

THE FULL FAMILY CHURCH

DATE : 23 November 2008

MESSAGE: HOLD ONTO THE TRUTH THAT WAS TAUGHT TO YOU. THE TRUTH.

Last week again I experienced how great it can be if our boat of life sails in calm waters. The wind in the sails is perfect - not too strong, not too calm. And sailing in the deep waters – not too deep (we might be exposed to too big swells), not too shallow either (those rock reefs!). These are some of Gods blessings that the Bible mentions. Peace and calmness.

Sunday after Sunday we sit here in church and every one of us hears the incredible power of the Word. We listen with comfortable ears, because there are no waves. Some times it merely goes into the one ear and out of the other. Life is great. There are no waves. When later when the time comes for Church and Care Group attendance we have all kinds of excuses to stay away. All of a sudden we are tired, and we have so much to do. Yet, when the party corks pop, we are never too tired. We can always make time for socialising.

I am not accusing anyone, because this is natural in a human being. Our nature to hate God and love the world.

But then a day arrives when the slightest wave appears out of place. When it brushes our little boat on one side and feels as if Jonah's whale is underneath us, or we have been hit with a Puket tsunami, things change dramatically.

We should realise that big waves will come in life. Sometimes pleasant things and sometimes less pleasant things happen to us. Now, we know what James says in his letter, that difficult times take us to our spiritual gym. It poses resistance against incompetent spiritual muscles and the only way we will be able to strengthen them, is by exercising. Forcing one in a way. If you can honestly tell me that you find it pleasant to exercise until

you are in pain, I will sponsor you with a free consultation at a shrink. There is not such thing. Maybe afterwards.

The entire Bible is soaked with Father God, the Prophets, Jesus and several others who encourage us to keep good faith. Not to give up. They encourage us to persevere under the pressure of this gym. To press on and to exercise so that you will receive the prize in the end.

We read and hear it Sunday after Sunday and later on we become blaze about it. Then when the nasty wave rocks up and we are all of a sudden out of our depth, we don't how to react. It becomes so bad that we question everything that we have learned up till now. Things like:

- God's love,
- His fairness,
- His provision,
- The truth regarding God's forgiveness through the Blood of His Son, Jesus Christ,
- Our freedom from the Law, that was meant for the Jews,
- The love between David and Jonathan, and God's blessing on them,
- The truth regarding the sin of Sodom and Gommora and that these sinful cities were not wiped out because of homosexuality but because people violated the hospitality code and the fact that they intended to gang rape the angels who were entertained by Lot.

We quickly forget that when the wave comes, how Jesus in Matthew 19:112 told the people that we are born either with a heterosexual or homosexual gender preference. He then speaks about the eunuchs. How the first group of eunuchs were born that way. The second group, born for specific tasks, were castrated by people, and how a third group chose to abstain for sexual activity in order to serve the Lord more efficiently. This is celibacy.

When the wave comes we forget that Jesus healed the partner of Roman Centurion who both had a same gender preference. The modern translations speak about a “slave/servant”, yet the Greek refers to his “*pais*”, his lover. Jesus did not expose the Soldier or asked embarrassing questions. Jesus, the Son God, our Messiah, healed the Soldier’s partner. He then turned around to the Pharisees and Sadducees and gave the Soldier a precious complement. He said, “Behold, in the whole of Israel I have never seen such great faith.”

Then the wave lashes out to us and the community horn blows: ‘God hates gays and lesbians! They will never see heaven! The Bible says that a man may not lie with another man the way in which a man lies with a woman! The Bible clearly states in Corinthians that men gave up their natural ways; they burned in lust towards one another. Men did scandalous things with men. Women alike. Therefore God will give them over to their lusts so that they will not be able to see the truth. Therefore they will go to hell!

And then the tsunami: “murderess, thieves, prostitutes, gossipers, drunkards, as well as homosexuals will never enter heaven.” The Bible says ... the Bible says ... the Bible says!!

Every Sunday we sit in this church, we attend the care groups during the week and we work through these issues. We are only focussed on one thing: Truth!

We are not interested to pat one another on the shoulder or to establish a new theology. What we preach and believe does not appear in modern Bible translations of the past 500 years. These truths we believe in come from the mother source, the original text from which numerous Bible translations were made. Translations that modern people unfortunately made to support their political trends, race preferences, cultural preferences and gender orientation fears. Why? Because it fits in with the time, ways and norms that suit the larger community now.

I tremble at the mere thought of what the Bible will look like in another 500 years.

Every one of us that work with translations, know how easy it is to deviate from a true translation, to just twist the truth in such a way that we will arrive at a half-truth. It is not a blatant lie, but it does not really reflect the original truth. Half of the one and half of the other. Very safe. Then we keep to that, if forms an integral part of our broad culture, the politics in the church and the government and ultimately our faith. We grow up with that and do not question it. The thinking is left to the academics; those who are supposed to know of better.

That half truth is then used to grind the minority groups, to people who were created in the image of God, with a spirit, a soul and body, whom the God also gave His Son for. Those minority groups are then belittled to such a degree that they are branded as less human. As mere objects. It then becomes easier for the larger holy order to do various inhuman things to those people. It then becomes easier to bring reborn Christian brothers and sisters, often from another colour, culture or gender preference, down, and call them names, such as, “foreigners, kaffers and faggots”. Having succeeded to de-humanise them, one will be able to do inhuman things to them. It then becomes legitimate to exploit, persecute, belittle, humiliate, slander, deprive them of privileges, and in the end to kill them. They are objects. Things. Ask Hitler. He almost perfected that skill.

Then the worst wave arrives: “foreigners, kaffers and faggots will not go to heaven. God hates them.”

Our boat is flipped. We tread water and cannot see land. All of a sudden we forget everything about the truth that we have learned.

Yet, there is one thing that can never be questioned or changed. And that is truth.

Facts change continuously. That is a fact. As new research aspires, new facts replace the old ones. But the truth will never change. Truth is the rock underneath our feet. The immovable surety. If only we would have looked down we would have recognised that it has always been there. It never moved. It has always been there for us to stand on and be safe.

Yet, when the voices of the traditionalists sound with that suited translation that soothes their cultural and political belief, our boats is turned upside down. They seem so sure about their belief. They confidently adhere to and follow that.

When that happens you have to realise that it is not a man to man conflict. They have been deceived. It all happens in the spiritual realm. They were manipulated out of their ignorance to believe those half truths.

Paul reminded us in Ephesians 6 about this. I have spoken about it previously: “Take up the full armour of God so that you will be able to stand on the day of evil.” Does it ring a bell?

The various pieces of armour are:

- **truth** as belt around your loins,
- the **absolution** of God as chest harness,
- the **desire** to spread the Gospel of peace as shoes on your feet,
- **faith** as shield in your hand,
- put **salvation** on as your helmet,
- the **sword of the Spirit**, which is the Word of God.

Truth as belt around your loins.

Why do you think truth has to protect our loins? Did God include this in here by chance to protect our loins? That area from which God wants us to keep our relationship? That place from where you give our most personal gift? That most precious part of us that is originally referred to as our virginity? That place from which God wants man to procreate and fill the earth? The fountain of our life? The most precious source of energy: our loins.

Why does Paul request us to gird our loins with truth?

Because truth has a lot to do with our loins. This supports Jesus statement in Mathew when he refers to the eunuchs. When Pauls points the “natural” that had been planted in each of us. The way we were born. Our nature. This is what he refers to. Our natural gender preference.

Man's nature moves on a gliding scale. Not one of us is only heterosexually or homosexually orientated.

Alfred C. Kinsey, the great gender researcher, found that not one of us experience a male or female gender preference on a constant basis. We can often, within the course of a day, experience a gender attraction to the same or the opposite sex.

And although it will always remain there, a particular preference will become dominant later in your life. But because us people have the ability to execute choices in the way that we can stick to that, it helps us to make a final choice and commitment to one person.

Should a person be heterosexually dominant, the process is relatively easy. A man and woman find one another, become attracted and marry. They hopefully commit for life.

A person with a homosexually dominant nature also has it relatively easy. He/she is attracted to someone of the same gender and hopefully commit for life.

When we deal with bisexuality, though, the plot thickens. Such a person experiences full fulfillment in both gender choices. They meet people from both genders, become attracted, would like to commit, but always experience ambivalence in their deepest being. However, when they commit to one person and devote themselves, they really try to be faithful to that one person. Yet, deep in their psyche they experience a deficiency.

Our external appearance determines our physical gender. Ultimately our gender does not only lie in what we look like on the outside. Our souls (mind, thoughts, and personalities) also have a gender.

If our physical, our outer being, is male, and our soul is predominantly male, I will probably be heterosexually orientated.

Should my physical, my outer being, be female, and my soul predominant male, I will probably be lesbian orientated.

If I have the appearance of a man from the outside, yet my soul has a strong attraction to the male gender, the chances are good that I will have a homosexual orientation.

Bi-sexual people experience this to both sides.

This is the nature Paul refers to in Corinthians. That which goes on at the inside of us.

It is therefore easy for those who interpret the Scriptures in line with their fears and preferences to overlook these crucial dynamics in the Bible. The whole context is done away with. They peg away at what they believe in because it suits them.

Now we get to our Scripture reading for today. Please page with me to 2 Timothy 2:1-17 and read it.

Paul is writing here. The letter is meant for his faith child, Timothy. Paul hears that Timothy is surfing a few heavy waves and seems to forget what he had been taught because he was put on the spot.

Now, let's get this straight. Timothy was not having a challenge with gender orientation. His challenge was about people doubting his faith; that truth that he had learnt and that he preached.

Now, his dear uncle in the spiritual business, Paul, writes him a letter of comfort and to tell him to stick it out.

Timothy went through the same current and turmoil we have to face today. He experienced it as traumatic when the people questioned his faith. He became emotionally unstable and had to rethink everything that he had learnt and knew.

Then Paul advises him to relax. 'Remember the things that I have taught you regarding Jesus Christ.' [*My version.*]

Now, you can say, yes, it is easy for you to say, brother, Anton. But do we not all believe in a way we have the truth and others are misled?

Absolutely! And man will continue doing so until the coming of our Lord. It will never stop. And it seems to be ok because God has made provision for that in His infinite omnipotence. We are not all the same. Yet, that which we believe in regarding God's love will either set us free or condemn us.

But, and this is an important but, we may never cause division among the community of the saints. He/she that brings division in the Body of Christ is excluded from taking Holy Communion. When you bring about division you are taking the office of Judge upon you. Jesus says clearly that He is the Judge. We are not allowed to judge. That is His privilege.

Have a look at verse 8. Paul advises Timothy never to forget that Jesus Christ was born from the descendants of David and that He was raised from the dead. This is the Good News that he preaches.

The Good News. What is the Good News? There are two things:

- That Jesus was born from the descendants of David,
- And that Jesus was raised from the dead.

These two aspects, with everything that had been written before and after that, form the nucleus of the Bible. In the Old Testament God promised a Redeemer that will free us from the sin Adam brought into this world. This was the same sin that brought about the necessity for Jesus to be born on this earth and that He had to die as our Saviour. Through His death He brought about triumph over sin [the eternal death of the human spirit] by being raised from the dead.

It is for the cause of this Good News message that many honest, deep rooted Christians, who had a living relationship with the Lord, were prepared to die for throughout the ages.

Now Paul says to his dearly beloved Timothy, (verse 14), 'Brother, tell the people to stop their quarrelling about their opinions. It causes great damage among the believers. [*My version.*]

Then he also says in verse 15, “Therefore, brothers and sisters stand fast and keep to the instructions you have learnt either through a word or through a letter from us.”

Paul is quite specific about the way we should approach this thing. He speaks about instructions, a word or a letter.

Now watch closely:

He nowhere refers to translations that were translated into a modern day fashion. He refers to instructions: first hand revelations that come from the source of the instructions.

What is an instruction? Jesus explains it in Luke 11, where he speak with the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the so called main line church people, those people who lead the religion of the day.

To the Pharisees – the people that saw to it that everybody do the right things, the caretakers of morals, those that looked for the splinters in the eyes of the naïve believers – Jesus says in verse 42, “Misery awaits you, because you are scrupulous in giving a tithe of even the smallest part of your income, but you totally forget about the justice and the love for God.”

Jesus says to them, you have a lot to say to other believers, but you do not do it yourself. You will also be taken out because you do not keep in mind that God is just and that you should love God.

He then gets to the Sadducees; those scholars of the Law, they that do everything according to the letter of the law. You may not do this! You may not do that! To them He says in verse 46: “Misery awaits you. You are loading people with impossible religious demands [the 613 commandments] and you do not lift a finger to ease their burden!”

Those are the people Jesus had a problem with. People who pretended to be holier than thou; who strived to put the ordinary believer under the Law time and time again. They wanted to keep them in the suffocating grip of religion’s depression and a weak self-esteem.

Jesus continues. In verse 52, He gets to the essence of this matter in which you and I are today. Jesus still today tells the scholars of the Law: “Misery awaits you, because you are hiding the **key to knowledge** from people [*the key ‘to know’*]. You yourself will not enter the Kingdom, and you are preventing others to enter into it.”

What is this “key to knowledge” or “to may know” that Jesus is referring to here?

What do we do with a key? We unlock something. Something that is hidden because of its great value. But we now see that Jesus points out to the Law scholars that believers have a right to unveil that which is hidden. Jesus says so!

That is why we have read 2 Timothy 2 today.

Can you remember what Paul referred to when he advised Timothy to stick it out? What did Timothy have to hold onto? Paul commanded him to hold onto the key to knowledge, of “to know about”, “to know about the right things”. And this key brings freedom. Not imprisonment.

Have a look at verse 8 again: Paul says to Timothy, “Never forget that Jesus Christ was born from the descendants of David and that He was raised from the dead. This is the Good News that I preach.”

The Good News:

- That Jesus was born from the descendants of David,
- And that Jesus was raised from the dead.

This key brings acceptance, love, living space, participation, empathy - all those things because we realise that Jesus commanded us to love God with our whole hearts, our whole souls and with all of our energies. And the second to that: that we should love our neighbour as we love ourselves.

Jesus sums up the Law, for only He fulfilled it. That means that only He was able to keep to it. He also realised that man could not keep to all those laws. Man’s effort to try and keep it brought about heavy mindedness and hopelessness. Jesus therefore spoke to us about the **meaning** of the Law.

He releases us from keeping to the letter of those sets and sets of impossible laws.

Remember what Jesus said: if you have shown kindness and help to the least among the least, you would have done it as unto Me.

Jesus identified with the least among the least. He hanged out with all sinners: prostitutes, money collectors, all of them. He drank and ate with them. He partied with them. His attraction to the minority groups caused the religious (the Pharisees and the Sadducees) to act in a loveless way towards Him. They were jealous of Him. Jesus knew how it felt to be a part of the minority group. He preferred to identify Himself with them.

When Jesus was born, a heavenly host of angels sang the Good News to the shepherds on the fields close to Bethlehem. The Good News about the Redeemer that was born from the descendants of David, the Messiah. The One who was to conquer death. The Redeemer.

After all these things that I we have discussed here today, what do the waves around you look like now? Remember, we will ultimately stand responsible to One person only. That is God. Jesus Christ will intercede for us where we fall short.

Never EVER defend the truth that sets you free. That truth that brings you peace deep inside. Never defend this truth to people who wants to rob you of that. You don't need to defend that. Do you know why? Because in a spiritual argument with someone who believes otherwise, you will have a desire to make your point. This urge is driven by pride. PRIDE will try and convince the other person. Pride, the one and only, "ME". God hates pride the most. The whole issue will not be about Jesus' case anymore. It will become a quarrel that PRIDE would like to win. You will never convince that person. That will be a winning recipe for strife and confusion. Ultimately the church and believers will get hurt and suffer in the process. A very bad marketing effort for the Kingdom!

It was the great Hindu leader, Mahatma Gandhi that one day said: Christianity is the most wonderful model ever to live by on earth. I would

have loved to join it, if it hadn't been for the Christians who represented it so badly.

What a horrible thing to hear. What a condemning accusation! And that from a non-Christian for whom Jesus also died on the cross.

So, how do you we handle these waves now?

Give unconditional love to those who persecute you. That means, be nice with that person. Serve him/her with a truthful heart. Yet, when he/she tempts you into a religious argument, politely inform that person that you are not interested in a quarrel. Be firm and decisive about it. Should the person continue to make a scene, you have the fullest right to get up and walk out. Do not try to say the last word on the matter or fling sarcasm at him/her. Keep your dignity out of respect for the One whom you stand for, Jesus. Remember that you are His representative.

May God in Jesus through the Holy Spirit give you peace. May you experience Him as the true rock in your life when the world's godless waves come to rob you of your truth. Keep you lions girded with the truth, and keep to what you have been taught. Truth never changes. Facts do. Truth is only found at the source, there where it originated from, not out of the watered down reflections or fakes of human opinions and contorted, fashionable translations that suits a time like this.

Don't just believe opinions. Test the truth by consulting the source. The character of a lie is the tail of non-truths it drags along. Truth with a tail is a half-truth. A half-truth is a lie and cannot withstand the fire of truth. That is the way in which the devil lured Eve into taking the disastrous bite.

Truth makes one free and freedom brings peace. That peace that surpasses all understanding. Hold onto that, my dear Timothy, and never deviate from that. That is your rock.

Let us live the truth with dignity. In Jesus' Name.

Amen.

Pastor Anton Smith