

St. Peter Lutheran Church, Doss, TX 5-15-22 "Into All Truth"

John 16: 12-15 *"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own; He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to Me by taking from what is Mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is Mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is Mine and make it known to you."*

We can be truthful with one another. But being truthful can be difficult at times, but it will be right and God pleasing. Take this letter from Nevada Barr, the mystery author, to see what she writes about lies in our lives.

Dear Friends,

There's something addictive about lying. I'm not talking about the Big Lies. Mostly we know we're in hot water when we find ourselves lying big. Either we're ashamed of what we've done because we know it was rotten, or we don't think it was rotten but lie because we haven't the moral rectitude to face the consequences of our choice. And I'm not interested in discussing Little White Lies. If you're old enough to hear this, you're old enough to know the difference between lying because you're a coward or a sneak and lying because your cousin doesn't need to know her thighs look like packing crates in spandex.

It is hoped one avoids the Big Lies and understands the need for White Lies. Their very obviousness forces us to be aware of them even if we've not the fortitude to keep away from the former or the generosity to commit the latter.

It's the quiet lies that seduce. The little ones, cute, baby lies that "hurt" no one: shaving a second or two off your time running the mile, a few dollars off that dress you bought on sale, five pounds off your weight on your driver's license, making that nasty comment someone made just a wee bit nastier in the telling. A friend of mine, in the early stages of true addiction, referred to this habit as "tuning up the truth."

I wish I could say I have risen above this petty pastime, and always tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, but, alas, this is not the case. At times, though

aware of the slippery slope I tread, I still find myself altering the facts just a hair to make myself seem a bit taller, stronger, or more clever. The strange thing about this litany of "adjustments" is that they do not achieve the desired goal; they are too small, too insignificant to truly aggrandize.

Though not totally honest, since I discovered, some twenty odd years ago, that I had developed the habit of lying, I have managed to curb it with some success. In and of themselves, my tiny lies were relatively harmless to the listeners, but they worked against me in a myriad of ways; my credibility was subtly undermined over time and, once accustomed to lying in little ways, when time came and a Big Lie tempted, it was so much easier to tell it.

The greatest danger, though, was the boiling of the frog. It's said (and I assume it's true) that if you put a frog in a pan of water and heat it slowly, the frog will not notice the changing temperature; he'll never hop out and save himself but will sit there till he boils to death. In telling the little lies, I slowly inured myself to the concept of honesty. It was so easy to start exaggerating the exaggerations, moving into the realm of lies that can be detected (thus looking like a liar and a fool), then into lies that could harm. The truth became malleable, unimportant, and, finally, meaningless. Without a strong attachment to the truth, I was without an anchor. What is, what happened, how it happened is what anchors me to life. I'd once thought that genuinely living in the moment, totally just in the one moment currently happening, would be the ideal. Then I saw a medical show which profiled a man with a head injury, an injury which manifested in the man's total inability to recall the recent past. This poor man would ask a hundred times in a twenty-minute conversation: "And who are you? Where am I?" Requests, asked and granted, were forgotten and asked again. He was totally in the moment, but without his past the moment had no depth, no weight, no meaning.

Lying let me detach myself from my past, my real past, and that is who I am. I am the woman who weighs one hundred twenty-one pounds, not the fictitious one-hundred-eighteen- pound woman on my driver's license. In a sense, the truth is as a million threads of varying thickness that tether us to who we are and where we belong in the world. There

are times when I've wanted to escape my own reality, when the little lies (and the big ones) felt necessary. I needed to create another person because the one I'd found when I looked in the metaphorical mirror was not a woman I admired. But the lies couldn't change the image. They simply blurred it for me and made it too clear to those to whom I lied.

I've come to rely on the old saw that honesty is the best policy. Honesty in all things, great and small. Leaving no truth unturned. In my endeavor to be brutally honest, I expected to be hit constantly with the consequences the little lies were meant to ameliorate. The reverse has proved true. In telling the truth, I began to accept myself as is, warts and all. In accepting myself, I started to become free to be myself. The freedom I'd experienced when I was younger to enjoy my own idiosyncrasies, face my own limitations, take on projects I was admittedly ill-equipped to handle, and learn from others seeped back into my life.

To my great surprise, telling the truth, always and in painstaking detail, made me comfortable in my own skin, attuned to my own needs and wants, firmly tethered to my past, and hopeful about a future that would bring genuine strength and insight.

Others became more accepting of me as well not only because I disappointed them less frequently, but because I let them see who I was, come to genuinely know me, even the bad things, the weaknesses. In admitting my faults, friends became able if not to help me, then to understand and so forgive more easily. Whoever said, "And the truth shall set you free" knew what he was talking about.

Your Friend,

Nevada

(from Seeking Enlightenment One Hat at a Time, Nevada Barr with permission)

If there are truths we cannot bear now that clearly implies that down the road we will be able to bear them... God expects us to be people who want to grow... One of the saddest sights I know is the Christian who has stopped growing, who has denied their spiritual birthright, who refuses to let the Spirit guide them into new awareness and truth.

...

Karl Barth, one of the great theological minds of the century, said the greatest truth he ever learned is this: "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." We crawl before we run. We walk before we skip. God delights in our growth at whatever stage we're at. ...

Having established that common foundation of faith we're ready to talk about growing into truth. The Spirit is our guide for that truth, a guide who is attuned to our abilities and moves us along at our own pace. ...

God and Jesus want us to grow up, mature, and develop into all truth. But the first stage of that journey of growing up is faith, individual faith in Jesus. The first and most significant stage is to say "I believe." When we say that we don't know what it means. We have no idea where that journey may take us. But the first step is crucial.

Jesus says: "I have more things to tell you, but you cannot bear them now. But when the Spirit of truth comes, He will lead you into all truth". That's a pretty clear statement about learning and needing to learn.

Where are you on this journey toward truthfulness? Has Nevada in her letter helped you to look at the place of truth in your life a little more? It is not a little lie to say nothing about someone that would put them down. It is discretion and kindness or in other words, if you don't have something good to say, don't say it; it is not discretion or kindness, however, when we refuse to speak the truth in love. We generally don't because we are afraid. Paul says: (Eph 4:15) *Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.* It becomes a matter of trust to grow. Listen to an alternate rendering of our text and today's Gospel: (John 16:12-15 - MsgB) *"I still have many things to tell you, but you can't handle them now. [13] But when the Friend comes, the Spirit of the Truth, He will take you by the hand and guide you into all the truth there is."* When we are truthful about ourselves, like Nevada suggests, we will be freer and more faithful to God. Amen