

Hard Truths

Matthew 10:24-39

June 21, 2020

As a child, I believed that Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, and the Tooth Fairy were real. I believed that being an adult would be the best thing in the world because I could stay up as late as I wanted without other grown-ups telling me what to do. I wouldn't have to go to school or have homework. I could drive a car, and I could do whatever I wanted whenever I wanted. I believed and planned on eating McDonalds and pizza every meal of every day for the rest of my life. In short, I believed being an adult would be a dream come true, and I just couldn't wait to be one. Then, I grew up, and the hard truths about adulthood hit me. Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, the Tooth Fairy, none of them were ever real. Being an adult is not all it's chalked up to be. As an adult, I still have a bedtime, even if it is later than it was as a child. Realizing my metabolism has slowed down (and that there are better places to get a burger than McDonalds), I recognize I cannot eat like a pig as I had originally hoped. On top of that, between taxes, bills, mortgages, and household chores without any allowance, I came to realize that adulthood isn't the dream I imagined it being as a child. Then again, I'm not the only one here who has had to face hard truths in their lifetime.

We as humans like to believe that our friends, family members, and pets will always be with us. However, we all must face the hard truth at some point that all life is finite, even our own. Modern medicine has lulled us into thinking that our doctors and nurses can combat nearly any illness or disorder with almost perfect success rates, but the hard truth is that nature still holds the upper hand and that there are viruses our medical knowledge cannot fight or prevent with any certainty. Our country prides itself on being a land of freedom and equality, but the hard truth is that those freedoms are hindered for many by a discriminatory system that favors wealthy, White, straight, Christian males or some combination therein. Many Christians like to believe that Jesus was White, but the truth dictates that he was Arab. These and more are hard truths that we as humans deny, conceal, and fight tooth and nail to disprove, even to ourselves. However, we all must face and come to terms with the truth eventually.

Jesus affirms this hard truth about our need to face hard truths in the reading today, saying, "for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known." Never have I told a lie, at least to my recollection, that did not get revealed as its being a half-truth or a whole lie eventually. A prime example happened when I was in high school. The youth group often went to Buffalo Wild Wings for fellowship and planning of the mission trip, Youth Sunday, and other trips. One week, we were going there to plan Youth Sunday, and my mom gave me money to pay for my dinner. However, when it came time to pay the bills, the youth pastor insisted on paying for all of us. I didn't tell my mom that's what happened and I kept the \$20 she had given me for the next time we went. She found out that I didn't pay for my dinner and had not given her the money back. The look of disappointment on her face is something that still haunts me. Still, this isn't an experience I alone have had.

Looking to our current situation in our nation, this is a hard truth we are experiencing right now. For so long, amidst its being painted as the ideal nation to live in, our country has

been plagued with the sickness of discrimination, and now, especially in the last few years, that truth, one we have rather left covered up and ignored, has been uncovered, refusing to be ignored any longer. This hard truth our nation on the whole has tried to keep in the shadows for so long is now in the limelight, unable to be ignored any longer. It's a hard truth but the truth nonetheless. Therefore, I'm left to wonder, why would we rather hide the truth than face it and address it?

The answer: fear. We are afraid of the truth, afraid to admit our imperfections for what that might do to our image, afraid of the stigma that will be attached to us and those we love if the truth gets out. This is the same fear the disciples faced in today's reading. Jesus begins with saying, "The student is not above the teacher, nor the slave above his master." In other words, there is a very real possibility that they would receive the same reaction as and be persecuted like Jesus would be later on. They carried with them a truth that differed from what others knew and believed, and spreading the gospel news, doing as Christ commands, drawing near to those that others refuse to show compassion, such actions are tantamount to heresy. The disciples know this, and the truth makes them fearful. However, even in light of this hard truth, that they were potentially going to be sent out and not return, Christ tells them to proclaim his name from the rooftops and to shout it out loud. Christ encourages them to not be timid about this charge they are being given because, as he puts it, "Do not fear those who can kill the body but not the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both the body and the soul in Hell." In other words, what the humans might do to them for their serving God is nothing in comparison to the awesome power of God. Plus, Jesus reassures them that God is so intimately involved in humanity that he "knows the number of hairs on our heads" and that they are deeply valued by God. In short, they are being charged with a noble task of spreading the truth, hard as it might be for people to hear, of proclaiming Jesus' name far and wide, a charge that will be returned tenfold in the next life when Jesus proclaims our name before the Father.

In the end, admitting to the truth is not always easy. Being open and honest about our imperfections and our therein need for help doesn't come easy to a people that pride themselves on looking and being self-sufficient. To admit that we are vulnerable, that we are not "perfect," admitting to the fact that we hurt, is a scary thing. Nonetheless, this passage reassures us that God is with us amidst our fears. Even if we are not perfect, we are nonetheless "perfectly made in God's image" as Children of God and are called to live as such. This means admitting the hard truths of the existence of racism, sexism, ageism, White Privilege, etc. How do we do this? We do that, as Denise Thorpe writes, by "claiming with body and action that when church, state, nation, or any other authority fails to respect the glory of God's creation in every person, loyalty to that authority must be rebuffed." In other words, we remain open and honest, even if that means standing against the powers that be so that the Love of God may be known and that all God's children are treating each other as brothers and sisters, as equals. As the saying goes, "the truth will set you free." As hard as it might be to accept, living in truth, living a life of honesty, sounds much better than living a life of falsehoods, living a lie. Therefore, something we all must ask ourselves, now more than ever, is what truths we have been denying ourselves, and how is God leading us into the light of truth?