The Statue of 3 Lies

(by Michael Cawthon)

One of the many attractions in Boston, MA is located at Harvard University. In Harvard Yard is a statue of John Harvard, credited with starting the school in 1638. However, the statue is also known by another name, *“The statue of three lies.”* First, John Harvard did not actually start the school. The university was founded by the colonial government and named it for Mr. Harvard when he bequeathed his library to the institution. Second, the school started in 1636, not 1638. And third, the man memorialized in the statue is not John Harvard! There were no pictures of him to use, so the artist used a friend as a model.

There are a couple lessons Christians need to learn from this statue of John Harvard (I mean the friend of the sculpture). Isn’t it interesting and perhaps scary how quickly we take what someone says or has written as the truth? Perhaps that child-like innocence is to be commended to some regard; however it can be extremely dangerous to your soul. Paul warned the new Christians in Galatia, ***“But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed”*** (**Galatians 1:8**).

It doesn’t take long to look around at the religious world today and see people who claim to follow God doing different things. People worship God differently. People claim to have been saved from their sins by different means. Preachers even claim to be speaking the truth, yet the messages are at opposite ends of the spectrum. How do we know what to believe?

Good news! There is a source of truth...it is God. God cannot lie (**Titus 1:2**). The Bible is God’s word and is His truth to man about life, sin, salvation, worship, church, everything. ***“The sum of Thy word is truth”*** (**Psalm 119:160**). Do you want to know about how the world came into existence? Go to the source of truth. Do you want to know about marriage? Go to the source of truth. Like the Bereans, when we hear a sermon or message claiming to be from God, we need to ***“search the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things [are] so”*** (**Acts 17:11**).

God takes lying very seriously. Of the seven things mentioned that the LORD hates, ***“a lying tongue”*** is one (**Proverbs 6:16-19**). Of the people named who will ***“have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone,”*** liars are among them (**Revelation 21:8**). Speaking lies is so opposite of who God is and who we should be, that Jesus gives this description of one who speaks falsehood, ***“You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it”*** (**John 8:44**).

We need to be careful what we say, what we write, what we text, post, and blog. Jesus said, ***“Let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one”*** (**Matthew 5:37**). Let’s not fool ourselves into thinking there are different color lies. *“Little white lies,”* purple lies, red lies, and yellow lies are all lies. Also, *“half-truths,” “3/4 truths,”* and *“15/16 truths”* are all lies. Don’t shortcut on verifying the information before you spread it. It is difficult to print a retraction on something you have said.

Take a lesson from the statue of John Harvard. Don’t believe everything you hear or read, especially when it pertains to matters of spirituality. Verify it with the truth of God’s word. And be careful little mouth what you say! My dad used to tell us kids, *“Always, always, always tell the truth. Even if you think you may be hurt by doing it.”*

***Note****: The seal of Harvard University includes the Latin word “Veritas.” It means truth. [How ironic!]*