

**“Truthing”, a sermon preached by Kerry Enright at Knox Church Dunedin New Zealand on the festival of Christ the King, Sunday 22 November 2015, based on the gospel John 18:33-37. It was also the occasion of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Carrington College, Dunedin.**

It is very good for Knox to join in celebrating the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Carrington College. In a few minutes, we will hear from Bill Dawson how much Knox and Carrington are linked. It is wonderful that today we are being reminded of the relationship.

This sermon takes the gospel text for today and tries to say something both to the Carrington community and the Knox community. I begin with some stories that lead us into the gospel.

Looking on, you would have seen the classic courtroom scene, a judge passing sentence, a defendant in the dock, counsel at their tables. After sentencing, the man might have been taken down, to prison, to serve out his term. The Judge would have gone home that night, his work done. And he did his work professionally, capably, with a good reputation. But there was more to it than that. From his first days as a lawyer, the man noticed that some communities were over-represented in the courtroom. He noticed the patterns and the groups. He involved himself in those communities. He learned their language, te reo. He became trustee of a fund to support young people with potential but without resources, at least two of whom became all blacks, one of whom became a high court judge. He could have done his job, been respected for it, but he decided to do more, to inquire further.

Recently I noticed two families who moved from overseas to New Zealand. They could have unpacked their belongings, settled into a pattern of work and recreation, and got on with living. But they thought about where they were, and who was here, and who was here before them. They learned that New Zealand is a country with a Treaty with tangata whenua. So members of both families decided they would learn something of the language and the culture over the summer. They could have lived their lives in a straightforward and easy way. They decided to do more, to inquire further.

It reminded me of a family that moved into the area in which I grew up. They bought a house, settled in, went about their everyday lives, but as they entered into the community they sensed the tension between Pakeha and Maori. They could have left it at that, but they wanted to learn more. So they went to events at the local marae and engaged local iwi. They learned the terrible history of confiscation and injustice in our area, that abides in the soul of the town in which I grew up. They inquired further. They did more.

Which brings us to Harold Turner, assistant minister here in the early fifties. He could have been the Assistant Minister at Knox Church, leading worship, offering pastoral care, guiding Christian education. People would have respected him for it. But he listened to the students here. He heard their desire for better accommodation and support. He gained the support of David Herron, the minister at the time, to establish a college, and the college became two colleges, Arana and Carrington, 70 years ago, and he helped establish the University Book Shop, and recruited the people of Knox to support him in doing so. He could have done the basics and no more, and been respected. He decided to do more.

Communities and cities and churches and countries live from people deciding to do more. Yes, the economy needs to function by us earning and spending. Yes, we need recreation and relaxation that enable us to be fully human. But there is more.

What a contrast there was between Pilate and Jesus.

John portrays Pilate as one who washes his hands, who does no more than what he absolutely must do, who is determined not to be caught up in the right or wrong of Jesus. He will keep himself safe and secure, of good repute with the Empire. He will not inquire beyond the obvious. He will not delve into the truth. He will deal with things only on the surface, as they are presented, as they appear.

Not so for Jesus. It was not simple and plain and straightforward and obvious and self-evident and expedient and convenient and efficient and tidy and organised.

“My kingdom is not from this world”, he says.

Our kingdom is not from this world. The realm of our living, the spirit who animates us, the one who guides us, does not draw his way of living, his being from this world, from the world’s systems of status and worth, from the world’s structures of economy and empire, from what impresses or does not impress the world.

He was committed to truth, to inquiring further, to going deeper, to attending to the fundamentals of being human. So it was for the people who we remembered earlier.

I have spent eight years of my life in University halls of residence like Carrington. They can be wonderful communities of support. Indeed, on Friday, one of my former Princeton class-mates posted on facebook a photo of the guys who inhabited the fourth floor of Alexander Hall 31 years ago. The memories flooded back of shared experiences, mutual support, and special times, of the friend who took me to his home for Thanksgiving and another who took me to his home during another break.

Places like Knox and Carrington are born and thrive from people who go further, inquire deeper, act on what they learn.

We are shaped by a kingdom not from this world.

What kind of kingdom? As we sang earlier,

Clothed in light upon the mountain,  
Stripped of might upon the cross;  
Shining in eternal glory,  
Beggared by a soldier’s toss.  
You who walk each day beside us,  
Sit in power at God’s side.

One scholar calls it truthing. Going beyond the surface to what is behind what people do, to the patterns and powers, the systems. Truthing is what enables the Knoxes and Carringtons and all communities to flourish.