

Make It Simple – Facing the Truth

(This message began with a short clip from the movie “A Few Good Men”. “I want the truth.... You can’t handle the truth”)

Everybody wants the truth. Lawyers flush out the truth. Scientists discover the truth. Politicians spin the truth. And religions all claim to know the truth. The concept of “truth” seems to be built into our DNA. Maybe it’s part of being made in the image of God. We begin early in life, as inquisitive, two-year-olds asking, “Why... Why... Why...” We want to know how things really are. We want to know the truth.

But as we get a little older, and learn more “stuff”, we eventually figure out that some of it doesn’t square with what we understand to be *truth*. Much of it is *untruth*. Sometimes people deliberately deceive us (I really want to go and see the movie “The Invention of Lying”). Sometimes we deceive ourselves. And sometimes our concept of truth changes as we experience new and different things. All of this makes “truth” a bit complicated.

Let’s try to **make it simple**. This has been our theme this month as we think carefully about how we use the gifts, talents and resources we have been given. Last week we asked ourselves “What’s enough” as we thought about how to follow Jesus. Today we are *facing the truth* about ourselves. The disciples discovered this truth while crossing a lake in the middle of a storm. Many of us have discovered the same thing while lying on a hospital bed or caring for a loved one who is sick or battling a disease like cancer. In times like these, there is one universal truth of our existence that cannot be avoided. I like to think of it in these words: **We can’t make it on our own.**

This truth is seen and experienced by every person living on the planet - namely because we all die. No one has any power to ultimately “makes it”. We all come to

an end. But this truth is also experienced in all kinds of other ways. Every failing, every broken relationship, every selfish act results from our attempts to *go it alone*. We stop communicating - we hold grudges – we distrust those different from us. We accumulate things for ourselves in an attempt to buy security. We neglect or even exploit those who are less fortunate. We try to find happiness and purpose in the temporary things we construct... or buy... or do. And for a short amount of time, it seems to work.

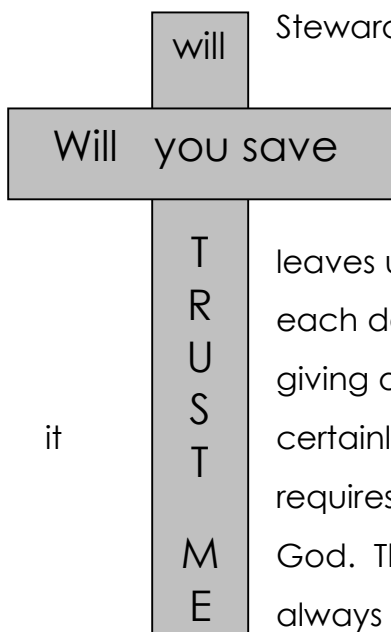
But when difficulties come, when storms toss us around, we are again forced to face the truth that **we can't make it on our own**. We cry out for help and the truth that we can't make it on our own spawns a question that we pose to any god who will listen, **“Will you save us?”** Will you save us from the storms of life, from worry, from the fear of death, from the truth of our own existence? We are people who cannot make it on our own and so we look to someone, or something and join with the disciples, “Doesn't anybody care that we are perishing?”

There are many people today who answer that question with a “NO”. No one cares, especially no one called “God” because God is a concept with no relevance. Studies on American religious life continue to show a growing number of people who are disillusioned with God, especially the way God is “dished out” by religious institutions. Some of those folks live in this community. Some may be here this morning and there are some days when I could be counted among them.

So what are we to say to the question of “Who will save us?” What truth do any of us have to offer in response? WE, only have a gift that has been revealed to us. It is a truth given to us by God's own self, who came into this world as flesh and blood to shout God's response to our fear that **we can't make it on our own**. The truth of God-in-the-flesh is simply this: **YOU ARE NOT ALONE**. You have never been alone. You will never be alone. I am with you always but not always in the way or the place you expect. The truth of God-with-us is truth established in trust – it is truth taken on faith. The question humanity shouts in the middle of life's storms (Will you save us?) is met with another question from the one who promises to never leave us: **WILL YOU TRUST ME?**

As we think about stewardship and what it means to live as redeemed people, as people loved and freed and forgiven, as people commanded to love in the very same way that Jesus loved us, we live at the intersection of these two questions. [Will you save me?](#) [Will you trust me?](#) The first truth will always be a part of life in this world of difficulty and death, of fire and storms, of brokenness and division. Like the disciples will never ever be able to stop crying out “Save us Jesus we are drowning, Save us Jesus we are drowning.”

But, because God loves the world to the point of death, we are never far away from the second truth, **“We are not alone. We can trust in God’s peace.”**



Stewardship is about living in the crosshairs of our need and God’s providence. It is living as people of the cross. It is not always clear cut or easy. [God asks for us to risk.](#) Risk getting in the boat with Jesus. Risk trusting the promise that God never leaves us on our own. What does that mean for how we go through each day? How does that truth affect our time, our talents, and the giving of our financial resources? Living within the tension of the cross certainly not easy, but it is the best way I know of to do what God requires: To DO justice, LOVE kindness, and WALK humbly with our God. The truth about us drives us to the truth about God and God is always ready to forgive, always ready to help, always ready to bless us with more than imagine. [Let us live in that truth and give according to the grace that has been shown to us.](#) Amen

The Children’s Message. (taken from “Make It Simple” www.elca.org)

One day, after giving people food, making sick people better, and telling people God’s truth, Jesus got into a boat. “Come on in,” he told his friends, the disciples. So the disciples climbed in the boat. Be careful; it’s kind of tippy. (Pretend to rock in a boat.)

Everyone in the boat? Great. The boat started off to the other side of the lake on gentle waves. Let's feel those gentle waves. (Rock with children, as though by waves.)

In the middle of the night a horrible storm came up! (Pause and look terrified.) Hold on another second—you don't mind, do you? (To musician) Could I get another Middle C? (After note sounds) Thanks.

Where was I? Oh yeah, the storm raged on. The disciples awakened to ferocious winds and water pouring in. They tried to bail out the water with their hands, with their arms, with their feet, with their heads! (Pretend to bail.)

Now Jesus was asleep in the back of the boat. And his friends hurried to wake him up because right in the middle of the storm, right in the **middle of the sea**, they needed tell him something. Know what that was? Jesus had given them a prayer. *"Help us Jesus, we are drowning. Help us Jesus, we are drowning."*

Jesus gave the disciples a prayer and they prayed it louder and louder. (Chant together, at Middle C pitch.) *Help us Jesus, we are drowning. Help us Jesus, we are drowning.*

Jesus woke up - reached out his arms and shouted above the storm, "Peace. Be still." And the storm stopped. No more waves, no more wind. (Stop moving.)

Then Jesus looked at the storm **inside** the boat. He looked at the disciples' scared eyes, he looked at the way they were all wet, he looked at the way their hands gripped the sides of the boat. And Jesus gave them another song in the **middle of the sea**. *"Peace, be still. Peace, be still."*

Jesus told them. "When we get out of the boat on the other side, we'll keep doing what we do. We'll feed people and heal people and help people. And we'll give something else after this trip. We'll give them Middle Sea for their storms." *Help us Jesus, we are drowning. Peace, be still. Help us Jesus, we are drowning. Peace, be still.*

You know, some people say that the church is like a boat. (Look up and around your worship space.) Some churches have a ceiling shaped like an upside down ark. We travel the seas in this boat. We journey with Jesus here. We go through some big storms outside of this boat and even sometimes inside this boat. And just like he promised, Jesus gives us Middle Sea here. (Chant the prayer, now inviting everyone in the congregation) *Help us Jesus, we are drowning. Peace, be still. Amen!*