

## C.A.F.E.

**Sept 12, Oct 3, 2010 Truth Speaks to Power**

Opening prayer: Ps 77

Who are some powerful people you know or know of? Why do you consider them powerful people? How do they use their power?

Who are some truth tellers? What are they like? What do they tell us?

The OT story:

Cast of Characters: Moses, YHWH, Pharaoh, slaves

Plot: The slaves have cried out. God hears their cry and sends Moses to be the (reluctant) freedom fighter or political agitator (you decide) to rescue them. He and Pharaoh have a series of confrontations.

Scripture: Ex 3:4-10, 5:1-23;

What ideas came to you from these passages?

Points to ponder:

Who has the power? How would you describe Pharaoh's power? Where does it come from? How does he use it?

What is the truth Moses offers Pharaoh and the Hebrew slaves? How is his truth received?

Read Ex 7:1-12:30 about the plagues before our session if you wish.

Plot: Pharaoh finally releases them but later changes his mind.

Scripture: Ex 12:31-36, 14:1-9

What ideas came to you from these passages?

Points to ponder:

Was it difficult for Pharaoh to relinquish power?

Does Pharaoh lose his power or is it somehow changed?

Must power step aside for truth?

Is it difficult for any person to relinquish power?

Who are those crying out in our time?

Do we sometimes have and use Pharaoh power? Is it hard to give up?  
Do we sometimes have and use truth successfully like Moses did?  
Truth Speaks to Power (continued)

The NT story:

Cast of Characters: Jesus, Pilate, the kingdom of God , the Jewish authorities

Plot: The Jewish authorities have arrested a political agitator or a religious outsider (you decide) and send him off to Pilate to decide his fate.

Scripture: John 18:28-19:16

What ideas came to you concerning this reading?

Points to ponder:

Who is the truth-teller? What is the truth that he presents to Pilate?

How does Pilate deal with this truth?

What is this kingdom that Jesus is king of?

Are there winners and losers in this story?

Who are the Pilates of today?

What is generally the fate of truth tellers?

Plot: Jesus feeds 5000 men plus women and children from a supply of 5 loaves and 2 fishes but the disciples don't get "it."

Scripture: MK 6:34-52

What ideas came to you from this passage?

Points to ponder:

Mk 6:52 says that they did not get it since their hearts were hardened.

Just like Pharaoh. What might have they been thinking?

The disciples in the boat could be a symbol of the "barque of Peter," a way of speaking of the church. How can this story speak to the church?

When do we have hardened hearts? What does it take to soften hearts?

Let us consider: what is truth and who is truth.

## **Nov 7, Dec 12, 2010, Truth Beyond the Reach of Power**

Opening prayer: Lk 1:46-55

Are there some folks who have no special credentials, no public office who are truth tellers and use the truth to help others? From where do they get their motivation? What is valuable about what they do?

OT story:

Cast of characters: Elijah, Elisha, various people in need, King Ahab, the word of the Lord

Plot: Israelite kings worship pagan gods and ignore the plight of the poor.

Two men who come out of nowhere, have no credentials, no power, no army but they have the truth given to them by the Spirit of God.

Scripture: 1Kgs 16:29-33; 17:1-24; 19:19-21; 2 Kgs 2:9-18; 5:1-19; 13:20-21.

What ideas came to you from these passages?

Scriptures to read before the meeting if you wish: 1Kgs 18, 19; 2 Kgs 4, 5.

Points to ponder:

How are Elijah and Elisha introduced to the reader? What do we know about them?

What is the truth that they bring from the word of God?

What motivates them to help folks in need and to challenge the king?

How are the lives of the widow of Zarephath and Namann the Syrian transformed by the actions of Elijah and Elisha?(Jesus mentions them in Lk 4:25-27.)

How would you describe Elijah's relationship with King Ahab?

In what situations could truth tellers be effective today?

## Truth Beyond the Reach of Power (continued)

NT stories:

Plot: In a parable, Jesus tells the story of a widow with 2<sup>nd</sup> class status in her culture who is able to get justice from a powerful judge.

Scripture: Lk 18:1-8

What ideas came to you from this reading?

Points to ponder:

What does it take to get justice for the widow?

What kind of a person is she?

How is God compared with the dishonest judge?

Plot: The multitude who has the truth has power.

Scripture: Lk 19:47-48

What ideas came to you from this reading?

Points to ponder:

Can a crowd of poor peasants know the truth?

Plot: A young Israelite woman with no royal lineage is asked to be the mother of a king. She accepts and glorifies God and the lowly by her response.

Scripture: Lk 1:32-33; 46-55.

Points to ponder:

What does she believe will result from the birth of this king?

How does she see her role in this kingdom?

What is the truth that Mary proclaims in the Magnificat?

Is Mary telling us that the impossible can happen?

Can poverty become abundance?

Can famine become nourishment?

Can war become peace?

Can death become life?

What does it take to trust in this kind of truth?

Does Acts 2:42-47; 4:23-36; 6:1-7 hold some clues for us?

## Jan 9, Feb 6, 2011 Power Led by Truth

Can you think of any political leader, past or present who has changed systems and structures bringing truth and justice to the people he governs?

How about Nelson Mandela? Others?

The OT plot: King Josiah, (639-609 BC) inherits the throne of Judah at age 8. When he is 16 he chooses to seek the Lord and at age 20 begins a great reform in Judah. Many of the previous kings have encouraged idolatry and ignored the law of God.

He has the temple restored and in the process, Hilkah the priest discovers the book of the law given to God by Moses. Josiah realizes how much the people of Judah have strayed from God and brings about a great renewal of the covenant.

Scripture: 2 Chron 34:1-33 or 2 Kgs 22,23

What ideas came to you from this chapter?

Points to ponder:

What is the truth that Josiah heard?

What were the characteristics of Josiah that show that he was able to accept and live by this truth?

How would you explain the behavior of Josiah after he heard the “book of the law” from Shaphan?

Why do you think that Josiah included the whole community rather than just giving orders that the covenant must be restored?

How does our church community understand to the idea of “covenant”?

If you wish, read what most scholars think this book was: Deuteronomy 12-26, (and maybe)28.

Among the statutes and decrees of this book are those that are intended to show God’s love for the PEP people- the poor, the excluded and the powerless.

Economic justice: Deut 15:1-11; 24:6-22

Freedom: 15:12-18;23:16-18;

Legal justice: 16:18-20; 17:8-20;

What ideas came to you from these readings?

An often repeated theme from Deut is that of “Remembering”

Scripture: Deut 5:15;10:19; 15:15; 16:12,14; 24:18, 22.

What ideas come to you from these readings?

Another theme: the renewal the covenant is be celebrated.

Scripture: 2 Chron 35:1-19; 2 Kgs 23:21-22

What ideas came to you concerning these passages?

Points to ponder:

Why is “remembering” the past so important to this process?

Why is celebration an important part of renewal?

What are some deeds of God that we should remember and how should we celebrate them?

The NT story:

Plot: a man with no political power- Jesus- takes up the themes of

Deuteronomy and the PEP people big time:

Scripture: Lk 6:20-26; Lk 9:46-47; Lk 18 1-8; Mt 20:1-16; Matt 25:31-45

What ideas came to you concerning these passages?

Points to ponder:

This is a small selection of passages that Jesus uses to advance his ideas about social justice. Are there others that speak to you?

In Matt 22:34-40, Jesus links Deut 6:4-5 and Lev 19:18. It is the summary of how to “love” that start in the OT and brought forward by Jesus in the NT:

Hospitality- not just sharing a cup of coffee but making space for all.

Generosity- not just giving money or clothes but emptying oneself.

Forgiveness- not just laying aside grudges but choosing not to keep score.

Is it possible to “love” as God loves? Are these ordinary practices or very counter-cultural?