

For it is truth, however painful, however embarrassing, that generates healing, real people and intimacy. True friends are not lost by truth, but saved. Joshua 13:14-32; Psalm 40, 54; Luke 7:1-17

## Saturday, May 17

Luke 7:18-35 *And when the men had come to him, they said, “John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, ‘Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?’”* (v.20)

During the past week we have looked at some of the hard sayings of Jesus, and we have seen that we do “look for another,” an easier way. Is Jesus the Messiah, the one who was to come, or should we look for another?

Jesus does not answer John’s disciples outright, but gives them the evidence which was to identify the Christ: “The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them.”

With the resurrection, God put His final stamp of authenticity on Jesus. However, as Jesus predicted, “If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead” (Luke 16:31).

“And a voice from the cloud said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him’” (Matthew 17:5). God has done all that He can to show His love for us. Now it is up to us to “listen to him.”

Joshua 14:1-15; Psalm 55; Colossians 3:12-17

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## Good News Daily

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## Sunday, May 11

Matthew 7:15-29 *“Thus you will know them by their fruits.”* (v.20 RSV)

What does Jesus mean by human fruits? Does he mean concertos and cathedrals and good deeds, things produced by doing? Or is fruit produced simply by being who we are?

Fruit is a vehicle for seeds which in turn produce fruit. In the Parable of the Sower, the seed is the word of God. God spoke and created the heavens and the earth. The fruit of God’s seed is creation. “In the beginning was the Word....” The fruit of God’s Word is Jesus.

There is a sense in which our words are also seeds which germinate in the soil of the hearer where they bear fruit. Words of affirmation nourish, bringing glory to the Creator. Seeds of judgment perpetuate judgment. Compassion heals. Condemnation cripples. Truth generates light; lies, darkness. Jesus said, “I tell you, on the day of judgment men will render account for every careless word they utter; for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matthew 12:36-37).

What kind of tree are you? Is the fruit of your seed nourishing, healing—light illuminating the Father? Or do your words poison, cripple, and blind? The choice is yours.

Joshua 4:19-24, 5:1-9; Psalms 63, 98; 1 Peter 5:1-11

## Monday, May 12

Luke 6:1-11 *And Jesus said to them, “I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm...”* (v.9)

The pastor had a throat spasm which he tried to suppress. In my purse were cough drops. In my arms my precious grandson. Around me the bastion of church people seemingly frozen in their pews. I sat riveted by indecision. If I disrupted the service, I would be seen as odd, a show-off.

He coughed again. During the psalm we moved down the central aisle, under the watchful eye of the establishment, and I handed him the cough drop box. By avoiding eye contact, I washed involvement from my hands. Perhaps a time warp covered our movement.

“And Jesus said to them, ‘I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm...’” “But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.”

I sometimes wonder if Jesus changed anything in us. How often do we fail to show love simply because of what others might think? “If God is for us, who is against us?” (Romans 8:31). It is God who is to be feared, not people. It is Love that demands our worship, not decorum.

Joshua 10:16-27; Psalms 41, 52; Colossians 1:1-14

## Tuesday, May 13

Luke 6:12-26 *"Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh."* (v.21b)

The Beatitudes are a font of divine paradox. Is Jesus saying that life's apparent inequities will be addressed and corrected in heaven? Or is he saying that laughter is a consequence of tears, tears a prerequisite for laughter? Jesus tells us to weep, that we may laugh.

And do we encourage each other's tears? Little boys are told that boys don't cry. Girls are not stigmatized for their tears, but neither are their tears encouraged. Rather, parents do everything in their power to stop the tears, to hide their own tears, to deny sadness. And so, we grow apart from our emotions, uncomfortable with them, alienated from self, a house divided.

When a dear friend died, I mourned her passing; I grieved. I visited her remains, sat with "her," prayed by her, finding consolation in her remembered presence and the beauty and solitude of the cemetery. One day as I sat with her, I felt an altogether new sensation in my gut, a sensation of fullness, as from a satisfying meal, but with no discomfort. The sensation was that of pure joy. Where had it come from? It was the consequence of my tears. "Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh."

Joshua 10:29-43; Psalm 45; Colossians 1:15-23

## Wednesday, May 14

Luke 6:27-38 *"From anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you...."* (v.29)

But, Lord, what will be left for me! If I do that, I will soon become poor!

Well, God gives, and is He poor? Does He not give and give, holding nothing back for Himself? Yet "all that is in the heavens and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all" (1 Chronicles 29:11).

"Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (Luke 6:20). Consolation prize or consequence? Laughter contingent upon tears? Wealth a consequence of poverty?

Hannah had nothing, but she gave what she did not have to the Lord. "O Lord of hosts, if thou...wilt give to thy maid-servant a son, then I will give him to the Lord... And the Lord remembered her; and in due time, Hannah conceived and bore a son...," then "three sons and two daughters" (1 Samuel 1:11, 19-20; 2:21). She stepped out in faith and was richly blessed.

"Thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing" (Malachi 3:10).

The Bible is a timeless classic because God's word is good.

Joshua 11:1-23; Psalm 119:49-72; Colossians 1:24—2:7

## Thursday, May 15

Luke 6:39-49 *"A disciple is not above his teacher, but every one when he is fully taught will be like his teacher."* (v.40)

For nearly two thousand years, the church has been following Jesus, studying Holy Scripture, trying to bring God's kingdom to earth. How successful has it been? Why are there not more Christians? Why does war still rage on the planet?

Jesus says, "Every one when he is fully taught will be like his teacher." But, what was our teacher Jesus like? He had neither home, nor spouse, nor grandchildren. What privacy he had he stole by rising before anyone else. He had no job, no security, no status, being servant of all, and before middle age, he was painfully executed as a criminal. Who would choose to be like that?

What about us? How often are we guilty of snacking on the Bread of Life, but looking elsewhere for palatable nourishment? We prize comfort instead of poverty, self-justification in place of meekness, "right-ness" above mercy, law over love, independence and not trust, numbness rather than pain and tears, the approval of others above truth. And the kingdom eludes us. The peace which passes understanding is just not there.

The way of the teacher is inconvenient, even sacrificial, but truly learning from him looks to mercy, love, trust—and fulfilling God's purposes in the world. What could be more significant than that?

Joshua 13:1-13; Psalm 50; Colossians 2:8-23

## Friday, May 16

Colossians 3:1-11 *"Do not lie to one another..."* (v.9)

I do not lie. In fact, I pride myself on the fact. I grew up on Pinocchio and fear exposure—a telltale nose, or some such embarrassment. But do I tell the truth? Is it the same thing?

I recently wrote an estranged friend about the destructive force of her judgments. I received a prompt and unexpected reply in which she asked my forgiveness for the hurt she had caused me. The response to a letter of difficult truth was healing!

As I thought back to the initial rupture, the cause had been an incident in which I had been less than truthful. From fear of the consequences of the exact truth, I had told but a portion, and that half-truth had cost me my friendship.

While I pride myself on not lying (from fear), I am afraid also of the truth. Truth can confront. Truth can hurt feelings. Truth can alienate. And so, from fear of isolation, I often keep the truth quiet. And intimacy eludes.