Weekly Reflection: The Authentic Gospel - Courage, Integrity, and Love

St. John's Presbyterian Church, White Rock

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-13

Dear friends in Christ,

As we reflect on Sunday's message, *The Authentic Gospel: Courage, Integrity, and Love*, we are reminded that the gospel is more than a message we proclaim with our lips. It is a way of life that reveals the love of Jesus Christ through our words, our character, and our actions.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:1-13, the Apostle Paul describes a ministry marked by courage, integrity, and love. Despite suffering and opposition, Paul and his companions continued to proclaim the gospel because their strength came from God. They were not motivated by personal gain, human praise, or a desire for recognition. Instead, they faithfully served God and cared deeply for the people among whom they ministered.

Courage calls us to remain faithful even when circumstances are difficult. As a congregation, we may face uncertainty, limited resources, changing community needs, and questions about the future. Yet God continues to call us to share Christ's hope, welcome those seeking belonging, and serve our neighbours. Courage does not mean having no fear; it means trusting God enough to take the next faithful step.

Integrity reminds us that the way we live must reflect the faith we profess. Our Christian witness becomes credible when we are honest, dependable, humble, and fair in our dealings with others. Whether in church leadership, family life, the workplace, or our relationships with neighbours, we are called to please God rather than simply seek human approval. Our actions should strengthen, not contradict, the message we proclaim.

Love invites us to share not only the gospel but also our lives. Paul describes his care for the Thessalonians using the tender image of a mother caring for her children. His ministry was not merely about delivering a message; it was about building relationships and giving himself to the well-being of others.

This brings to mind the story shared in Sunday's sermon about my parents, whose home in Kenya was destroyed by fire. The following morning, members of their church arrived with food, clothing, bedding, and a willingness to help rebuild. They could not undo the tragedy, but they helped restore hope, dignity, and a sense of belonging. Through their practical acts of kindness, the love of God became visible.

As we begin another week, let us consider how we can embody this same love at St. John's. Perhaps we can call someone who has been absent, listen patiently to someone carrying a burden, visit someone who is unwell, or offer practical help to a person facing hardship. We may not be able to solve every problem, but we can offer what God has placed in our hands.

Courage without love can become harshness; integrity without compassion can become coldness; and love without integrity can lose its credibility. When these three qualities work together, our congregation becomes a living witness to Jesus Christ.

A question for the week: How can I demonstrate courage, integrity, and love in one practical way this week?

May God give us courage when challenges arise, integrity when difficult choices confront us, and generous hearts when others need our care. May those who encounter St. John's Presbyterian Church experience not only our words of faith but also the transforming love of Jesus Christ.

In Christ's service,

Kennedy M