

50 - Making Room for Truth

John 8:37-45

Human hearts are not all the same. They vary widely. Some are so full of desires for the things of this world there is little or no room left to desire God. When truth comes and knocks on the door of that heart it finds no place to lodge; there is no interest, no welcome, no sense of need for that truth. That heart is already full; it's full of longing for other things but not for more of God.

Other hearts are not as full of desires for the things of this world. There is still an interest to find answers to the important questions. There is a sense of need, an honest awareness of feeling empty, of being "poor in spirit," of sensing that there must be more to life than this. When truth comes to that heart it finds room; there is interest; there is a welcome; there is enough humility to investigate a new idea, to listen to a challenge, to consider something that will require change.

This is what Jesus was trying to explain to people who wanted to kill Him. He was showing them why His words made no sense to them. He said the problem was that He was speaking truth. Had He lied about God and told them things they wanted to hear, they would have believed, but because He told them the truth about God, they didn't believe.

What Jesus teaches in this passage helps us understand why some hearts are hard and some are soft, but His words contain a warning even to those of us who are already believers. We too need to guard our heart. Wrong desires push out the desire for truth. But thankfully the desire for truth can also push out wrong desires, so each of us has a choice. If we want more truth, we have to make room for it. Let's learn how.

Confronting opponents (Jn 8:37-45)

• DBS (Sun, Mon, Fri, Sat)

Truth

To understand what Jesus was saying, the first thing we have to do is define the word "truth." It's an age-old question: What is truth? Yet the Bible has an answer to that question: Truth is the knowledge that God reveals to us. He is the Source of all truth. So there is a distinct difference between truth and facts. Facts are accurate pieces of information which humans can gather for themselves, but truths are facts as seen through God's eyes. You might say a truth is a fact with meaning: We see not only the fact, but how that fact fits into God's plan. Facts are observed, but truths are revealed. Facts are measured, but truths are believed, and believing requires faith, which in turn requires humility and trust. Before a person can receive a truth he or she has to admit to not knowing it. Then that person has to trust that God does and believe what He says. And every time we believe what He says it always requires obedience, and that obedience always comes at a high price. That's why when we talk about truth as a broad concept we all say we want it. But when confronted by a specific truth from God, receiving it is much more difficult. Something has to leave that heart in order for truth to enter; a wrong desire has to die and give place to the desire for more of God.

Abraham's children

In this debate there is much discussion about Abraham. Jesus' opponents pointed to the fact that they were Abraham's physical descendants and therefore heirs of his promises. Jesus pointed to the fact that Abraham was a man whose heart made room for truth and challenged them to be like Abraham. He wanted them to receive truth the way their ancestor had. He said, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham" (v39). So what were the "deeds of Abraham?" Let's review some of the truths God spoke to that man and watch how he responded and recognize the price he paid:

- 1) The truth: God has a plan for me. Abraham's response: He let God lead him away from his home and family though he didn't know where God was taking him. The price: He gave up security to find more of God (Ge 12).
- 2) The truth: God's faithfulness continues from generation to generation. Abraham's response: He believed promises he would not see fulfilled in his lifetime (a land, a multitude of children, a spiritual blessing to the whole earth). The price: He had to endure in faith for an entire lifetime (Ge 12, 15).
- 3) The truth: God can do the impossible. Abraham's response: He and Sarah believed God would rejuvenate their old bodies, so they could conceive a child. The price: They had to wait for 25 years and must have had to fight against discouragement (Ge 17).
- 4) The truth: God's judgment is always just. Abraham's response: He welcomed God into his camp and trusted He would protect the righteous who lived in Sodom. The price: As he watched the smoke rise from Sodom he had to refuse fear and trust that God had protected Lot (Ge 18).
- 5) The truth: God can raise the dead to life. Abraham's response: He was willing to sacrifice Isaac on Mt. Moriah because he believed God would bring his son back to life (Heb 11:18-19). The price: He had to release his son to God (Ge 22).
- 6) The truth: It is possible to live with God forever after we die. Abraham's response: Though he was a wealthy man, he lived in this world like a stranger passing through (Heb 11:9-10). The price: He gave up his desires for this world.

When we review these "deeds of Abraham" a pattern emerges. We learn from his example that truth, unlike facts, has to be believed and obeyed and that obedience is likely to be very costly. When truth comes to the human heart, our minds quickly read the price tag; we realize that if we accept this truth it will require us to do something difficult. And just as quickly if there is not a desire in that heart for more of God, we push that truth away. In time that heart can lose its ability to hear truth at all.



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During His ministry Jesus occasionally identified someone as a child of Abraham. When Zaccheus offered to give generously to the poor and return what he had stolen, Jesus said, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham” (Lk 19:9). When a woman who had suffered for twelve years pressed through a crowd to touch the hem of His garment He said, “Daughter [of Abraham], your faith has made you well” (Mk 5:34). In each case that person heard truth and was willing to pay the price to receive it, just as Abraham and Sarah had done.

Abraham moments

To know truth, God's truth, is a choice. To receive it we have to make room for it, and to keep it we have to vigilantly guard against losing it. And what is it that clogs our hearts and prevents truth from entering or squeezes out the truth that's there? It's wrong desires, desires for the things of this world rather than the desire for God. We can become so in love with the wrong things that we have no desire left for the one thing that matters: eternal life with God. How does someone arrive at the place where that desire is gone? That condition doesn't arrive all at once; it's the result of a multitude of choices. Each time truth came and knocked on the door of that heart, a decision was made not to pay the price. And every wrong decision damages that heart further until it becomes very difficult to even understand what God is saying; the fear of obedience has grown strong and the longing for God has grown weak.

But that terrible condition can be reversed. The solution is to start getting rid of wrong desires. We can ask God to show us where the “eye” of our heart has focused on something which competes with our love for Him. Listen to Jesus:

“The eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light, but when it is bad, your body also is full of darkness. Then watch out that the light in you is not darkness” (Lk 11:34-35).

In other words, where is our gaze focused? What is it that we're desiring and looking at? And when God points those things out to us, we have an “Abraham moment.” Will we accept what He says and decide to pay the price, or will we push His conviction away?

I believe the battle for the desires of our heart goes on throughout our lifetime. One desire after another comes along and tries to pull us away from God. But a wise man or woman, a true child of Abraham, will keep choosing to do whatever is necessary to remove anything that tries to come between us and God. And here's what the Book of Hebrews says about Abraham's children:

“Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them” (Heb 11:16).

Questions

- 1) Have you had an “Abraham moment” when God revealed to you a truth, and then you had to decide whether or not you would believe it? What price did you have to pay for that truth?
- 2) What's the difference between truth and facts?
- 3) In this sermon we listed six truths that Abraham had to believe. Pick one and tell us how God challenged you to believe that same truth.