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Truth at the Table

St. Andrew's – Jacksonville, OR
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A man told his doctor that he wasn't able to do all the things around the house that he used to do. When the examination was complete, he said, "Now, Doc, I can take it. Tell me in plain English what is wrong with me."

"Well, in plain English," the doctor replied, "you're just lazy."

"Okay," said the man. "Now give me the medical term so I can tell my wife."

Sometimes the truth can hurt...and sometimes, when we don't like the truth we do our best to cover it up. But, regardless of what we think of truth, it still remains the truth. And the truth gets more serious when we consider the ultimate truth found in God. Deacon Chris preached last week concerning truth. He told us that, "Truth is the difference between life and death, not whatever we want it to be." Such powerful words if you take the time to meditate on them. In the end...it will be the ultimate truth found in Jesus Christ that will prevail. One of the side effects of sin is a clouding of our ability to see and to seek ultimate truth. Once we fell into the darkness of disobedience in the Garden, our perceptions of reality and fidelity began to move into deception. Our paths began to diverge and explore the unmarked side trails that promise better adventures but, in the end, only lead to disappointment. As a hiker, I can tell you that a deceptive path will get one lost and...if you do not find your way back to the true path...you will be lost to your detriment. Paul's letter to the Corinthians is a warning to keep us on the very path that leads to the ultimate Truth found in Jesus Christ. Listen once again to Paul's words to the Corinthians:

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:1-2).

From the very beginning, the followers of Christ needed to be reminded of the Gospel. Satan was hard at work; taking every advantage he could, to cause the persuasions of mankind to twist the words of Christ. If he could only find a way to lure us onto a different path...one that promised better views and an easier gait, an offer to create our own personal interpretations of the trail. These side trails all have the same name...heresy. Paul is reminding us to keep the true Gospel in our memories so that we are not led astray. There are influences within the mind of mankind that distort the nature and role of Christ. When the church's perception of who Jesus is or what Jesus has done is altered, we end up with heretical views that lead us away from the Father, lead us away from the true Jesus. Granted, the instigators of some heretical views may have had the best intentions of seeking truth, however, their perceptions are still misleading.

The culmination of our belief is expressed most profoundly when we come to the Lord's Table. It is here where we acknowledge the very essence of God in our lives; His divinity as well as His humanity; the real presence of the God-man Jesus Christ. We must not sit with eyes covered in rose-colored glasses refusing to acknowledge the false perceptions and misguided scriptural interpretations that surround us. We must stay focused, vigilant and aware. It is here, at the Table where we accept the Gospel, where we receive...where we stand...and where we are saved! The Gospel does not stand in the heretical view of Arianism where the divinity of Christ is denied. The Gospel does not stand in Docetism either, denying the humanity of Jesus claiming that he is only an extension of God.

The church has fought the good fight in maintaining the highest level of truth we can comprehend. From the Apostles to the church councils and from our creedal statements of faith, we can be confident when we come to the Table and share together the meal prepared for us by the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.

And we do not consider the sacrament of Holy Communion as a mere memorial; the Sacraments have work to do...they keep us from forgetting. At the Last Supper, as Christ took the bread and wine he instructed us to do this in REMEMBRANCE of him. The temptation as we go through life is to forget...and it is the Lord's Supper that keeps us from forgetting the grace found in Christ and keeps us in remembrance

of the truth. When we see the bread at the Table and consume his precious body...we behold the incarnate Christ, remember his words, his actions and his love. When we see the Cup and consume his most precious blood we can feel the atonement of Jesus; we are reminded of the price paid and the love begotten. The physical act keeps in remembrance the truth of the Gospel...the sacrifice and atonement of Christ, while at the same time, in mystery, unites us corporately in the body of Christ. This outpouring of the spirit fills us with the knowledge and love of God that overflows from us into the world around us...spreading the Gospel.

God the Father is infinite and almighty...the horizon of all possibilities. He comes into the world as the Word, in the form of man, to become the mediator between possibility and actual occurrence. It is the Word that dwells within us, by the engrafting of the Holy Spirit, who guides us as agents of the Father's will. The sacraments are the visible Word that feed and strengthen us to carry out God's plan of salvation. The Sacraments are the instruments that give us the grace to carry out our duties toward Christ and by the receiving of the Holy Spirit we are empowered to act according to His will.

Our partaking of the Sacraments is a participation in the transcendence of God, (that which is above our comprehension) enabling his divine power to affect our lives. No movement on our part could have possibly affected our redemption; it is the immanence of God (God united to humanity in human flesh) found in Jesus Christ, that has brought man into relations with God the Father. His Transcendence may separate us, but his immanence brings us together. It is in this creator-creature distinction (Jesus as fully divine and Jesus as fully human) that fills the gap left by sin, by which we can be redeemed. It is God the Father, through the Son via the movement of the Holy Spirit that closes the gap created by sin. The most central truth of who Christ is and what he has done for us is found in the sacraments, being the ties that bind us together. Through the sacraments we are reminded that we go to the Father by the merits of the Son.

It was truth that required the life of Christ...and it was truth that required his death. When we come to the table today we come as inheritors of the truth...by the merits of the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32).

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.