

Truth Is to Be Experienced

When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, “Put out into deep water and let down your nets for a catch.”—Luke 5:4

When Christ teaches us something about Himself, He implements it into our lives through experience.

As the crowds gathered around, Jesus chose to board Peter's boat and teach the people from there. **All day long Peter sat in the boat listening to Jesus teach the multitudes.** At the close of His discourse, Jesus allowed Peter to experience the reality of what He had just been teaching the crowd. **The crowd had *heard* the truth, but Peter was to *experience* it.**

Jesus put His teaching into language a fisherman could understand.

He told Peter **Luke 5:4 (KJV)** ^{5:4} Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

He spoke to Peter and to the need and He does the same with us. He will meet us at our point of need and manifest His Presence there.

- Peter hesitated, “Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing.”
- Peter had been fishing all night, had washed and repaired his nets in the morning, and then listened to Jesus teach.
- He was tired. He probably was not expecting a dramatic encounter with God at a time like that.
- Yet, as Peter obeyed Jesus, he pulled in such a miraculous catch of fish that his boat almost sank! Peter was filled with amazement and recognized that he had just experienced the power of God (Luke 5:4–11).

Luke 5:8-11 (KJV) ⁸ When Simon Peter saw *it*, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. ⁹ For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: ¹⁰ And so *was* also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. ¹¹ And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

Peter learned that with a command from Jesus, he could do anything. Thus, Jesus was able to reorder Peter's priorities from catching fish to catching men (Mark 1:17).

Peter's obedience led to a dramatic new insight into the person of Jesus. This was an invitation from Jesus to walk with Him in an even more intimate and powerful way. **Jesus was moving Peter from a realm of catching fish which were alive and would die to the realm of catching men who were dead and who would be made alive.**

God does not want you to merely gain intellectual knowledge of truth. He wants you to *experience* His truth.

There are things about Jesus you will learn only as you respond in obedience to His Word. Your obedience will then lead to greater revelation and opportunities for service.

Let us look at another truth from Peter's life which also is applicable to us today.

Matthew 26:57-58, 69-74

Matthew 26:57-58 (KJV) ^{26:57} And they that had laid hold on Jesus led *him* away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. ⁵⁸ **But Peter followed him afar off** unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.

Matthew 26:69-74 (KJV) ^{26:69} **Now Peter sat without in the palace:** and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. ⁷⁰ **But he denied before *them* all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.** ⁷¹ And when he was gone out into the porch, another *maid* saw him, and said unto them that were there, This *fellow* was also with Jesus of Nazareth. ⁷² **And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.** ⁷³ And after a while came unto *him* they that stood by, and said to Peter, **Surely thou also art *one* of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee.** ⁷⁴ **Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man.** And immediately the cock crew.

Here is a truth we need to remember:

1. The Greater the Distance from Jesus, the Greater the Risk

Whenever Simon Peter got away from Jesus, he usually found himself in trouble. His spiritual life had been a roller coaster, to say the least. For three years the highs had been higher than high, but now the lows could hardly be lower.

"Meanwhile, Peter was following Him at a distance." What a sad commentary on the man who had boasted in **Matthew 26:33 (KJV)** Peter answered and said unto him, **Though all *men* shall be offended (fall, fail) because of thee, yet will I never be offended.**

We would do well to make note of the fact that when we think we stand, we are set up to fall.

The servant is certainly not greater than his Lord. We need to see and understand our Lord Jesus sought in every circumstance to be close to the Father in times of impending trial and temptation.

1. For forty days in the wilderness, He fasted and prayed before His great confrontation with the wicked one. In John 17:19,
2. He committed Himself afresh to His Father prior to Gethsemane.
3. He prayed all night before His arrest and trial.

The example of Christ should have been a model for Peter and it definitely is a model for us to follow.

Have you ever seen the bumper stickers or signs on the back of semi-trucks and even on some cars which warn us not to follow too closely.

That is a good warning for traveling in an automobile or a truck, but if we are following Christ, it is not, for we need to draw near to God and He will draw near to us. **James 4:8 (NKJV)** Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded.

We only fool ourselves if we think we can live at a distance from Him and only call on Him in our emergencies.

If you have professed Christ as your Savior and are living your life **as a distant follower of the Lord, you are setting your life up for failure after failure.**

Luke 9:62 (NKJV) But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

I read a story about a toddler whose mother had just tucked him into bed. She went downstairs and was cleaning the kitchen when she heard a thud and then a cry. Racing upstairs, she found her little boy on the floor, where he had fallen out of bed.

When she asked what had happened, he replied, "I guess I fell asleep too close to where I got in!"

How often does that happen in the believer's life? We profess Christ as our Savior and begin to walk with Him, but "fall out" too close to where we got in. In simple terms, we remain "babes in Christ" because we never grow in our walk with Him. God invites us to draw near and come close, and He gives us truth after truth in His Word which He wants us to experience in our lives.

Psalms 73:28 (KJV) But *it is* good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works.

Hebrews 10:22 (KJV) Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

I believe this verse in Hebrews is reminding us of the fact of the priesthood of every believer.

This means that you and I as believers are members of a priesthood. Every believer is a priest, and, as such, you can come boldly before the throne of grace to find help in time of need. Listen to this short passage from:

Hebrews 4:12-16 (KJV) ^{4:12} For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¹³ Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. ¹⁴ Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession. ¹⁵ For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we*

are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore come **boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.**

So many people ask the preacher to pray for them, which is all right, but we need to remember that every true believer has access to God through Christ. You have as much right in God's presence as I have, or as anyone else has, because we come, not by our righteousness, by this "newly sacrificed" way that Christ has made for us. It is on that basis and that basis ALONE that we come near to God. Also note the first verse of this passage says it is the Word of God that is quick and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword....

A second thing we can learn from the life of Peter is:

2. Delay in Decision Hardens the Heart

Waiting can be very valuable, but not when it comes to standing for the truth. Three times Peter was accused of being a disciple as his Lord endured the humiliation of a trial.

- 1. The first time he denied he knew Him.**
- 2. The second, he denied Him with an oath.**
- 3. The third time he cursed as he denied his Lord.**

Each time Peter dug the hole deeper and deeper, and each time his heart grew harder and his voice grew louder. I am sure from my own experience that is a truth that all of us experience. We never like to be wrong and in most cases will deny it getting louder and louder with each denial.

Older statistics used to tell us that 95 percent of all the people who make decisions for Christ will **do so before their eighteenth birthday.**

Today the statistics show that age has dropped to thirteen.

In other words, after a person reaches the age of 13 and has not accepted Christ, it will be harder and take longer for them to make that decision if they ever do. We only have to look around us, even in our church, and begin to understand we are quickly losing the younger generation.

Is that an accident? I don't think so. **I think it has more to do with the fact that the Church has been too infiltrated by the world and moved into**

preaching a social, feel good, watered down version of the gospel instead of preaching and teaching the uncompromised truth of the Word of God.

Our church is an exception to this, but the church overall has lost the power and influence that it used to have in our educational and social activities that go on in a community. Sports and other school activities have become more important than any of the activities of the church.

When I was growing up, schools would not dare schedule sports activities or training that would compete with any church service. There is no thought given to that today and in fact it seems like many schools go out of their way to schedule their activities to compete with regular church services.

Many churches have tried to compete with the world in order to increase their youth attendance, but in doing so, have compromised the teaching of the Word.

The earlier in life a person can make a commitment to Christ, the better. Years of heartache and pain can be avoided when those tender hearts accept the Good News of Christ and are taught the uncompromised TRUTH of the Word of God.

Our Churches and ministries do need to channel resources into people and programs that are committed to reaching the children and youth of our world but sadly many of the mega churches of today **focus more on programs and activities that make people feel good** instead of teaching the truth of the Word.

Make a mental note of what I am about to say and let it get from your head into your heart

We can make no greater investment than in ministering to and teaching the young people of our church the uncompromised Word of God.

We need to also understand they learn through example as much or more than anything else so we need to be sure that we practice what we preach and teach.....not only as parents/grandparents but also as God called teachers to teach our younger generation.

Many people postpone decisions because they erroneously assume that they'll make the decision more easily if they wait awhile, especially when it comes to the matter of a relationship with Christ.

In fact, any delay makes it harder. God's grace was greater than Satan's deceptions, so that, eventually, Peter realized the depth of God's love and boldly proclaimed it to everyone. But how much embarrassment could the big fisherman have saved himself had he simply told the truth from the beginning, answering yes when asked, "Are you one of His?" How much heartache can you save yourself by responding to that still small voice urging you to make a decision for Christ.

Point # 3:

3. He Deceives Himself Who Seeks the Benefits of Discipleship Without the Relationship

But, far greater than the risk of keeping Christ at a distance is the possibility a person may not know Him at all. Every person needs to know in their knower that they are definitely a child of God.

No one else can make that determination for you. You and you alone are the only one who knows whether that relationship is real or not. Others can look at the fruit in your life and assume one way or the other but only you and the Lord know for certain.

Jesus says, **John 8:31 (KJV)** Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, **If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;**

The book of James makes it clear that **phony faith talks a good game, but saving faith endures to the end.**

Enduring does not contribute to one's salvation; rather, it validates it. Simply, going to church every Sunday and Wednesday does not a disciple make.

Discipleship is following Christ and His teachings. If the only time we ever look at the Scriptures is in our Sunday School Class or during the Scripture reading for the Pastor's sermon, we need to work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

Annual Easter and/or Christmas worshipers need to closely examine their profession of faith in Christ for **a true relationship with Christ will develop into a hunger for His Word.** I am sure you have heard people say that they can worship God and feel closer to Him out on the lake fishing, out

in the woods hunting, out on the golf course or in various other ways but that is simply an excuse. The Word is very clear that we are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. There is something about being in the fellowship of other believers that gives us encouragement to continue on. What a privilege we have here at North Hills to have a fellowship of believers that cry with us when we cry, encourage us when we are down trodden, and prays for each other on a regular basis.

Although it is true that a person who is truly saved cannot lose their salvation, **a person who is truly saved cannot exist as a distant disciple.**

This is not to question of Peter's salvation at this point in his life, as he did not have the revelation at that point concerning Jesus that we have today?

As food for thought, why would any man who knew the full truth fight to keep Jesus from the very cross that would save his soul? But God gives us this story about Peter to show us how easy it is for a follower of Christ to fall into fear and disbelief.

Disciples are learners, and the word "disciple" means "to seek after truth." We have a fuller revelation of Truth than the 12 disciples had. They came to a much fuller understanding of the truths that Jesus had taught them after they saw the resurrected Christ.

Do you recall that three times Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me?" This is the same Peter that proclaimed "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God." It was upon this truth that Jesus proclaimed HE would build His Church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it.

Surely, as our Lord questioned Peter about his love for Him, His intended purpose was for Peter to carefully search his heart. **Jesus wanted Peter to be sure in his relationship to Him.** We also need to be sure about our RELATIONSHIP to Christ.

What we need to do is get the truth of God's Word from our heads into our hearts.

The full assurance of our salvation is promised in:

Romans 10:13 (NKJV) For *"whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."*

God says it, that settles it. Our unbelief does not change the truth of that fact.

Listen up Church, **it is not a matter of us working and striving to increase our faith, rather it is a matter of accepting the truth of “in him we live and move and have our being.”**

Paul says it better than I can: Galatians 2:20 (KJV) I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and **the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.**

In simple terms, **we live by His faith and His faith reveals that He knows the Father not only hears but also answers.**

So many times we pray “hoping” the Father will hear and answer” and we make specific requests as to what we want God to do for us or for someone. What we really need to be praying is the Word that never comes back void but always accomplishes the purpose for which it was sent in that it was sent unto.

I am convinced we have been taught in our churches a wrong teaching concerning mustard seed faith and we have grown up believing that it is having faith the size of a grain of mustard seed which is far from the truth which I believe Jesus was teaching in these verses.

Matthew 17:20 (NKJV) So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.

Luke 17:6 (NKJV) So the Lord said, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

The word “as” is defined ...**in like manner, in the same way.**

So understanding that a mustard seed is basically an inanimate object, there must be another understanding of what Jesus is saying than what most of us have been taught over the years.

The mustard seed is entirely dependent upon the actions of a Sovereign God to become or be anything other than a mustard seed. For it to change into a mustard plant, it must be planted in the ground, germination must take place, and then the plant has to receive water to live. In simple terms, the mustard seed is totally dependent upon God and it has nothing to do with the size of the seed, but **everything to do with the actions of a Sovereign God.**

In the same manner, we are to be totally dependent upon God for the needed changes to take place in our lives. We must die to our self life. This comes by us beginning to understand our co-crucifixion with Christ as well as our resurrection to walk in newness of life. Along with this understanding we must be continually watered by the Word He has spoken to us, the uncompromised Word. If you have ever raised a garden or tended a plant, you know that just watering the plant when you think about it will not get the job done....it must be watered on a continuous basis. Just a dose of the Word on Sunday morning or Wednesday night is not enough....we must be watered with the Word on a daily basis.

Let me close our study this morning with these great truths:

Psalm 119:89-91 (KJV) ^{119:89} -- For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven. ⁹⁰ Thy faithfulness *is* unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. ⁹¹ They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all *are* thy servants.

Isaiah 55:11 (NKJV) So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper *in the thing* for which I sent it.