

13th Pentecost
August 22, 2025 Sermon

We are so steeped in our physicality that sometimes we do not want to or even are unable to fathom the reality that this also includes our spiritual nature. God is Spirit and Truth. We are to worship in spirit and truth. But we limit ourselves to the five senses. We have a name for this. We have been polluted with materialism. You see it with Solomon who, on the one hand, says that God cannot be contained, but then turns right around and builds a temple to 'house' God.

If we follow the mantra of our age, not believing in spiritual things, and just think of God as One who will take care of our needs and, if properly applied, help us have a better life, society, fellowship, etc., then, as materialists, it may come to pass that the Marxist will one day call us comrade. With this kind of thinking, is it any wonder that so many have abandoned the faith as some kind of antique crutch that may have served in the past, but is no longer useful in our day. The Lord is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Scripture is telling us that we fight not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, forces of darkness, rulers and authorities. It is the battle of this age. In this age, we believe what we are told, whether or not it is true. Our so-called education is rife with denial of the reality of the Lord God in creation. People believe evolution, hook, line, and sinker, but do not believe in the God who transcends all things and who created all things. We have been pommelled all day long with reasons not to believe the truth, but turn right around and buy into the lies of our age.

Our faith begins with trusting, loving, and fearing the Lord above all things. We need to be armed to fight the battle of this age. First we need to stand firm. You have been baptized into the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The promise of God is more sure than anything your five senses can register. He has accomplished all that is needed for your salvation. Yes, you are a physical being, but you are also a spiritual being. The battle rages around us and perhaps, finally, people of faith are being awaked to see the reality of what is happening around us. What is truth? For every situation, that should be your first question. Not my truth, your truth, constantly seeking, but the literal truth. The word of God is truth.

The Lord God Almighty is the Creator of heaven and earth. This is the place where we can stand firm. "I don't believe that," some will say. Fine. But, even the fallen angels believe, and they shudder. People will believe what they want, but will you believe what is true? The truth must gird you. If you are not standing firm in the truth, the illusion of this age will lead you astray. We do need to read, consume, be surrounded by the truth of God's word. The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

The illustration that Paul gives us speaks timelessly of the pitfalls and problems that have plagued every person of faith all along. We are to be guarded, forthright, stalwart, and prepared to meet what is not true with what is true. Of course it will not be popular, politically correct, or conform to this world. It is the truth which stands in the face of all that is not true. It is not one proposition versus another – as if God's word can be weighed against the untruth of this age – but is that which was, is, and always will be true.

The truth of Covid I do not know. I hear so many different things, but one thing I do know is that our Lord and Savior saw this coming. He knows what is happening. What are we to do? Prayers and supplications. This is what we are told to do. "Lord, help me" on the one hand and "Lord what would you have me do" on the other. I am not my own person, but I was purchased, redeemed, on the cross when Jesus gave His life as a hostage for my life. I do not

belong to myself, but to the One who created, redeemed, restored, and empowers me to be His amidst a world that is constantly telling me that I need to be my own person. I am not and I know that. Truth tells me this. I am reminded many times throughout the day. So are you. Either we will live pretending we are our own, or else we will live the life that was offered us in the promise of our baptism.

Jesus speaks plainly – but in our sinful world these seem almost unacceptable words – when He tells us to take Him in. Take it all. It really is all or nothing. Take the Lord in and live because of Jesus. Apart from Jesus is pretense, while in Jesus is life itself. There is nothing half way about this. Jesus asks, “Does this offend you?” In the pretense of this world, “Yes, it does.” There’s the rub. I hear the words and I do not like them. We hear words from Jesus and we are tempted to soften them, deflect from them and go another way. Resist the temptation. God has the final word. We are to fear, trust, and love the Lord above all things; most especially above our excuses and internal defenses. Love means love. He who first loved us invites us into something which is foreign in our world. The Father will grant only those who will learn to love as we have been loved into His eternal kingdom. This is not punitive, but reality. Who wants to be coupled with another, loving them, while they, in return, take, but do not love? Many stories are loaded with this kind of unhealthy relationship. If Hollywood gets it, why don’t we?

If I am honest with Jesus, there are many times when He asks me to do something and I am filled with excuses as long as your arm as to why I could not, should not, do not want to do what I am being asked. “Do you also wish to go away?” Ah, how this world is filled with wishful thinking. You and I have more wishful thinking than we may want to admit.

If the Lord loves me, He will . . . Let us cut to the chase. God loves you. That’s the truth. There is no condition on His part, only ours. We are conditional in returning the love. For God so loved us that He gave His only begotten Son. No conditions here, only love. Return to the Lord and confess where you are conditional. Yes, I know things happen that you do not like. Do you suppose God stops loving because someone rejects Him? Our Lord is a persistent lover of us. He will pursue us to the very end. But, it must be that His will is done. Having lived our will, we know what a mess it has made of this world.

Come to the place where the stark truth amidst all the noise and confusion of this age is revealed. “Lord, where can we go, You have the words of eternal life.” This is most certainly true. We may wander for awhile and consume the pig-slop of this age, but our souls are constantly being reminded that we do not need to live this way. Jesus is the Holy One of God. “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away our sin.” He has come in the love of the Father to lead us out of this muddled world to see things through His eyes. He feeds us the heavenly food. He nurtures our souls and offers to lead us all the days of our lives.

Standing firm in the Lord, know that He shines His light upon us. He bestows His favor upon the upright. He grants joy to those who trust in Him. In weakness, He conquered sin. With strength, He bestows His goodness through mercy and grace. In all things, he brings them together for good for those who love Him.

Where else would we go? One day in the presence of the Lord is better than a thousand days in any other place. Our strength is in the One who made the heavens and the earth. He has called us by faith to be present with Him forever. Just as the Father sent the Son, and so we have true life, so also, the Father sends us into a confused world that believes the lies, but cannot comprehend the truth. The Lord sends you as His witness, shining His light through you so that those who do not see may see His light shining in You. Go forth in the truth of Christ and be His witness now and forever. Amen.