### “All the Truth” Steve Finlan for The First Church, June 15, 2025

**Ephesians 4:21–25; 5:1**

21 For surely you have heard about him and were taught in him, as truth is in Jesus, 22 to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. 25 So then, putting away falsehood, let each of you speak the truth with your neighbor, for we are members of one another. . . 1Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.

**John 16:12–15, 27**

12 “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14 He will glorify me because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 15 All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. . . 27for the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.”.”

You know how words have different meanings in different settings. “Truth” can mean something is factual. The cop might say “I truly saw you run that red light.” That’s referring to a material *fact*; it has nothing to do with a spiritual *Truth*. Spiritual Truth refers to something Godlike in the intellectual realm, something of the reality of God that we experience in our minds.

Sometimes we think of Truth as something hard and fast, set in concrete. I think we are confusing Truth with fact, because a fact *is* something that really is hard and fast. It happened a certain way, and you cannot change what happened. But Truth is more dynamic; we experience it as an inward spiritual reality.

I want to go deeper here, and talk about Truth in connection with divinity. Divinity is God-likeness; divinity means Godly quality. For instance, goodness is divinity expressed in the moral or interpersonal realm. We surely know when we have received goodness from someone! Even small acts of kindness can really affect us. Truth, on the other hand, is divinity in the *intellectual* realm, in the mind. When we encounter Truth it makes life meaningful for us. If “God is love” is meaningful to you, it is true because you have *experienced* this Truth in your life.

And so, *fact* may be something that is set in stone, whether or not you have experienced it. But Truth is something that you only know if you have experienced it. Jesus said, “You will know the truth and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32). The premise, the first clause, speaks of *knowing* the Truth. “Knowing” means some kind of personal experience you have.

Here’s a story that illustrates how the experience of Truth-discovery can make everything new. There were two sisters who had a hypochondriac mother and who suffered from hypochondria themselves. They were full of fear and anxiety, always imagining some new disease. It was doing serious damage to their marriages and crippling their lives, until they went to a sermon given by a pastor whose own mother had been a hypochondriac. He cited some scriptures that promised a way out of fear into faith, from unreality to reality.

He quoted “**Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect**” (Rom 12:2). He also read 2 Cor 10:5: “We demolish every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” And he cited another passage from Paul: “whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (Phil 4:8).

The women came to the pastor in tears after the sermon, and he gave them more guidance. They realized these passages provided Truth that they could use against their delusions and anxieties. They waged battle against falsehood, they provided support to each other, and in time they conquered their disorder. They were set free by Truth (timburt.org/blog/an-inspirational-story-the-miraculous-power-of-truth).

Now let us look at the Truth passage in the John reading. First notice that we hear about being guided into *all* the Truth. Does that mean into any Truth that is relevant to us at any given moment of our lives? Does it mean being guided toward a deeper understanding of life and of right and wrong? Does it mean being able to develop a profound philosophy of living? I think the answer is “yes” to all of these. The Ephesians passage says “Truth is in Jesus . . . clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God” (4:21, 24).

The Spirit will guide us in our pursuit of Truth. The Spirit “will take what is mine and declare it to you” (John 16:14). All the Truth and goodness that Jesus revealed in his life is like a treasure trove that is open to us. We can start to take on his character. And there is no limit, for “all that the Father has is mine” (16:15). By following the Spirit, we are following Jesus. And by following Jesus we are following God. We follow the path set before us, with Jesus’ love as the guiding light.

I mentioned developing a philosophy of living. This takes courage and time. It will probably take years. You will have to deal with the perplexing problems of life and persevere with faith to discover deep and ultimate meaning. You have to learn to overcome your own fears and prejudices, to seek out education in areas where you need it, and to find courage through acting upon the best you know. These may be mountains for you to climb, but you will not climb alone. This may be part of what is meant by “speaking the truth with your neighbor” (Eph 4:25). It’s not just *speaking* Truth, it’s *living* in loyalty to Truth.

Maybe the whole goal of living truthfully is to be imitators of God, as beloved children, as the Ephesians passage says. Even though the finite is miniscule compared to the Infinite, and the human is tiny compared to God, nevertheless we are called to start allowing God to transform us, to make us more Godly.

Thus, imitating God is our calling. Of course, we can hardly think of what imitating an Infinite personality would be like, and so we try instead to imitate Jesus, about whom we know something. So when I hear “imitate God” I convert it to “imitate Jesus.”

All of this affirms the value of persons. We are more valuable than religious symbols or holy days. Jesus affirmed that “the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27 RSV).

The Spirit affirms for us that our personality is not derived from nature, but is a spiritual reality that is God-given and that, to some degree, transcends time and space.

All these passages can help each one of us in developing a philosophy of living. That philosophy will need revising as you try it out in life. And life may “get in the way” of your plans as it often does, but the desire to seek God will lead you to real Truth that guides you and brings you freedom. Imitate God by seeking to become like Jesus. Know that your personality is valuable to God, and loved by God. For you are unique, there is no other *you* in all the world, or in all the universe. And you are cherished by the angels and loved by God.

These are truths that can be experienced. They are *living* truths. Honest Truth-seeking is the way to heaven. And in all your finding, don’t forget to let yourself *be found* by the Father who searches diligently for every lost sheep. Trust this as you go forward.