

Tuesday, May 19, 2020

Dear Members, Friends, and Guests of Desert Hills Lutheran Church,

I recently finished an excellent book by Dr. Henry Cloud titled *Changes that Heal*. Dr. Cloud is a Christian clinical psychologist; I've been reading his books for the past fifteen years. In this book he begins with a profound spiritual truth about mental and spiritual health. He posits that grace and truth together can reverse the effects of the fall. Quoting John's gospel:

14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

16 And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace.

17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. John 1:14, 16-17

What I had never thought about was that truth without grace always leads to judgment. Someone who is always pounding away with the law and without grace is self-righteous and judgmental. At the same time, having only grace without truth leads to license and directionless living. In his life and words, Jesus always carried the balance of both truth and grace.

In the story of the woman caught in adultery in John 8:1-11, the truth (law) demanded her death. Jesus refused and said, "The one without sin cast the first stone." One by one the men leave. In verse **10** Jesus looked up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" **11** She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again."

Jesus gives her grace. He does not condemn her even though she is guilty. But he doesn't just give the grace, he also gives truth. He says, "Go and give up these actions. Do not sin again." Grace and truth must be balanced in our day to day living, in how we treat ourselves and others.

Last week I recorded part 7 of *See Through the Scriptures*, A Crossways Bible Study. It covers the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, following the story of the Messiah Servant King Jesus. It is a good place to start if you have never done a beginner's walk through of the Bible's central story, that of God's forgiveness and redemption of creation through Jesus. It is a story of grace and truth.

Blessings,
Pastor Martin