

2022 11 06 – Walking a Path of Truth

Scripture: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17 (The Inclusive Bible)

Nearly everyday, in my inbox, I receive emails that are full of lies, from people and organizations who are trying to scam me. Sometimes, the deception is obvious, other times I have to do a little research to figure out whether I should open the attachment or click on the link that they have provided. I also get phone calls with false messages and sometimes the lies even arrive in my Canada Post mail box. Lies and deception are not new things, but in this world of social media and online messaging they can be spread faster and more efficiently than ever before. We have to be constantly on our guard to figure out what is true and what is false.

If any of you are following the political news coming from our neighbour to the south these days, you will be very aware of the dangers of lies and deception.

Here is an excerpt from [a CBC article](#) written earlier this week:

Warning that democracy itself is in peril, U.S. President Joe Biden called on Americans Wednesday night to use their ballots in next week's midterm elections to stand up against lies, violence and dangerous "ultra MAGA" election disruptors who are trying to "succeed where they failed" in subverting the 2020 elections.

This is no time to stand aside, he declared. "Silence is complicity."

After weeks of reassuring talk about America's economy and inflation, Biden turned to a darker, more urgent message, warning in the final days of midterm election voting that democracy itself is under threat from former president Donald Trump's election-denying lies and the violence he said they inspire.

Some of you may believe this is just political banter, but I believe President Biden is speaking the truth. Lies are dangerous. They can and do lead to violence and even war. [Matthew Fox](#), in his [daily meditations](#) this week has also been talking about this subject. He refers to earlier times of violence when he writes:

Hitler knew a lot about the soul of the Germans in the 1930's—the depression, the poverty, the loss of WWI, the resentment, the anger—and he tapped into it successfully. With, of course, the help of professional propagandists and liars and the use of the media of his time. In fact, Hitler declared that “there would be no Third Reich without the media.”

Today's scripture reading also talks about lies and deception. The author of the second letter to the Thessalonians, is warning this early Christian church about a previous letter that they have received. He says, “don't become easily agitated or disturbed by some prophecy, report or letter falsely attributed to us... Let no one deceive you, in any way.”

The topic of these letters happens to be the second coming of Christ and the controversy is over whether this was something that would happen in the future

or an event that had already taken place. I'm not going to spend any time on that particular escatological topic today. That's for another sermon. Today I want to stay focussed on the concept of lies and deception or, if we look at it from the opposite direction, truth and honesty.

Mahatma Gandhi once said that, "The way of peace is the way of truth.

Truthfulness is even more important than peacefulness." Often, when we listen to another person's truth our hearts and minds are opened. Immediately, I can think of two Truth and Reconciliation Commissions that have made an incredible impact on two different countries on opposite sides of this world:

- First, the truth-telling that took place in South Africa when Apartheid ended and,
- Second, the Truth & Reconciliation Commission here in Canada that has shed light on the impact of Residential Schools

We are only beginning to understand the truth of racism and its impact on all people of colour in North America. Movements like Black Lives Matter, Me Too, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Every Child Matters, have just started to shed light on the racist and misogynist realities of our society.

But the importance of truth is not just felt at a societal level. It is also key in our personal relationships and, most importantly, within our own beings. Too often, lying, even to ourselves, seems easier than accepting the truth. Scott Peck, psychiatrist, and author of *The Road Less Travelled*, writes:

Truth or reality is avoided when it is painful. We can revise our maps only when we have the discipline to overcome that pain. To have such discipline, we must be totally dedicated to truth. That is to say that we must always hold truth, as best we can determine it, to be more important, more vital to our self-interest, than our comfort. Conversely, we must always consider our personal discomfort relatively unimportant and, indeed, even welcome it in the service of the search for truth. Mental health is an ongoing process of dedication to reality at all costs.

<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/8648608-truth-or-reality-is-avoided-when-it-is-painful-we>

I would add that truth is essential to not just our mental but also our spiritual, emotional and physical health. It is also the key to peaceful living. If we are to be advocates for peace in the world, then we first need to find peace within ourselves. That is only possible when we are willing to face our own truth, no matter how murky or uncomfortable. In order to overcome our own shadows, we must first light them up with the power of truth.

Like those early Christians in Thessalonica, we can stand firm and face our truth because we know we are loved unconditionally. We can stand firm and face our truth because we know that the Spirit of Love is with wherever we are. We can stand firm and face our truth because we are a part of a caring, faith community

In the face of lies and deception, in a world of war and violence, may we walk a path of truth and love, may we go the way of peace. Amen.