

West Side Fellowship

Works of Service – The perils of conspiracy

“You are a king, then!” said Pilate.

Jesus answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”

“What is truth?” Pilate asked...

John 18v37-38

In this day and age we are bombarded with conflicting information from every side and from all sorts of sources, each with their own motives and slant on the truth. Some is fully true, some is fully false, and some, often the most dangerous, contains an element of truth and falsehood. Because there is so much conflicting information it becomes very difficult to know who to trust, especially if someone has lied to us before and at this point it becomes very easy to start a conspiracy.

So what is a conspiracy? If we look in a dictionary it comes down to the action two or more persons planning an unlawful or wrongful act to manipulate others or situations to bring about the results that they desire.

Now before dismissing conspiracies out of hand, we need to remember an old saying:

Just because you are paranoid doesn't mean they are not out to get you!

Every day there are people who try to manipulate the way we see and think about things. In it's most simple form let's look at advertising. The purpose of advertising is to change our mind or influence the way we think about a certain company or product by promoting the positive with the purpose of getting us to favour a company or product over another. The flip side of this is to give negative information about a competitor or their products to take them out of the running and so lead us to buy the oppositions product or view. This goes on in the business world on a daily basis and in the world of politics it happens hourly. On top of this of course is the way that the media then report any information, for let us be under no illusions that any media outlet is impartial. All favour certain views either as an organisation or as a reporter and so even the truth is seen and told through the eyes and views of the reporter.

A simple example of this is the case of a youngster running out into the road and being hit by a car. A tragedy by any standards, but the truth is influenced by the views of those watching. The car will be doing various speeds depending on the viewpoint of the witness. For a friend of the child the car will be driving at a crazy speed, for the child could never be at fault. For a friend of the driver, the child was at fault and the driver had no chance to stop. For someone who has a bad experience of the child, it was bound to happen, he was always doing stupid things and for the local activist who wants a blanket 20mph speed limit the car driver was going too fast. All have watched the

same event and are reporting the same facts, but each is influenced by their own views and relationships to those involved. So in the words of Pilate, "What is truth?"

Even from this simple example we can see that in many ways we are all subject to manipulation and again as we think about conspiracy we need to understand that just like the witnesses to the accident, the person or viewpoint we favour, will also effect our viewpoint of the information we are given.

At other times we cry conspiracy when something happens that we just can't believe. A classic example of this is the attack on the World Trade Centre in New York. How could these mighty structures fall? How could no one have seen the attack coming? There must be something or someone working behind the scenes and so the conspiracy starts. Then as one person passes snippets of information to another the conspiracy grows and part truths are used to build up a picture of our preconceived idea of what has happened.

Now this happens in the world, but sadly it also happens in a place where it should never happen, the church. For Christians can be very susceptible to conspiracy theories especially when they think something is trying to undermine their faith or their rights as a Christian or that something or someone is trying to lead them into sin. The classics of this are the mark of the beast, the anti Christ, the State of Israel or the temple, but they include things like the European Union and the latest being the Coronavirus and the conspiracies about the various vaccines with many believers spending hours trying to intellectually research and find out the "truth" behind these different things.

I said earlier that these conspiracies should never take place in the church and we will now look at why.

Let us start with the verse at the top of the page, **John 18v37-38**. Jesus said "*everyone on the side of truth listens to him,*" while Caesar representing the world does not even know what the truth is. Just think on that verse for a moment, the truth is found in Christ, for Jesus is the truth and always tells the truth (**John 14v6**). God is not a man that he should lie (**Numbers 23v19**), God always tells the truth and if we follow Him we should walk in the truth. If we listened to the Lord and allowed the Holy Spirit to lead us and guide us we would never fall into sin, for the Holy Spirit cannot lie or lead us into sin; quite the opposite. The Holy Spirit leads us in paths of righteousness as we walk in obedience. It is Satan and the world that does not know or recognise the truth and that leads us astray as it has done from the beginning.

Let us go back to the fall of man in **Genesis 3**. Satan, the great deceiver, starts up a little conspiracy theory that God is withholding information from Adam and Eve (**Genesis 3v5**) and that if they did a bit of research and went their own way they would be as wise as God (**Genesis 3v6**). This would mean that they could bypass seeking God in their decision making and would know what to do without any input from Him. Of course they didn't see the full picture, they just saw what was in front of them and took the words of the deceiver that appealed to their flesh and intellect to heart, and a bite of the fruit later, had gained everything that Satan had promised, yet lost their relationship with God himself.

The results of the fall are still with us today, especially the idea that we have wisdom like God. Satan is especially good at pushing the intellect button in Christians and allowing them to think that they understand what is going to happen or at least how things should happen.

A classic example of this is in politics, be it the general election, Brexit, the American election or even elections in Israel. Christians will build up an intellectual picture in their mind as to who should be winning and why, based on the views of the different parties and arguments. Once we have built up our picture who is right we then assume that God agrees with our interpretation of the truth. Therefore anything that goes against what we see as the right way is a conspiracy or it's of Satan. We miss the fact that God himself says that there is no authority or government that has been established except at the will of God (**Romans 13v1-2**). Our job when it comes to an election is quite simple, we don't need to sit through hours of political broadcasts and read endless editorials on what each party says they are going to do, for let's be honest, they are only trying to manipulate us into giving them our vote. Save yourself a lot of head scratching and intellectual brain ache and spend some time in prayer. Ask the Lord to show "you" who to vote for. Note I said to show "you!" It's not your job to influence others, that is the job of the Holy Spirit. When we try to win over others viewpoints we are not allowing them to be led of the Spirit, but instead are trying to manipulate their intellect.

And when the election is over, there is no need to lose sleep, whatever the result, because in the great scheme of things, it's the Kingdom of God that matters. Let us think about that, for if we are seeking first His kingdom (**Matthew 6v33**) we do not need to be worrying about the things of this world. Fix your eyes on Jesus (**Hebrews 12v2**) and his attitude towards politics. He lived in a time when his nation (Israel) was under occupation by the Romans. The Jews wanted a spiritual leader who would lead them to independence and yet Jesus, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, didn't get involved. He was above it all, working daily for his Father in the work of the Kingdom of God, that is what he had his mind set on. It is so easy to fall into the deception that all these things are important for the Kingdom of God while the truth is that God knows what is going on and all we need to be worrying about is our instruction for the day.

The same is true with conspiracies about the Coronavirus vaccine or any other vaccine or medical treatment for that matter. As a believer all we need to do is simply ask God if we should have it or not and allow Him to give us a simple "yes" or "no," being aware that the answer may be different for each one of us. The problem is that once we have started to look into things in the intellect, our ability to hear the Lord is diminished because He has to speak over our preconceived ideas. Our chasing of intellectually gained information is therefore not a blessing but in fact a curse just like in the garden of Eden. If our spiritual walk is truly one of faith then we need to trust that the Lord knows best and will never lead us into sin. However, it gets even worse if we start to spread it to other believers for we not only pollute our own ability to hear clearly from the Lord, but pollute theirs as well as we start to lead them down the path of human reason and intellect, sowing of the flesh rather than the Spirit (**John 3v6**). It is why in **1 Timothy 1v3** Paul tells us that we must command people to stop teaching these endless myths that lead to controversies instead of the work of God which is by faith. To the rest of us he tells us to have nothing to do with it, but rather train yourself to be godly (**1 Timothy 4v7**). How do we do that? By following the example of Christ (**1 Corinthians 11v1**).

Jesus told us to pick up our cross daily and follow (**Luke 9v23**), denying self, including the intellect. For as we are told in **Romans 12v1-3**, we need to offer ourselves as living sacrifices, Holy and pleasing. That is the priority of our walk with the Lord and comes down to seeking the Lord, spending time listening to him in prayer and following His leading. Only then will we start to truly understand what the Lord is doing in our lives and in the world around us (**Romans 12v2**). It means humbling ourselves (**Romans 12v3**), especially in the area of our intellect and humbly admitting

that we don't know what we thought we knew and that the real truth is only found in Christ and following in his footsteps. Maybe when we are truly seeking the Lord for the actions of the day and walking in obedience to that instruction will the Lord be able to explain to us the bigger picture, for you can be sure that the way forward will not be found through our intellectual pride, but rather through the humble obedience we see in the life of Jesus.

"Do not call conspiracy everything these people call conspiracy; do not fear what they fear and do not dread it.

The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread, and he will be a sanctuary; but for both houses of Israel he will be a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap and a snare.

Many of them will stumble; they will fall and be broken, they will be snared and captured."
Isaiah 8v12-15