

**1<sup>st</sup> Sunday After Pentecost: Holy Trinity Church : June 12, 2022**

**Preached**

**By**

**The Rev. John E. Higginbotham+**

**In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit AMEN!**

**One of the most famous lines in film history comes from Rob Reiner's 1992 film based on Aaron Sorkin's 1989 play, entitled "A Few Good Men."**

**In the movie, a military court scene plays out in which Navy lawyer Tom Cruise (Lieutenant Daniel Kaffee) pushes Colonel Nathan Jessup on the stand (played by Jack Nicholson) to admit that he ordered a "code red," a hazing, violent disciplinary measure that allowed two marines, Dawson and Downey, ultimately to kill a fellow peer, Private First-Class William Santiago. While the play enacted a real-life incident, which has never been solved, the movie sought to bring out a complicated truth that would be extremely hard to handle for those listening.**

**At first when Kaffee entraps the Colonel in a paradoxical statement, Jessup attacks back, saying, "You want the truth? You can't handle the truth!"**

**He then admits to giving the order. With horror, those in the courtroom realize the true paradox: men, who are taught to blindly obey commands, may override their basest human instinct to protect and spare a peer in danger of losing his life. While not all truths we face instill horror, still truth can harm more than heal when administered in the wrong way and at the wrong time. You all know examples of this.**

**Let me ask you Gentlemen, do you really want to tell your wife that her new dress doesn't inspire when you see the excitement in her eyes to show you?**

**Ladies, do you really want to tell your man whom you love no matter what that his eating habits annoy you?**

**Do you really want to tell a 5-year old all about the devastations of a recent tragedy, such as Uvalde, Texas and 19 children and two school teachers were murdered? Or explain to your 5 year- old tell them that the police didn't get to the school quick enough. Or tell them the truth about Santa when they are two or three years old? We understand that truth deserves a proper time and a proper place, a desired context. This "truth timing" is important to nurturing our relationships and our lives.**

**Likewise, we as Episcopalians believe that young people should go through a two-year time of classes to receive confirmation by the Bishop with the laying**

**of his hands upon the head of confirming their faith. We believe that when a child is only five years old, they aren't ready to fully understand the truth of the gospel and the commitment they are making, or the commitment others are making on their behalf.**

**My brothers and sisters, faith is certain. Faith is not vague. Faith is not a matter of opinion. It may not matter how you were baptized. It may not matter whether how you were sprinkled with water or immersion in a tub. Again, it may not matter how you were baptized. Let's just say, you were born in a hospital, and you have been taken to the nursery right away, because you are struggling to live and a loving Christian nurse picks you up in one arm and she cups her hand, opens the faucet and she puts warm water over your little head and she says, I Baptize you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. AMEN! That Baptism is valid. Baptism matters, no matter how you were Baptized. AMEN! It may not matter your denomination, Episcopal, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, etc., but it does matter whether you call yourself a Christian.**

**My sisters and Brothers in Christ, we need to be prepared, mature, ready to hear certain truths. It doesn't make the truth any less true. But it makes us**

**vastly more ready to accept it and commitment to it, especially if they are truths we do not want to hear.**

**Those who are priests, chaplains, doctors, and health care professionals know what it means to have to tell someone they only have six months to live. Those who are industry professionals sometimes need to tell someone that their skill set just doesn't match the position they applied for. While these truths are hard, we want to know them. But we want to know them when we are ready, or ready enough, to handle them.**

**It's no mistake in scripture that Jesus gradually dishes out bits and pieces of the truth of his mission, of God's plan for humanity, about his identity, and about what is about to happen. If he had told them everything from the outset, no doubt they would have ditched the discipling thing and gone back to their boats, muttering under their breath that he must be a little, you know, crazy.**

**Jesus knew the importance of timing.**

**How many times in scripture can you remember Jesus asking people not to tell about what he had done, because it wasn't time for the entire world to know? How many times did Jesus say to his disciples, they would understand better after the Holy Spirit had come upon them?**

**Jesus knew how hard it was during his last days to explain what would happen in the days and weeks and months to come, not only for him but for his disciples. They were already grieving the loss of their master and friend. Soon, he wouldn't be with them, and Jesus knew the hardships they would have to face. Only after his resurrection appearances and in their glorious experience at Pentecost would they truly understand the truth of what he had been preparing them for and what they would need to do next.**

**He asks them to be patient. He says literally, "I have much more to say to you, but you can't handle it now. However, when the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you in all truth and proclaim to you what is to come."**

**In other words, Be patient. Trust me. Wait for the Spirit. Then you will see for yourselves the truth that I have been telling you. Then you will know what to do.**

**While the Gospel for today is short, it needs to be read in context. If you read all of John 16, you see that Jesus is issuing his disciples a warning. He knows they are going to face fierce opposition as they attempt to seed the gospel to the world and to their colleagues. They will be thrown out of the synagogue. They will have their lives and livelihoods threatened. They will undergo great adversity. It will be very, very hard.**

**Jesus can't pile more on them at the moment, although he knows what is to come. They are afraid, they are in mourning, they are sad, they are already floundering, hiding, and avoiding the authorities. But they will know soon enough, as the Holy Spirit has given them strength, power, identity, and support in their Day of Pentecost. Were they feeling impatient? Probably. Frightened? Undoubtedly. Restless. Maybe. Probably. Certainly!**

**Let's face it. None of us like swimming in that place between question and answer. We hate dwelling in the grey. We like our answers black and white. We like to know what's coming next, the next day, the next month, the next year, the next year to retire. We like to know if things will turn out alright. We want to know the "truth," so we can plan our direction. But God doesn't always work that way. Waiting for answers, waiting for God's truth comes to us in God's own time.**

**Have you ever said a prayer of petition to God and wondered why God didn't answer you immediately? Or answer in the exact way that you hoped or planned? Have you been angry with God for not doing exactly what you asked? Have you been annoyed with God for leaving you in a place of worry or indecision or the utter unknown, when all you want is to know the way**

**forward? God's time is not our time. And God knows, we aren't always ready for God's truth.**

**My sisters and brothers in Christ, when we are, God does reveal to us. Jesus does appear to us. The Holy Spirit does guide us and teaches us in the ways we need to go. Today's scripture reminds us of the importance of faith. For patience is a part of having faith. To be patient is to have faith that God will reveal to us Christ's truth for our lives or for our hopes and dreams, even if we can see no way through at the moment. To be patient is to know that God's truth will prevail, even if things seem preposterous and egregious in the current time. It all comes down to faith, doesn't it? Faith in God. Faith in God's time. Faith in Christ's promise. Faith in the power of the Holy Spirit.**

**May God's truth come upon you powerfully and authentically in God's time!**

**AMEN!**