

Children – 5/24/09

Take a ruler, a yardstick or tape measure and ask the children what these are used for. Name some examples of their use (straight edge, tailoring, carpentry, framing a picture, placing furniture in a room, etc.). These tools help us measure physical things.

How do your parents tell if you have been naughty or nice? (listen to what they say, help them around the house, play well with others).

How do you think God measures whether we love Him or not? (Obey His commandments, listen to our parents, do good to others, follow Jesus).

Jesus is the best ruler God has to measure our love of Him. If we act like Jesus then we will please God. Jesus gave His all to obey His Father. That's the best measure there is.

Thy Word is Truth 7 Easter B

Discerning the truth is a human specialty. No other animal does that as well as people can. It is a task for parents, law enforcement, politicians, priests and prophets; every attempt at learning the truth concerning someone or some subject must be intentional. It is an inescapable part of our relationships with others. Finding the truth is also a spiritual endeavor. I can know the facts about someone or some subject but never know the complete truth. The gift of intuition – the “soul hunches” – often gets used in determining truth. Fortunately God gives us a greater gift than our hunches – His holy word.

One leg of our journey in finding truth is to recognize God’s will in a given situation, by His word and Spirit. The other leg of our spiritual journey is letting the truth transform us. I can know the facts about God, know His word, and pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, but if the truth does not transform me into Christ’s likeness then the truth is useless. Preaching God’s word is not mere information but a transformed people whose lives are being shaped on the anvil of God’s word.

Jesus gave us a summary of the Law and the Prophets as a simple yet powerful guide to the truth. To “love God and my neighbor” is the standard by which we measure the truth. Even a small child can follow that. A ruler measures distance or depth. (Pull out a ruler and measure an object). A ruler is how we can determine the physical dimensions in which we live. The scripture is a type of ruler that determines the spiritual dimension. Holy Scripture teaches us that to love God, we must obey His commandments. When we obey His commandments, they transform us and make us more God-like. The analogy is self-evident, but the results are not. The “Golden Rule” must get inside our minds and hearts, and change us from within.

Jesus uses the word “sanctify” in His prayer before His Ascension to the Father. He prays that the Father will cause those given to Him to become holy – like God. A holy man or woman is not a crazy person. They are not people who speak a different language from you and I. Their life is lived by a higher standard or measurement of character.

There is an ancient Native American story of how a tribe determined whether its member was lying or telling the truth. The member involved would stand before a tribal elder. In the elder’s hand would be a glowing red hot blade. The member would be told to stick out their tongue at the elder. The elder then would place the blade on the tongue. It was believed that if the member was speaking truth then the tongue would be moist and merely hiss from the touch of the hot blade. The tongue of the liar would be dry and of course stick to the blade and be

burned. Along the same lines modern lie detectors read electrical impulses on the surface of the skin.

Remember the days when a person's word was his or her bond? One could count on people to live up to what they said. Words are not the only ruler to measure what is in a person's heart, but is often the only one we can use without more knowledge. For this reason we may question and probe to find out the truth. We may interview others who have knowledge of a situation that we do not.

The remaining apostles discerned how they might know which of the two in their midst would replace Judas after his loss. They wisely decided that the witness to the resurrection would be the disciple who had lived among them throughout Jesus' ministry. Twelve was the number of the tribes of Israel. Twelve was the original number of disciples called by Jesus. After they used this standard of being an eye witness, they prayed for discernment as to which one, either Joseph or Matthias would complete the twelve. Then they performed a traditional practice of "casting lots," trusting that God would direct the deciding stone to the right disciple and it went to Matthias.

How do we trust God to show us truth? The eleven of us on vestry have employed a way of seeking and discerning the truth on any given decision. We seek knowledge when there is not enough. Seeking counsel, using questions such as, "Is this for the good of all concerned?" or "How does this matter confess that Jesus Christ is Lord?" We pray that God will show us the way we should go. The Proverbs from the third chapter, verses 3-4 state, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not seek your own understanding. Acknowledge Him in all your ways and He will direct your path."

What a wonderful gift it is that God did not leave us without a compass, not knowing how to find our way! He gives us all the details we need to know the truth. We apply the truth of His word to our hearts and minds. We pray and call on God to fill us with His Spirit that directs our feet to the road we should take. What's more, Jesus our Lord prayed for our protection as we go about deciding what to do in any given situation. "Your word O' Lord is a lamp to my feet and light to my path" Psalm 119:105. May God's word light our way, and lead us to paths of righteousness for His sake. Amen.