

Easter 4, 2018  
The Hard-Heart Truth  
*John 12:36-50/Psalm 116*  
St. Andrew's Church - Jacksonville, OR  
By Fr. Bill Baker

*"While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye might be the children of light."*

How important to you is the light? I'm talking about the kind of light you get from the sun or from the lights in your house and on your vehicle. This kind of light is quite necessary if we are to function on a daily basis. And I guarantee that one trip through my garage without the lights on would activate your hearing as you listened to the ambulance pulling up. If this kind of light exposes the dangers and pitfalls of the darkness what more can we say about the light of Christ who exposes the snares and deceptions of spiritual darkness?

Christ says in John 14:6, *"...I am the way, **the truth**, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."* And in John 8:12 we listen to Jesus as he speaks to the Pharisees and people telling them, *"I am the **light** of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."* The light of life...the light that makes everything clear...the ultimate light were the foundation of ultimate truth lies.

We live in a world today where belief in a foundation of ultimate truth is no longer acceptable. Truth has become individualized and opinionated; "your truth is not my truth, don't offend me by your persuasion". But what about us, is not our belief and faith in Jesus Christ equal to the opinions of those who disagree and hold other views? In our current day we are seeing a paradigm shift in the values of society. Everyone has a cause and everyone is offended. But, in the not so distant past, even those who were not Christian upheld the moral values contained in the Ten Commandments and understood the church to be a moral compass that could be trusted to keep society in proper order. The church was a good thing and was respected. So what has happened? *"He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts; that*

*they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, and be converted (and healed).* These words from St. John have strong implications not just for those of Jesus' day, but for us even now. Is the blinding of eyes and the hardening of hearts the will of God or is it the will of the people?

Last week while Andrea, Lizzy and I were running around town doing errands it became noticeably hot and necessary to use the air conditioner. No sooner did I turn the Air on that Andrea bewailed and moaned that the car was going to overheat (maybe that's a slight exaggeration☺). But she did make the statement. "No, it will be alright, the car runs fine" I replied. Sure enough the needle began to rise and we had to turn the air off. Windows rolled down, I couldn't accept the fact that the AC was not working properly. "Roll up the windows. I'm sure ever thing is fine." AC back on, were heading down Crater Lake Hwy. and the AC seems to be working fine...until...a red light impedes my progress. "The needle is going up again better turn the off the AC" I hear from the passenger seat as the windows once again come down. Still I cannot accept this...I know that everything is working fine...I just need to avoid red lights and slower moving vehicles, then I can show her that she is mistaken and I will once again be comfortable with my opinion. Moving at speeds contrary to the speed limit I hear what is becoming a familiar "yap, yap, yap" into my right ear. "Your starting to get into the red" as she shuts off the Air. "You know what, I exclaim? I think we need to take the car into the shop and have the AC looked at." Andrea agrees, "That would be a good idea."

A hardened heart against the truth is the foundation of arrogance and what leads so many astray. Most Christians today have a difficult time comprehending the unbelief of those who were there and witnessed the miracles and words of Jesus. We read from St. John today that, *"...though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him...Nevertheless, among the chief rulers also many (did) believe on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."* In my arrogance, I did not want to accept what my wife was telling me even though I could see it happening before my very eyes. I wanted what I was willing to believe to be true and for my

opinion to be accepted as truth. I was willing to challenge the truth that was right in front of me.

God does not harden the heart to keep some from eternal life. It is the truth of God's word that causes mankind to harden their own hearts because they want to be rulers of their own destinies. Hearts that are hardened against God are so formed because God's aid is refused. Just look around at today's vast opinions...they all say the same thing, "your truth is not my truth and God has nothing to do with it." Well, our truth is found in Jesus Christ regardless of the world's denial...a hardened heart is the choice of fools.

Like Job, family and friends too may persecute us for our beliefs. But it is up to us to speak out (yap, yap, yap - maybe) but, the truth will set us free. We have the responsibility of letting the world around us know that they are redlining and need to roll the windows down and reconsider were their faith lies. The words of scripture are so sobering to those who have open minds when we consider that at some point every knee will bow, every tongue will confess and every eye will see that Jesus Christ is the Lord of life.

Eternal life is found only in Jesus Christ and in him only is ultimate and foundational truth. Our joy is found in willing hearts able to put aside selfish desires and wayward motives to rest in the truth of what God offers in the flesh of Jesus Christ. Mankind's sense of truth is clouded by the distortion of sin. Hardened hearts cannot accept that, but hearts of faith can. It is through faith that we come to belief and it is belief that sets us free.

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