

MAY 3...TRUTH OR DARE...COMMUNION SUNDAY

There's a game most kids know about. It's called:

Truth or Dare!

Anyone ever play Truth or Dare?

When you play truth or dare you ask someone

What do you want? A TRUTH OR A DARE?

TRUTH means that you have to answer truthfully *any question* someone might ask you, however lewd or embarrassing that question might be.

A DARE means that someone is going to ask you to do something probably really crazy, and that because you agreed to the dare you are going to have to do it to save face.

So, for instance, my son long ago took a dare. He took the dare because he was afraid someone was going to ask him whether or not he liked a certain girl in the class. Which he actually did, but he didn't want to own up to it.

So instead of making it so that he had to tell the truth about this fact, he chose a dare. The dare was that he was asked to do a chicken dance around one of his teachers...which he did.

I asked him:

Now why do a chicken dance around someone, when you could tell the truth?

Well, mom, it's embarrassing to tell the truth.

But it's the truth isn't it?

Yeah, but the kids will think I'm stupid; they'll make fun of me.

And they won't make fun of you if you do the chicken dance around the teacher?

This game is a puzzle to me. I don't understand it; .

The biblical understanding of truth means non-concealment. No hiding. The disclosure of the full or real state of affairs:

This is the message we have heard (declares John) that God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5)

No hiding. No darkness. The full or real state of affairs revealed. And sometimes that's hard to take.

Can you think of a time when you didn't want to know the full or real state of affairs?

- Every time you don't open the bills right away after a major vacation it means you don't want to know the full or real state of affairs.

- Or if you gained five pounds and don't diet because you convince yourself that the scale is broken and your pants must have shrunk it's because the full or real state of affairs is just too painful.

- Every time you close your eyes on a roller coaster because the slope is too steep and the speed too fast, it's because you don't want to know the full or real state of affairs. There might be six more of these drops that you have to endure and you'd rather not know.

- Or that thing in the refrigerator you forgot about – you don't want to peel back the cover on the container and reveal the full or real state of affairs.

In a more serious vein, who likes to be told that they are a workaholic and that they need to do something about it?

Or who wants to take a hard look at one's marriage or family and realize that although the outside might look great, on the inside things are falling apart.

It's not always easy to deal with the truth.

Today we are dealing with two very real truths – the cross and the resurrection.

Both are true, and both for certain reasons are hard to handle.

Both the cross and the resurrection require a TRUTH AND A DARE

Here's why...

THE TRUTH OF THE CROSS IS HARD TO DEAL WITH

I don't like to look at

I don't like to look at the cross.

I don't want to see myself as having **any liability for the death of Jesus.** / *don't want to admit that.*

Jesus hangs there on the cross and tells me who I am, and what I am capable of doing. (IMAGE OF CROSS)

The cross reveals to me the grotesqueness of what occurs when I am separated from God...Jesus shows me this in his own being...hanging there

And yet I **have to look at it.**

The dare of the cross is to actually to look at the truth of who I am without God.

When I look at the cross, and Jesus suffering there, I see the truth I don't want to see.

I get the reality of life without God – the hell of that

I see Jesus experiencing what I deserve.

The truth of this terrifies me.

The cross is straight up holy honesty

What I mean by that is...God is saying "You blew it"...loud and clear

There is no denial...no chicken dance on God's part
Trying to somehow soft pedal the truth of how separated I am from Him
to make it easier for me –
No. The cross on the one hand should terrify me...a truth that is hard to
look at

Scripture says...

**If we claim to be without sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in
us ...(1 John 1:8.)**

But God says to you and to me...LOOK AT IT...LOOK AT THE CROSS
IF I REFUSE TO LOOK AT IT, then I am not aware of the true state of
Affairs – my sin, my separation from him

It's only because I have looked at the awful truth of the cross that I can so
much more readily appreciate
God coming to be with me on my terms, before I even
knew I was broken.

Truth or dare!

Can I take the truth of what the cross is telling me about myself...my
need for God or...

Do I dare to live without Jesus, and do a chicken dance around my need
for him?

Or do I recognize the truth of my sin....like the thief hanging there...who
cried out to Jesus...I *deserve* to die...*I am a thief*...but you are a giver and
you have done nothing wrong...

And then take the dare, in my sorry state, to fall on God's mercy and
ask...**JESUS REMEMBER ME**

Don't forget me...There's something awfully wrong with me, there's
nothing wrong with you

**I am a sinner...you are truth and light...I take the dare to ask you to save
me by your grace**

Remember me!

Rescue me!

And of course Jesus response to the thief in all of us by giving us a free gift we don't have to steal by saying...

"Today you will be with me in paradise"

A lot of scholars have debated what that word paradise really means

I think the point of Jesus response to the thief is the first part of that statement..."You will be with me"

Cause I don't care where I am..if I'm with Jesus its got to be pretty good

We have an "I WANT TO BE WITH YOU GOD"

That's what the cross was for

Reconciling us to him

The thing about God's love and forgiveness is that it is bigger than the horror of the cross.

But we can't grasp God's love until we take the dare to look at the truth of the grotesqueness of the cross and grasp the enormity of what he has rescued us from.

But when we do, we find that there is also a truth and a dare in the resurrection

The truth of the resurrection is that God is victorious over the worst that evil can do.

He reigns victorious over darkness...nothing evil can destroy his living presence in our lives.

That's the truth.

He bursts forth from an empty tomb that is cold and dark and smells of death

Death that would separate us from him, is the very vehicle he uses for our reconciliation to him, by being triumphant over it.

So today when we cry out, in whatever darkness we might find ourselves in,

“Jesus remember me..Jesus look down on me..Jesus have mercy on me.”

Like the thief on the cross, I know my need

His response is...”Today you can and will be with me...because of the cross.”

Of course I will remember you.

If the truth of the resurrection is that God is victorious over the worst that evil can do, guess what the dare of the resurrection is?

The DARE is this – that you receive his living presence and trust his love for you today.

We don’t do that very well.

Sometimes we think that God loves everyone else but us

That he forgives everyone else, but sort of has a chip on his shoulder when it comes to me...

As you take communion today I dare you to take in the fact that ***If you were the only one in the world, God would have gone to the cross just for you, and risen victorious from the tomb just for you.***

God wants you to know that he chose YOU...and YOU...and YOU...the object of his affection

To rescue, to deliver, to save, to reconcile

So that we could be with him...

(STORY OF CLEFT PALLET)

Then all of a sudden we start to recognize Who it is we worship

And that because of His amazing grace

we are forgiven,

we are set free,

that there is no condemnation,

that **We have a God who went through hell to bring us heaven**

We start to be so grateful for that Love who pursued us and just refuses to give up on people...

So we could be with him..

I'd like you to DARE to ponder the TRUTH of the cross today as we take communion now.

Look at the cross and take the dare to look at it and be terrified by the TRUTH of it -Where would we be without Jesus?

And then, after you really think about that, which is horrifying, allow yourself to recognize another truth -
which is God's love - an ironclad eternal truth, stronger than our darkness...victorious over the worst darkness
And then DARE to receive the truth of that love, just for you

Reach out like the thief on the cross did and say...I am unworthy but...Jesus, remember me ...forgive me Lord...I DARE to receive you and the unspeakable gift of your salvation.