

Truth and Grace in Community  
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You'll be able to download an outline or the full transcript of the sermon on the live page of the Bundy website

Please feel free to use those if they will help you follow along

Most importantly, please keep your bibles open

Especially to John chapter 1

And make sure that you test everything you hear from me against the Bible.

Over the last two weeks in our series on Community

We've seen that God made us in His image for loving,  
other-centred community with Him and with others

Last week we saw that this community has been broken by our sin

And that we need to turn to God in repentance

Today we will be looking at how we need truth and grace in Community

And this is exactly what Jesus brings to us.

Let's pray before we do anything else

On Wednesday this week

After more than a 100 days of lockdown

I went out by myself to my favourite Vietnamese restaurant

I even took a photo of my meal

That is how an introvert celebrates the end of hard lockdown

Understandably, lots of people have been out this week

at shops, cafes, pubs and restaurants

It's been a very long lockdown

But in reality the cost I have paid has been very trivial

Compared with others who have lost jobs, businesses and loved ones

There's still a lot of grief and there will be for some time

It will take time to heal

And I think it will take time for people to rebuild trust with each other

Deep divisions have formed during pandemic and lockdown

We're seeing this in the US elections

But I suspect that some of these divisions are here as well

There are those who supported every decision the government made during lockdown

There are those who resented every single one of them and those in-between

There are those who flouted COVID restrictions

And those who kept them and judged those who didn't.

Many are cautious as we come out of lockdown

Can we trust others?

Is their contact tracing adequate?

Why isn't she wearing a mask?

I haven't seen him for 8 months, and I feel guilty about not speaking to him

What do we need as we seek to rebuild community?

We need Truth and Grace

Two points I want to make today

Truth and Grace matter in community

Truth and Grace come through Jesus Christ

### **Firstly, Truth and Grace matter in Community**

#### **Truth matters because trust matters**

If you want to have a healthy functioning community

Truth matters

Because truth is the basis of trust

And trust is necessary in all relationships

How can I depend on you if I don't know if you are reliable and trustworthy?

But who gets to determine what truth is

Especially in an age when truth is relative

What's true for you

May not be true for me

So says our age

Your truth is whatever you feel it is

As long as our truth doesn't hurt anyone else

One of my favourite episodes of the Simpsons

Is when the whole town of Springfield decides to adopt Bart Simpson's motto

"Do what you feel like"

And it all culminates in the "Do what you feel like festival"

Everything is going fine

Until a grandstand collapses injuring people

When the maintenance guy is questioned about not doing his job

He says "I didn't feel like it"

And Marge Simpsons says angrily to him

"I don't want to judge the rightness of your ego orientation

But my inner critic says you should have done your job"

Only to have Ned Flanders correct her saying "No Marge, let's not should his fella to death"

In minutes, the town is in chaos

With a ferris wheel coming off its hinges

And accusations and violence erupting as trust breaks down in their community

You see I think when truth is relative

Inevitably people do get hurt

I think it's funny that in an age of relative truth

During this pandemic we've been told that truth matters

And absolute truth matters

All of us need to stand together

On the truth of such practices as social distancing and face masks and travel restrictions

In fact if we don't adhere to these truths

We face judgement in the form of public shaming through media

Or hefty fines from the police.

I think for a culture as individualistic and autonomous as we are here in Australia

These things have been very hard for us

Don't tell me what I should do

Stop imposing your truth on me

So I think it's very confusing at the moment

In our society we live by the anthem “Do what you feel” – truth is relative  
Don’t judge anyone for their choices  
But now we hear a different cry “Live by the truth” – otherwise we will judge you

The Bible’s starting point is that truth is absolute  
Truth is not relative  
Truth is not what we decide  
In fact we are measured against the truth  
Truth comes to us from God through Jesus

Jesus said this well-known verse in John 14  
[Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.](#)

These have been seen as highly offensive words by Jesus  
How dare Jesus be so exclusive in his claim on truth  
But I invite you to test his claim by looking at his life  
Remember what I said, truth matters because trust matters

You know why you will find it hard to trust me or anyone else for that matter?  
Because eventually you will find out that I am a liar and hypocrite  
And the same applies to you  
Eventually you also will prove to be a liar and a hypocrite in the things you say and do  
I invite you to read one of the gospels of Jesus in the bible  
And see if he is a liar or a hypocrite  
See if he passes the pub test  
See if the things that come out of his mouth are for his own good  
Or for the good of others  
I think you will find that he is the truth  
Because he is completely trustworthy  
Just as God is trustworthy

### **Truth matters to God because justice matters**

God made the world  
And He made us for community  
But God also expects accountability in community  
Justice is a characteristic of God  
God is righteous in all His dealings with us  
It’s only fair then that he appoints someone to judge and that is Jesus

Here is the apostle Paul in Acts 17  
Verse 30

[<sup>30</sup>The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, <sup>31</sup>because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”](#)

Truth matters to God so everyone will face this day of judgement  
And while that is something that people find objectionable about Christianity  
Imagine a world without judgement  
Imagine a world where corruption, violence and negligence had no consequences

Imagine a world without justice

Truth matters to our community

That's why we set up royal commissions and judicial enquiries

This week we're waiting to hear the interim report on the hotel quarantine debacle

And many people are waiting for these findings because truth matters

It's extremely comforting that God appoints Jesus as the judge

You see unlike sinful people

Jesus can't be bought,

Jesus judges in righteousness (that is truth)

Jesus knows the truth, no secrets are hidden from Him

Jesus is impartial and not prone to bias

Jesus is blameless and not corrupt

Jesus has the right to judge because he is the truth

Not only does truth matter but grace also matters

**Grace matters because of who we are**

In recent years we've seen the rise of cancel culture

This is where someone is outed by their community

As being offensive in some way whether that be racist, sexist,

or something else which the community finds offensive

Perpetrators are named and shamed and then they are boycotted

They're effectively kicked out of professional circles and social circles

In other words they are cancelled

Statues of historical figures

have been torn down and removed for their past sins

Celebrities and high-profile figures have been outed online

Cancel Culture has been seen as empowering victims

Giving them a collective voice against their abusers

And while it is a good thing to call out sinful behaviour

There is a dark side to Cancel Culture and people are starting to notice this

What if you're on the receiving end?

What if you're the one defined by your past

What if all your mistakes and indiscretions and secret sins

Were displayed in front of everyone

What if you were named and shamed and then cancelled by your community

You see the trouble is

All of us are guilty when measured against the truth

Paul says in Romans 3:22,23

For there is no distinction: <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

The objective standard, the measure of truth all of us are compared with is God himself

And all of us fall short

Like an arrow falling short of its target

We miss the mark because we are sinful people

We saw that last week

We are broken by our sin

We say no to God  
Not only do we reject the truth  
We live by our own truth  
Let's be honest, we often even fail to live up to our own subjective truth  
We stand before Jesus the Judge – guilty  
We ought to be cancelled  
Cast out from God's community

Our only hope is grace  
Grace in the bible is God's undeserved kindness or favour  
Grace is often hand in hand with mercy  
Mercy is often described as not getting what you deserve from God – condemnation  
Grace is described as getting what you don't deserve which is the righteousness of Jesus  
Grace matters to guilty people like us  
Because all sinners need God's undeserved kindness

### **Grace matters because of who God is**

The Bible is clear that God is full of justice  
God is a Holy God who stands for truth  
In Him there is no sin  
In fact God ought to cancel out sinners like us  
But the Bible shows us that grace is a characteristic of God

In the Old Testament  
The Israelites commit a terrible idolatry at Mt Sinai  
While Moses is with God on mountain  
God's people make and worship a golden calf instead of worshipping God  
And God is angry  
Angry enough that He's about to wipe them out from history  
He's about to cancel them  
But He relents and then He says this to Moses

Exodus 34

<sup>6</sup>The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,

This description of God is used in a number of different places in the Old Testament  
God could have and should have cancelled out the Israelites  
Because of their repeated sin against Him and others  
But He doesn't,  
He is the God of grace and mercy

And not only to them but also to us  
God shows everyone His common grace  
Regardless of whether you believe in Him or not  
God is kind towards you  
The very fact of our lives is evidence of God's common grace  
Every heartbeat  
Every breath of our lungs  
Every drop of rain  
Is a gracious gift of our Creator

Think about all the gifts that you enjoyed and took for granted before COVID  
Freedom to travel, work, restaurants, holidays, health, friends, family  
Each and everyone of these things were never our entitlement  
These were gifts of grace from God.

But God shows us His grace in an even more pointed way through His Son Jesus

This brings us to our second point  
**Truth and Grace come through Jesus**  
Our community needs both truth and grace

When we read the gospel of John  
We see both truth and grace embodied in Jesus

**Jesus is truth because of who He is**  
The eternal word who created the world

John 1 verse 1  
In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

In the book of Genesis before anything was in existence  
Before God said "Let there be light"  
Before He brought something out of nothing  
Jesus was there  
In fact Jesus was the Word bringing reality into existence  
Reality is defined by Jesus  
What is true is defined by Jesus  
He made everything  
He made us  
But how did we respond to Him

John 1 Verse 9  
The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him.

Jesus didn't come into a thankful and receptive world  
But a world that rejected him  
A world in darkness hates being exposed by the light  
We don't like the truth

Amidst the jubilation of coming out of hard lockdown this week  
There are clearly people who are still angry with the State government  
People with signs on their fences saying give Dan the boot  
Here's one I drove past this week  
"Dan, you can't handle the truth"  
We have an interesting relationship with the truth don't we?  
We want truth applied to others  
But I think all of us struggle to have the truth applied to ourselves

We want others measured against the truth  
And we're ready to reject them when they fail to measure up  
But what if that same measure was applied to ourselves  
None of us like the truth when we're caught in its spotlight

That's why Jesus is also confronting  
Jesus is the light of truth  
And the light that gives life to all  
Is also the light that exposes the darkness of our lives  
And we find that unsettling

Why could Jesus say that He is the truth,  
The only way to God His Father  
Because Jesus is the Son of the Father

Verse 14

[14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.](#)

In one sentence  
John makes a stunning statement  
The creator becomes a creature  
The one who made us became one of us  
In Jesus we see the glory of God  
We see something of God's magnificence  
Truth from God is not at arm's length  
Many have a view that God is distant and impersonal  
But God didn't send a nameless PR person to reveal Himself  
He sent His one and only Son  
God's truth is close and personal

In the Old Testament when God revealed His glory to Moses  
Moses was at risk of being consumed by God's glory  
So God shielded Moses from experiencing the fullness of His glory  
How could a sinner experience the glory of God and survive?  
But in John we are seeing even more of God's glory than Moses  
How is that possible?  
Because Jesus is both Truth and Grace

Verse 16

[For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.](#)

God's Old Testament law is truth  
And Truth only points out your guilt when you break the commands of the law  
God's law was not able to bring us into right relationship with God  
We need more than truth we need grace

In Jesus we find this grace  
John makes a point of saying that God's grace  
His undeserved kindness is abundant

Grace upon grace  
God is not stingy towards undeserving sinners like us

We see this grace in the love that God shows to the world by sending Jesus

John 3:16

[16](#) “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. [17](#) For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

God loves the world  
Remember this is the world that hates Jesus  
If Jesus was just Truth – He would condemn the world  
But Jesus is also Grace so He loves the world that is guilty for hating Him.

In the ministry of Jesus we see both truth and grace  
Jesus was truth when he confronted the hypocrisy of the Pharisees  
Jesus preached the truth about hell, even more than he spoke about heaven  
Jesus didn't pull his punches when he told the rich ruler  
that he had to give away his wealth and follow him  
Which proved to be too much for this man  
Jesus fulfilled the law by obeying its commands  
Jesus is all truth

Jesus was also grace  
Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners when others shunned them  
Jesus welcomed children and touched lepers who others had no time for  
Jesus gave dignity to women who were treated as inferior  
He welcomed the hardened criminal dying next to him into paradise  
Jesus is all grace

And the Truth and Grace of Jesus finds its ultimate expression in the cross  
The glory of God the Father and the Son in all its fulness.

This is what Jesus prayed about the hour of his death the night before he died.

John 17

[When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, <sup>2</sup>since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. <sup>3</sup>And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.](#)

Why is the cross so glorious?  
Because we see the fulness of truth and the fulness of grace

God's commitment to the truth means He must punish our sin  
But God's commitment to grace means he loves sinners and wants to forgive our sin  
How can He do both?  
By punishing sin on Jesus on the cross  
So that He can show His grace in forgiving sinners  
Through the death of Jesus sin is cancelled and not the sinner

God's just anger towards sin is satisfied by the death of Jesus

It's very hard to find both truth and grace in a relationship  
Usually we get one or the other  
Truth without grace  
Is cold  
It has a hard-edge  
It's brutal  
Like a sledgehammer  
We're being told something harsh  
And they say it's for own good  
But they're just getting it off their chest  
And it feels like we're being hammered

But grace without truth  
Is soft and indulgent  
People tell you what you want to hear  
They always accept you but they never challenge you by disagreeing with you  
We may feel liked but love is tougher than this  
Grace without truth is a kindness that kills  
Like a diet of marshmallows

Jesus is not either or  
Jesus is both and  
He is grace and truth  
Just what we need  
The message of the gospel of Jesus Christ tells us we are wrong but that we are loved.

This is how Tim Keller puts it:  
"The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope."

Truth – we are more sinful and flawed than we ever dared believe  
Grace – we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope

I don't know how many relationships you have  
Where someone sees you at your very worst  
And gives you their very best  
And this is exactly what Jesus does  
This is the cross of Christ  
This is the good news of Christ

This is why every single one of us  
Needs the truth and grace of Jesus  
Do you know this truth and grace?  
Do you remember this truth and grace?  
Come to the foot of the cross and ask Jesus for this truth and grace

If you are a follower of Jesus  
Well you need to show this truth and grace to others

In fact, God's people should be a community of truth and grace

I want you to write these two sentences down

This is your homework for the week

Two sentences that will help you as you come out of lockdown

These two sentences will help you rebuild your relationship with God and with others.

Are you ready:

"I'm wrong, please forgive me"

"You're wrong, and I love you"

I'm wrong please forgive me.

This is a comment that recognises when we fail to live up to the truth

But it is also humble enough to receive grace

This is how every Christian began and continues in their relationship with Jesus

And it is also how we should relate to each other

In fact, we are about to celebrate the Lord's Supper

This is a meal we have together where we say to God and to each other

"I'm wrong please forgive me"

So often the thing we hear when someone does the wrong thing

"I'm not wrong", "I'm not sorry"

"I'm sorry that you feel that way"

This should not be the way for people who know Jesus

We surrender our pride

We recognise we are liars and hypocrites

We need to keep saying "I'm wrong, please forgive me"

The thing that Jesus did so well is this.

He could say "You're wrong but I love you"

This was what Jesus' ministry was all about

He told people that they needed to repent

In other words, you're sinful

You're doing the wrong thing

You need to change

But at the same time, he would do that with tears of love in his eyes

He would do that filled with compassion

He would do that with the eagerness to forgive

And he was willing to pay the cost of this forgiveness

So often, the message we hear in our society is this

"You're wrong and I hate you"

Every time someone writes a hate filled comment online

Every time someone issues angry expletives at a politician

Every time someone yells at other drivers on the road

Every time someone refuses to forgive someone who is sorry

You're wrong and I hate you

This should not be the way for people of the cross

For we know the comfort of our Saviour Jesus

Who said to us "You're wrong and I love you"  
This is truth and grace  
So learn how to say "You're wrong and I love you"  
Every time you share the gospel of Jesus with someone  
That is in effect what you are doing  
You are saying "You're wrong and I love you"  
You are bringing truth and grace

Truth and Grace matter in community  
Truth and Grace come through Jesus  
We need the truth and grace of Jesus  
And we need to show His truth and grace

Let's pray