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| Big Words In The Bible – Love | Sunday, August 8, 2021 |
| Scripture Reading - James 1:12-18 |  |

**Slide 1**

In this series about Big Words In The Bible, we are looking at words that are not necessarily long or difficult to pronounce. We are looking at words whose meaning have a significant impact on how we live our lives as Christians.

Today’s Big Word is truth, and it is a big word because it is so important to possess and share in our lives. Throughout history, people have searched to discover truth, yet when some people come face to face with it they fail to recognize it and they continue their search in vain.

History is littered with people who have recognized the truth when they encountered it, but they want to customize the truth to make it their own. Truth has a unique property, for if you change it in any way, it is no longer truth. The human ego does not like the idea of being wrong, so we have invented words such as half-truths and white-lies to justify or legitimize our explanations to cover our embarrassment or shame.

In Genesis 3, the first sin in world history is recorded. In a conversation with a serpent, the woman says, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.” The truth is, God said nothing about touching the fruit, only the eating of the fruit was forbidden. Intentionally adding or subtracting from the truth is called deception. We all will experience death because the woman was deceived by a serpent, and in that single act of eating the fruit that God forbade them to eat, all humanity faces certain death.

For some, deception has a dollar value. The Canadian Anti-Fraud Center reported that in 2019 nearly 4,500 Canadian’s lost more than $96 million dollars to the criminal act of fraud.

**Slide 2**

There are many different dictionary definitions for truth,

Meriam Webster’s dictionary defines truth as: the body of real things, events, and facts

The Cambridge dictionary defines truth as: the actual fact or facts about a matter

The Oxford dictionary defines truth as: that which corresponds to reality

**Slide 3** [Image: The Boy Who Cried Wolf.jpg – Used with permission, Pat and Scott Gustafson]

The Boy Who Cried Wolf is one of hundreds of stories in the collection known as Aesop’s Fables that was written about the same time in history as the Old Testament Book of Daniel, 500 to 600 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. This is a story about a young shepherd boy who thought it would be funny to joke around and cry out “Wolf! Wolf!”. Two times the boy was pleased that his cries for help resulted in the local villagers rushing out to help him. But one day a wolf did come and the boy’s cries for help were ignored because the boy could not be trusted. I want to digress for a moment. Like the Book of Daniel, the original copies of Aesop’s Fables no longer exist. But unlike the Book of Daniel that has been preserved throughout it’s lifetime, there are different versions of this fable, with no version having a happy ending for the boy or his sheep.

The preservation of this ancient Greek pagan fable acknowledges that truth matters. We read in **2 Timothy 4:3** that a ***“time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine”***, and we are living in the reality of that time we are warned about. In **Mark 7:6-8** Jesus warned that false worshipers honour God with their lips, but they seek the teachings of human reason rather than God’s truth. Their attention is not truly focused on God.

As Christians we must preserve the integrity of our reputation by rejecting urban legends, conspiracy theories, and false information, because when the message really matters about the truth of the Good News of Jesus Christ we need to be very different from the Boy who Cried Wolf. We need to be believable.

**Slide 4**

In **John 18:38** the Roman governor named Pilate asks Jesus an age-old question, “***What is truth?”***  Many philosophers today ask the same question Pilate asked, and they conclude that truth is relative, meaning, there are no universal truths, and that what is true for you may not be true for me. The Bible is clear that truth is not relative. In **John 8:31-32** Jesus tells us that ***truth is available to us, and if we accept truth, it will set us free.***

A better question for us to ask is, “**Who is truth?”** The Psalms tell us that God is the source of all truth and truth is found in God’s word and it is a requirement for love, mercy, grace, our preservation, and justice. John 14:6 says “***Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life.’***” The psalms tell us that God’s truth reaches to the skies and God’s truth teaches and leads us so we can walk in truth. In **1 John 4:6** we learn about the who is truth in that there is a spirit of truth and a spirit of error. Ephesians 6:12 says ***“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”***

In John 8:44-45, Jesus tells the Jewish religious leaders in Jesus day, where they were positioned in relation to the spiritual battle ***“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”***

**Slide 5** – The Relationship between Truth & Love

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word ‘emet is most often translated into English as the word ***truth***. For the Old Testament writers, truth was more than something that conforms to facts, they were saying that God is reliable, dependable and trustworthy; all those things that our Christian hope is built upon. The word *‘emet*, is also used for people who had these Godly traits. The Old Testament writers viewed truth as God revealing his ways in words and deed, and this view of truth defines our moral foundation that shape our ethical thoughts and behaviours.

I have heard it said that the court system is designed to hear the truth from one, side, then then the other, and then attempt to discover the truth that lies somewhere in between. Our system is imperfect as at times innocent people are found guilty, and the guilty are set free because of procedural technicality.

In John’s Gospel, John tells us that the Father is the truth and that Jesus teaches only what the Father has given to him.

We see in the New Testament Gospels where Jesus reveals God’s truth, in word and deed. We find in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke where Jesus reveals God’s love for the outcasts, and then we see Jesus eating with tax-collectors and sinners. We see in this passage that the teachings of the Pharisees had become so distorted over time that they could not connect God’s truth about loving to Jesus’ living out God’s truth. We saw this pattern last week where Jesus reveals God’s truths and commandments and then lives them out. In Matthew 5:44 Jesus commands us to love our enemies, and we see Jesus tortured and dying and the cross forgiving those who have tortured him.

For the Pharisees, they claimed the moral high ground on the matter and condemned Jesus actions as being scandalous. Since Jesus only taught what the Father had given him, it was Jesus who held the moral high ground because Jesus possessed and lived out God’s truth. What Jesus asks us to do may be difficult, but it is not impossible.

**Slide 6**

Truth creates boundaries that separate right from wrong and some people believe that boundaries are nothing more than an attempt by humans to control or manipulate others. Yet the boundaries God establishes in scripture are truths created for our benefit.

 As our society today reinvents truth in the name of tolerance, inclusiveness and ending discrimination, the truth and reality is that boundaries are moved and redefined and in many ways society has become less tolerant, less inclusive and is failing to end discrimination. This morning’s scripture reading was from the first chapter of James, and **James 1:14-15** helps us understand the mind of those who cross over the boundaries God’s truth sets before us. James says ***that “each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”***

When God created a boundary in scripture, it is like a line that we see being drawn in the sand. The boundary is visible, it can be easily recognized. The line itself represents a truth.

In February of 2021 we were going through the Old Testament Book of Daniel and we were learning about a nation that crossed over the boundaries God established. Daniel 8:12 describes the nation’s behaviour saying that God’s “**truth was thrown to the ground**”. This pattern of crossing the boundaries God set and punishment for crossing the boundaries is a theme that is woven into the Old Testament and we see punishment lasting hundreds of years. **Daniel 9:13** speaks to the issue of how slow we are at times to see the truth and benefits of God’s ways and repent of our sins. “**Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come on us, yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth.**”

**Galatians 6:7-10** has this to say about the protection God’s boundaries:

***7Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. 8Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. 9Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. 10Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.***

**Slide 7**

When Jesus prayed for his disciples in John 17:17, he used the word sanctify by saying, “***Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.***” Sanctification is also a big word, but it is one for another day. For today, it is sufficient to know there are four uses of this word in scripture and when Jesus prayed using this word, he is referring to the life long process of cleaning up our lives as we become more Christ like. Jesus said in Luke 5:31-32 that **“*It is not the healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*”** We don’t get cleaned up to accept Christ, it is accepting God’s truth and living out God’s truth in our lives that we clean up our acts and become more Christ like which pleases God.

This change inclines us towards obedience and our new life is not to look like our old way of life. But we are only inclined towards obedience, we must put an effort into becoming obedient. In **Ephesians 4:25** Paul wrote ***Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.*** The basis for what Paul tells is found in **Exodus 20:16** when God gives us the ninth of ten commandments ***You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.***

And as I bring this message to a close, Psalm 25:5 says ***”Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.”*** As Christians we should love truth and be willing learn and willing to do the doing required by truth. The Proverbs teach a truth that is unspeakable in classrooms of our schools today.

Proverbs 12:1 ***“Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but whoever hates correction is stupid.”***

Proverbs 12:15 ***“The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice.”***

The Psalmist brings together the realities that truth guides our transformation, to live Godly lives, which is part and parcel to the hope we have in our salvation.

Truth matters, truth transforms.