

GRACE AND TRUTH FREELY GIVEN



Scripture:

Psalm 111

¹Praise the LORD! I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation. ²Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them. ³Full of honor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever. ⁴He has gained renown by his wonderful deeds; the LORD is gracious and merciful. ⁵He provides food for those who fear him; he is ever mindful of his covenant. ⁶He has shown his people the power of his works, in giving them the heritage of the nations. ⁷The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy. ⁸They are established forever and ever, to be performed with faithfulness and uprightness. ⁹He sent redemption to his people; he has commanded his covenant forever. Holy and awesome is his name. ¹⁰The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever.

1st Kings 3:5-14

⁵At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask what I should give you." ⁶And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. ⁷And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. ⁸And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. ⁹Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?"

¹⁰It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. ¹¹God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, ¹²I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you. ¹³I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor all your life; no other king shall

compare with you. ¹⁴If you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your life.”

This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!



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I’ve been thinking a lot this past week about truth and wisdom and God’s grace. The DreamRiders are riding because they want to raise awareness about the truth of how the end of DACA will hurt not just Hispanic students but also Koreans and young people from other countries.

The Catholic Church got blasted by the truth that was revealed in Pennsylvania this week by the attorney general whose investigation for the past two years uncovered secret documents detailing the mishandling of abuse cases involving over one-thousand children by more than three-hundred priests. Absolutely outrageous!

WHAT IS TRUTH?

The truth sets us free. But what is truth? Webster’s dictionary said that something is true when it is in accordance with fact or reality. Other words like verifiable, accurate, and correct help to define truth.

There once was a woman shopping for truth. Let’s see what she found. (A skit about truth was performed by Nancy and Bill Morgan.)

KING SOLOMON

King Solomon, the son of King David, was smart enough to know he needed true wisdom to be a good leader. Truth leads to wisdom; wisdom leads to peace; peace leads to happiness.

Solomon was like the Warren Buffet of the Bible. Like the legendary billionaire, Solomon is best known for:

- (A) His wisdom, and
- (B) His wealth.

God was so pleased with Solomon's priorities that he showered him with not only crazy wisdom but also "riches and honor all [his] life." (First Kings 3:13)

Suddenly Solomon had very great wisdom, as vast as the sand on the seashore, so that [it] surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt. [...] People came from all the nations to hear the wisdom of Solomon. The most famous of these visitors was the Queen of Sheba, who was blown away by Solomon's big brain. Read about it in First Kings 10.

Sadly as time went by, Solomon’s wisdom went to his head so to speak and he became greedy, selfish, heady, and acted as if he was equal to God. After he successfully built the temple, he became overly confident. Solomon's downfall consisted of basically three stages:

- (1) Out of control polygamy,
- (2) Then succumbing to idolatry, and
- (3) Letting political problems pile up.

Sound familiar? History repeats itself in many ways if we don’t keep our focus on God.

GOD’S GRACE

Psalm 51 says: God desires truth in our inward being; God wants us to live lives of truth, and wisdom with an understanding that we are dependent upon God’s grace. Solomon’s downfall was when he forgot his wisdom was from God’s grace and not from his own brain. He fell off the path of righteousness into a snare of self-satisfaction.

Truth sets us free because we have nothing to hide when we tell the truth. Being truthful and honest leads people to trust us.

Albert Einstein said, “Whoever is careless with the truth in small matters cannot be trusted with important matters.”

Truth tellers are fruitful in the end because real success is based on truth, not lies. In her Ted Talk on The Power of Truth-telling, Sociologist Christine Carter shared the secret to

happiness: “When a person doesn’t feel like they have to lie about anything at all. People who are truly happy are those who live in total integrity with themselves. Those who live open, honest and transparent lives are the happiest because we human beings need the truth like we need food. And we are starving for the truth in this era!”

PRETENDING

She describes how the general population learns how to not be honest from an early age because we are worried about what others think of us and we pretend we are happy, when we are really anxious or angry.

All of this kind of pretending is a form of lying. Lying is the most stressful thing you can do to your brain and body. A polygraph test registers higher blood pressure, rapid heart rate and fast breathing when a person is lying because lying is stressful to the body.

LISTEN WITH COMPASSION

However, she doesn’t recommend answering every question that is asked of you with harsh truths. Such as: Does my butt look big? Does this dress make me look fat? Instead, she suggests you ask them how they are feeling. Do they feel pretty? What are they concerned about? And then listen with compassion.

YOUR INTEGRITY

When you speak your truth, people might respond with shock or anger, but when you explain your integrity is now your priority in life, then you will be sharing your real self with the world. Those who care about you will be supportive.

Overtime you will feel better and be psychologically healthier. False selves hold you back from experiencing deep joy. But it takes courage to be your authentic self in the world. The power in truth-telling can be scary powerful. We must swim upstream with truth against the current of lies that are flowing out of our White House. Be brave enough to call for others to be truthful, too.

Solomon lost his kingdom when he started worshipping idols and other Gods. Wealth went to his head.

**Successful author and motivational speaker Bo Bennet said,
“For every good reason there is to lie,
there is a better reason
to tell the truth.”**

So I want to leave you today with my favorite quote on truth. It gives me hope for a peaceful future despite the lack of truth we are struggling with today.

“I refuse to accept the view that humankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality. ... I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word.”
(Martin Luther King, Jr.)

Amen

Benediction:

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever more. Amen



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