

The Path to Wholeness: THREE, USA
August 5, 2018

How would you complete this sentence?

Land of the Brave; Home of the _____

We have been talking about characters from the Bible
that teach us a great deal about ourselves.

God will use them as a mirror and say,

Look closely.

That's YOU!

That's you as you're are prone to be,

but also let me show you the YOU that *I* have in mind.

The YOU that is whole and complete and lacking nothing.

The YOU that is being cleansed and transformed by the Holy Spirit
into the likeness of my son.

Just as souls fall into certain personality types,

with dominant characteristics,

so also do countries.

Countries often take the characteristics to an art form.

becoming the archetypes for that personality.

So it is for America.

Before we finish today, I hope we can look in the mirror as a country and say,

Wow, home of the BRAVE

Land of the THREE

Do you remember the core motivation and the core temptation of a THREE?

➤ **core motivation**

I need to be successful

I must achieve

I must reach their goal.

I must WIN, be the best, be on the top

I cannot let others get the best of me!

So powerful is this drive that the

➤ **core temptation** becomes deception

When truth and goal collide, it truth, not the goal will slide.

Deception becomes a way of life.

THREEs hone the art of the spin.

so much so they lose any conscious awareness that they're spinning.

The unadulterated truth gets sacrificed on the altar of

succeeding, achieving and winning,

or at least maintaining the IMAGE of those things.

A THREEs image is their prized possession.

Their moral compass has been drowned out by the need to reach their goal,

be it relational, financial, political, or just image.

Is this America?

Watch FOX news for 30 minutes, then watch CNN for 30 minutes.

You are in two different universes, each with their own version of reality.

I've decided we're having a schizophrenic breakdown.

Why?

I suggest that it's because the core motivation and the core temptation of our THREENESS has imploded on us and is destroying us.

America is the LAND OF THE THREE

Today, we turn to the book to look at two political characters who made the same fatal mistakes that we are making.

Two political character for whom I actually feel a lot of sympathy,

but who gave in to the core temptation for the sake of success,

who betrayed the truth and their own inner moral compass

to preserve their power, position and image.

The first we read about in Luke 3.

HEROD ANTIPAS, tetrarch of Galilee, who ruled during Jesus' 3-year ministry.

We see his THREENESS first when he falls in love with his half-brother's wife, Herodias.

THREEs know how to get what they want.

Herod Antipas divorces his current wife and marries Herodias.

Luke 3:19-20

But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of his marriage to Herodias,
his brother's wife, and all the other evil things he had done,
Herod added this to them all: He locked John up in prison.

Didn't John the Baptist know that this was NOT a politically strategic move?
I've often wondered if John ever thought,
"Why did I just kept his mouth shut! I still be out there ministering to people."
I mean, what good is a dead prophet?

But, Nope! For John, truth trumped power and position.

You can imagine that Herodias wanted John the Baptist dead!

But Mark 6:17 says

[Herodias] was not able to [kill John], because Herod feared John
and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man.

When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him

That's why Herod is a sympathetic character.

He wasn't so much a bad man as he was a weak man.

His gut told him that John the Baptist was a righteous and holy man
and he liked him.

Now Herod's integrity held when it came to dispute with his wife
about keeping John alive

After all, he was OK with WINNING an argument
as long as it didn't cost him power and image.

However, Herodias knew his core temptation and played to it
(Just as Satan knows America's core temptation and is playing us).

Mark 6:21

"On his birthday, Herod gave a banquet
for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee.

When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced,
she pleased Herod and his dinner guests.

The king said to the girl, "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you."
(I'm the ultimate in generosity!)

What she asked for was the head of John the Baptist.

Would *Herod's* integrity hold when his image in front of his political peers was at stake?

Nope.

His own moral compass got sacrificed on the altar of his image.

What has America sacrificed on the altar of image, power, the need to be on top?

Let's take a look at another career politician

who was enjoying great political success during the ministry of Jesus,
PONTIUS PILATE, governor of Judea during the time of Jesus' arrest.

Pilate was convinced of Jesus' innocence.

He says, **Luke 23:13-25**

Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, and said to them,
"You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion.

I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him.

Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see,

he has done nothing to deserve death.

Therefore, I will punish him and then release him."

But the whole crowd shouted, "Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!"

(Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.)

Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again.

But they kept shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

For the third time he spoke to them: "Why? What crime has this man committed?

I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty.

Therefore, I will have him punished and then release him."

But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified,

and their shouts prevailed.

So Pilate decided to grant their demand.

He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder,

the one they asked for, and surrendered Jesus to their will.

And to make matters worse, Pilate's wife had warned him of the high cost
of caving in to political pressure.

Matthew 27:19

While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message:

"Don't have anything to do with that innocent man,

for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him."

Pilate is in agony of soul – but Pilate chooses wrong.

How does Pilate excuse himself?
In resignation he poses the question,
 What is truth?

The truth is not concrete; it's illusive; it's subjective.
I will escape into that world of liquid truth
 and not be bound by the cold facts.

For the sake of protecting his political power, his political position, his wealth, his image
 and perhaps even his life, he plays loose with truth.
He makes a mistake with eternal consequences.

But there is one more man in the Jesus story
 who is the archetype of the UNREDEEMED THREE.
Although he held no political position,
 his actions were politically motivated.

His name is JUDAS

According to widespread theory,
Judas betrayed Jesus to compel him to act;
 to force him finally to seize political power as Messiah, the redeemer of Israel.
Victory is so close he can taste it.
Jesus just raised a man from the dead – Lazarus!
Then he rode into Jerusalem to the shouts of Hosannas!
Even the Greeks from the surrounding territories are flocking to hear him teach.
 But he keeps talking about dying!

Judas says to himself, **“He just needs a reality check – a little push in the right direction.”**
 Certainly, if his life is at stake, Jesus will rise up and WIN.
 What good is a dead Messiah?”

When Judas realized that his calculations were wrong,
 he saw no way out except suicide.

AMERICA, our calculations have been WRONG!
 And we are committing suicide.

America is the land of the THREE.
We are the land of Herod.
We are the land of Pilate.
We are deceived into thinking that the way of Judas leads to greatness.

We can't see it because in Western civilization being
an UNREDEEMED THREE is virtually never challenged.

In fact, they're *venerated*!

There is no motivation in our social, economic and political structure *NOT* to be a THREE.

Our motto, I succeed, therefore I am.

What would you say is America's original sin?

Many have suggested it's slavery.

As horrific as slavery is, I would say that slavery is the *bi-product* of America's original sin.

What purpose did slavery serve?

To achieve and hold onto wealth and power.

Selling slaves was BIG business.

Owning slaves allowed the plantation owners to succeed at big business.

Owning slaves was not just about subjugating another race out of hate,

is was about core motivation of the THREE – to succeed, to achieve, to win.

Everything, including people, was subservient to that goal.

Do you really think that the people in the North were more moral and righteous
than their southern counterparts because their cause was more moral?

No, they were just less dependent on slaves to stay on top.

They might have claimed moral superiority

because their cause was more moral,

but not see that they too were infected by the spirit of a THREE.

Jesus would say to us, like he said to James and John,

Who were after all willing to fight *FOR* Jesus' cause.

You don't know what spirit you are of.

You may think you are building my kingdom.

**fighting to get all the right laws passed or championing for social justice,
but my Kingdom is built on a totally different operating system.**

So, when the depth of our **THREENESS** is exposed,
and we see the horror of it all.
What do we do?

Behind door number one is – *GET MAD!*
Post angry messages on Facebook,
exposing the arrogance of rulers and the stupidity of the ruled.
Bring them down . . . with the same tools that built them up.

We fail to see that leaders are simply the embodiment of our collective soul.
The leader you despise –
be it republican or democrat or something in between –
is *not* your enemy.
To hate your enemy, is to hate yourself.

So, what would a **REDEEMED AMERICA** look like?

The symbolic animal of the **UNREDEEMED THREE** is a peacock,
strutting about, drawing attention itself.

However, the symbolic animal of the **REDEEMED THREE** is the eagle.
The eagle is the only animal that can look directly into the sun.

How ironic, that the eagle is our national bird.
It's also the only hope for America.
Can America dare to look into the S-O-N.

The SON who said, **Matthew 16:25-26**
For whoever wants to save his life
will lose it, but whoever loses his life
for My sake will find it.
What does it profit a man if he gains
the whole world, but loses his own soul?

Do we want Jesus' version of Great?
He who would be great among you must be the servant of all.

Do we want to be leaders (and people) who succeed at the expense of truth
or be leaders (and people) who hold to the truth at the expense of success?

COMMUNION

As we go into communion today, these are the questions we must ask ourselves, especially as Americans.

At what price truth?

Do you have a price?

At what point will you resort to deception to get and keep what you want?

The only escape for a THREE is rigorous honesty.

The path to redemption for a THREE personally and nationally, is paved with humility and rigorous honesty.

I strongly suggest you answer that question in your heart before the Lord before you come to the table today.

Remember Ananias.

He had sold his property and was giving an extremely generous portion of the proceeds to the church,
but he wanted to be seen by others as just a *little* better than he actually was,
and so he lied to Peter about the sale price of his home
so it appeared as if he was giving ALL, instead of almost all.

Peter says, “You have not lied to men, but to God.”

What Ananias said was almost true – but not rigorously true.

Ananias became the example for the last 2000 years of how greatly God values truthfulness, rigorous honesty, the only escape route for a THREE.

May the fear of God

and the love of God demonstrated when he laid down his life for us
compel us into all righteousness.