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Text: John 17:11-19

Easter 7

## BECOMING PEOPLE OF TRUTH

Memorial Day is a day to remember those who have died in our nation's service. The people of our country have been doing this since the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and it has become a special day for many of us.

Memorial Day has also become a time to remember loved ones who have died after leaving their deep impressions upon our own lives. Most of us have special people - parents and grandparents, brothers and sisters, friends and co-workers - who have helped to shape and mold us into the people we have become. Today we remember them and we thank God for them.

Imagine if someone who was very special to you left a message just before he or she died. A soldier writes a letter to his family the day before he is killed in battle. A loved one on her death bed reaches for your hand and whispers a word of encouragement in your ear. You would treasure such a message, wouldn't you! You would remember that message and value it greatly.

Jesus left such a message for us. Jesus knew he wouldn't be with his disciples much longer in the way he had been with them for three years. He was concerned about them and he prayed for them. His prayer gives us insight into what he wanted for his followers - for all of his followers, and that includes you and me. We heard part of that prayer a moment ago in the reading from the Gospel of John.

In this prayer Jesus talked about truth. Truth was obviously very important to Jesus. And he earnestly desired that his followers be

people of truth. “Sanctify them in the truth,” he prayed. Sanctify means “to set apart for God.” Jesus wants us to be set apart for God as people of truth.

But what is truth? There are so many conflicting claims for truth. There are more religions than we can count, there are vastly different political points of view, there are liberals and conservatives, there are strikingly different economic theories, and there are millions of television advertisements each claiming to tell the truth - it really is hard to know what is true. Everyone has an opinion and everyone thinks that his or her opinion is the truth. And simple logic says that they can't all be true.

And so we try to figure out the truth. And that can be helpful. Charlie Brown and Lucy were talking. Lucy said, “My dad has been doing a lot reading and studying lately. He’s been studying theology, history, communications and political science. He’s very interested in finding the truth.” Charlie Brown thought for a minute and then asked, “Has all this reading and studying helped him?” “Oh, yes,” replied Lucy, “It’s taken his mind off his golf game.”

There is an even bigger advantage, says Jesus. Truth, he says, leads one to God!

That should make us eager to pursue the truth. There is no need to wring our hands in despair and think it is hopeless to ever know the truth. How we do find the truth?

Jesus gives us the answer. “I am the way and the truth and the life,” he says. Jesus is the truth. To know Jesus is to know the truth. To believe in Jesus is to believe in the truth. To follow Jesus is to walk in the path of truth. Want to know the truth? Listen to Jesus. Want to know the truth? Study his words.

Jesus is the truth - and so we come here to gain the truth. We gather around the cross to gaze at the truth. We speak the truth about our lives and hear the truth of God’s forgiveness and acceptance. We listen to the stories of Scripture to hear the truth. We immerse ourselves in Scripture, we read, study, and inwardly digest the words of Scripture, because these words are the truth. We eat and drink at

this table to be fed with the truth. Filled with truth, we are sent from here to be people of truth in the world.

Value the truth. Speak the truth. Live the truth. That is what it means to be people of truth in the world. We have been sanctified, set apart, for that purpose.

It is not always easy to be people of truth. In Columbia, South America, Christians are persecuted and even killed, because they have the reputation of telling the truth.

Sometimes it is the little ones among us who lead the way in telling the truth. One day Joyce's grandson was visiting her. "Grandma," he said, "do you know how you and God are alike?" Suddenly Joyce was filled with great pride, thinking her grandson thought she was like God. And so while she was mentally polishing her halo she asked, "No, how are we alike?" "You're both old," he replied. People of truth!

This weekend we are reminded that countless men and women have given their lives so that we may live in a land where we can speak the truth and live the truth and value the truth. We honor their sacrifice when we pursue the truth.

Jesus prayed that we be people of truth. "Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth."  
(NLT)

Set apart to be people of truth. That's who we are. Set apart to be people of truth. That's what we should strive to become.