

Pentecost 4+

Truth Must Be Lived

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Isaiah 66:10-16, Psalm 66, Galatians 6, Luke 10:1-20

Last week, Father Isaac offered a challenge. In light of the recent Supreme Court decision in regard to Roe vs Wade he said, “As Christians embrace the truth of human life, we must also embrace the cost of this truth, and make sure we are the ones to pay it.” In this sense, we must respond to the responsibility before us to translate our defense of unborn children into ways of caring for both the children and the mothers.

As Fr Isaac said, “We must seek policy and structures in society that support women, children and families of all shapes and sizes; but most importantly, right now, we must weep with those who weep, cheer with those who cheer, and help those who need help.” Our faith must be embodied.

We know from the Gospels that truth is a person. The person of Jesus Christ. Truth must be lived. Jesus lives the truth of His Father in word and deed. He reveals the Father perfectly. In beholding Jesus, we behold the Father. As disciples, we are invited into this pattern of image bearing. Truth telling for us is not simply speech or protest, it must be lived in ways that bear witness to our Lord.

In our readings today, we see two aspects of embodied faith. Our Gospel reading looks outward to world beyond the community. Jesus says that He is sending them out as sheep among wolves. This anticipates the call of the disciples in Acts to preach and live the Gospel in a world that is often unwelcoming. Disciples are to love those who persecute them. In Acts, disciples will be stoned, beheaded, beaten, imprisoned, and despised. Yet, the Good News of Jesus Christ will spread, communities of faith will be planted, and a people who bear witness to the love of God will grow.

Our second lesson focuses upon life within the community. It is the end of a longer argument in Galatians about faith expressing itself through love. Today we’ll pause over this Galatians passage.

In Galatians Six, our passage begins by highlighting our responsibility to one another. Throughout Paul’s letter, he focuses on a variety of ways we support and care for one another. In today’s passage, he starts out by focusing on our responsibility to gently restore those caught in transgression.

“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. <sup>2</sup> Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”<sup>1</sup> Just as Christ bore our sins on the cross, we bear one

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<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ga 6:1–2.

another's burdens. We are not carrying their sin on us as Jesus did, but we are seeking to help restore those who have fallen or walked away to communion with God and with the body.

Paul holds this community commitment in tension with our personal responsibility. We seek to restore those who fall but we also seek to be responsible for our own walk of faith. This is a great picture of personhood. A person is not an isolated individual. We are bound up with others in a series of relations. And yet, this does not mean that we lose sight of our own responsibility before God. Each of us is growing up into Christ and His call to us. At the same time, we are growing up in a body of relations with other people. We are called to live out both aspects of responsibility.

Now Paul continues his argument. Verse 10 highlights the center of his point. "So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith."<sup>2</sup> Our faith will take shape in the way we treat the community of faith as well as those beyond the community of faith. At this beginning of this passage in verse six, Paul emphasizes that our commitment to the community begins with a commitment to provide for those who teach the Gospel.

In verse six he writes, "Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches."<sup>3</sup> Paul is exhorting the Galatians to take care of their Gospel teachers financially as part of their responsibility to the household of faith. Why is this considered so important? He wants to protect them from false teachers who may sound good but lead them down a dangerous road.

His argument comes more clearly into view in verses 12 and 13,

<sup>12</sup> "It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcised, and only in order that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. <sup>13</sup> For even those who are circumcised do not themselves keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh."<sup>4</sup>

Paul explains that there are others who would lead the community astray by adding circumcision as an essential part of salvation. They have left the inner logic of the cross. The Cross of Christ stands at the heart of our faith. In the cross we behold the goodness of God who pours out His life in love. We behold truth made flesh. This unrestrained love in the cross is transforming and will transform every aspect of this creation.

In every age, false teachers diminish the Gospel, and lead people away from the goodness of God. Some teachers live only for their stomach. Even in Paul's day, some teachers were building up reputation and wealth through their preaching. False teachers end up manipulating their

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<sup>2</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ga 6:10.

<sup>3</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ga 6:6.

<sup>4</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ga 6:12–13.

people, damaging their people. As a result, many people close their hearts to the community of faith. How many people even in our own community have abandoned church because they were wounded by leaders within the church?

In light of this danger of false teachers, Paul exhorts the body to preserve truth within the community by supporting those who speak and live the truth of Jesus Christ. As Paul demonstrates in his own life, the truth of the Gospel must be lived out in our words and deeds. In verse 14, we are reminded that Paul's message is always rooted in the cross of Christ. "Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."<sup>5</sup> A moment ago I mentioned the inner logic of the cross. What is it about the cross of Christ? Consider how it changed Paul.

Before his encounter on the road to Damascus, Paul's zeal for the Lord led him to oversee the persecution and killing of Christians. The person of Jesus and the cross of Christ was offense to Paul. His false understanding of God was leading to the destruction of others. For him, truth became a weapon that damaged the world around him. The same is true today. For many people on the right and the left, truth has become a weapon that damages and destroys others.

Then on the road to Damascus, Paul had an encounter with the Triune God. This encounter radically changed him. From that moment on, his whole identity was bound to the cross of Christ.

In all his letters, Paul's make it known this his identity is bound up with the cross of Christ. Through his writings, we get an image of how the cross reveals the love of the Triune God. In the cross, Jesus reveals to us the love of the Father. He also reveals to us the love between Father and the Son. In His death, the Son pours out his life to the Father without restraint, and in the resurrection the Father pours out His life in raising the Son without restraint. This unrestrained love between Father and Son is fully made manifest by the Holy Spirit of love. This in the Triune God we see something of the cross: an unrestrained love that flows between Father, Son, and Spirit. This love is perfect and complete. It was before creation, is now, and will always be.

To reveal this kind of love in a sin-filled world, is to enter into the sin and suffering of this world in the cross. Jesus comes to cleanse us our sin and restore us to the Father, to the communion of love. In the cross, the unrestrained love of God is made manifest.

In our humans loves, we are incomplete and often fail to love rightly or fully. We are selfish even in our marriages and friendships. It is only through the cross of Christ that we can be transformed and grow into a love that is patient and kind; a love that does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. It is only in and through the cross of

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<sup>5</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ga 6:14.

Christ that we can know and participate in a love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. A love never ends.<sup>6</sup>

In Galatians, Paul is on guard against anyone or any teaching that will move the people away from the goodness of God in the cross of Christ. He sees how it is dividing Jews and Gentiles to the point that they will not even share a meal together.

In our passion for truth, we must cling to the cross and pray that the love Christ might grow up in us. As we consider the complex and divisive issues that threaten to split our culture, we must ask, “What does the inner logic of the cross look like in this situation?” Or “How do I bear witness to Christ and His unrestrained love while also standing against patterns of death or perversion?” How do I care for the unwed mother, for the fatherless child, for the working poor, for those who have been forgotten at the very margins of society?

How do we prepare to answer these questions? How do we prepare to act upon these answers? By beholding the love of God in Christ. Our response to the evils of the age begins in prayer. Jesus says, “Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”<sup>7</sup> We begin by seeking the face of God in Christ. We begin in worship and contemplation. We ourselves must be changed by God’s love.

Even as we cultivate a pattern of seeking the Lord in our own lives, we seek Him together in worship. We behold the outpouring of His life as we gather, hear His Word, and receive the gift of His life poured out for us in the sacrament of Bread and Wine.

We are contemplating and receiving His life poured out for the life of the world. As we leave this place, we ourselves are being poured out for this life of the world. Let us go forth in and through His love, seeking to bear witness in word and deed.

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<sup>6</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Co 13:4–8.

<sup>7</sup> *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Lk 10:2.