

BLAINE MEMORIAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
LENTEN SERIES 2016

FEARLESS: The Courage to Question

Worship Service • March 6, 2016

Fearless Search for the Truth

• Introduction: Food for Thought •

Power does not corrupt. Fear corrupts... perhaps the fear of a loss of power. - John Steinbeck

Consciously or not, we are all on a quest for answers, trying to learn the lessons of life. We grapple with fear and guilt. We search for meaning, love, and power. We try to understand fear, loss, and time. We seek to discover who we are and how we can become truly happy.

- Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

Men occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of them pick themselves up and hurry off as if nothing ever happened.

- Sir Winston Churchill

The opposite of a correct statement is a false statement. But the opposite of a profound truth may well be another profound truth.

- Niels Bohr

I never did give them hell. I just told the truth, and they thought it was hell.

- Harry S Truman

All great truths begin as blasphemies.

- George Bernard Shaw

There are no whole truths; all truths are half- truths. It is trying to treat them as whole truths that plays the devil.

- Alfred North Whitehead

• The Word of God •

¹ As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. ² His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' ³ Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. ⁴ We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.' ⁶ When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, ⁷ saying to him, 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. ⁸ The neighbours and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, 'Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?' ⁹ Some were saying, 'It is he.' Others were saying, 'No, but it is someone like him.' He kept saying, 'I am the man.' ¹⁰ But they kept asking him, 'Then how were your eyes opened?' ¹¹ He answered, 'The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, "Go to Siloam and wash." Then I went and washed and received my sight.' ¹² They said to him, 'Where is he?' He said, 'I do not know.' ¹³ They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. ¹⁴ Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. ¹⁵ Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, 'He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.' ¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, 'This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath.' But others said, 'How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?' And they were divided. ¹⁷ So they said again to the blind man, 'What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened.' He said, 'He is a prophet.' ¹⁸ The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight ¹⁹ and asked them, 'Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?' ²⁰ His parents answered, 'We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; ²¹ but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.' ²² His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. ²³ Therefore his parents said, 'He is of age; ask him.' ²⁴ So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, 'Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner.' ²⁵ He answered, 'I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.' ²⁶ They said to him, 'What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?' ²⁷ He answered them, 'I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?' ²⁸ Then they reviled him, saying, 'You are his

disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. 29 We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.' 30 The man answered, 'Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. 31 We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. 32 Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. 33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.' 34 They answered him, 'You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?' And they drove him out. 35 Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' 36 He answered, 'And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.' 37 Jesus said to him, 'You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.' 38 He said, 'Lord, I believe.' And he worshipped him. 39 Jesus said, 'I came into this world for judgement so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.' 40 Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, 'Surely we are not blind, are we?' 41 Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, "We see", your sin remains.'

• Reflection Questions from Sermon •

- How did the worship bulletin cover "grab you"? What do you think about each of the images? What do they say to you? How about the opening quotes on the front of this insert? Talk about how these leapt out on you, and what each of the terms means for you.
- Can you think of some examples that you have heard of, or that you know from your life, of people who are so dogmatic about their truths, values, beliefs - that they are unable to truly evaluate - or even listen to or consider - the values, beliefs or truths of others? Does this stance keep others at a distance from these persons? or prevent the building of personal relationships? Is there anything in your own lives that you might worry could become like this?
- What does our faith have to say about such a dynamic? If we understand ourselves as seeing truth only "dimly" - rather than as "face to face"... what does that mean for us if we wish to deepen our understanding of the truth, and ultimately about seeing the face of God more fully and completely in our lives? Are there any limitations to such a search?

• Notes from the Sermon - Rev. Derek Nakano •

please read this section after hearing today's sermon

- When it comes to “truth” - it is something all would say that they seek after, and seek to live by. But it is important that we also acknowledge that as human beings we are limited by both our capacity to understand, but also our human frailty and the limits we put on how we might see and discern the truth in others, and in the world.
- The Bible passage today reminds us that while we seek after the truth, often times our own “truths,” preconceived ideas and values, and power and influence we have to protect, religious tenets we believe are incontrovertible and unquestionable, sometimes at all costs - keeps us from seeing or evaluating another’s perception of the truth, and what it means to them, and what it might mean for us.
- In evaluating the statements/beliefs of others, it is important that we first seek clarity about where we are standing, and our own point of view, and take stock of whether these factors have created a self-imposed limitation that would keep us from evaluating fully and completely the truth statements from others. Is it possible to be open, and still “dogmatic”?
- While we might come to believe that we have some “untouchable” truths/beliefs/values/faith stances in our lives, it will be important for us to place even these, under scrutiny and deep questioning. Is it that...“they are because they are” or “they are because we have made them out to be so”? - making them unquestionable, and impenetrable?