"The Truth hurts sometimes"

Let me just say from the very beginning, that I am probably going to say some things that may make you feel a little uneasy this morning. But when I say uneasy, I mean that your comfort zones may get a little shake.

We are going to see a side to the Word of God that many people don’t like to talk about, but if we are to teach the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, we cannot ignore the parts that make us feel uncomfortable.

A woman was preparing some pancakes for her sons, Johnny, who was 5, and Alex, who was 3. The two boys began to argue over who would get the first pancake. So their mother decided that this would be a good opportunity to teach them a moral lesson. So she said to them, "If Jesus were sitting here, He would say, 'Let my brother have the first pancake, I can wait." Little Johnny quickly turned to his younger brother and said to him, "Okay, Alex, you be Jesus!"

And I guess the moral of the story is, being a good example of Jesus needs to involve handling the truth like Jesus did. We are going to look at how Jesus handled the truth, especially when He was in debate with other people. We are going to learn how we should handle the truth and come to the understanding that people will often be offended by it and that’s because sometimes the truth hurts.

2 Timothy 3:16+17 “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

Timothy tells us that all scripture of God breathed. And you need to understand that when God says “All” He means “All”. Everything written within the Old Testament and everything written within the New Testament. “All scripture is God-breathed.”

But we are living in a time where some people want to rip the Bible to shreds and discredit it. We are living in a time where many religions of the world, even so-called Christians are placing less and less faith in the Word of God. We are living in a time where so-called religious people are using and twisting the Word of God to suit their own needs.

But how are we going to handle the truth? Are we going to stand up proudly and say, “Yes, we have the truth and everyone else doesn’t and that’s just tough”? Or are we going to handle the truth like Jesus did?

Turn your Bibles to John 12:42-50 “Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved praise from men more than praise from God. When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me. I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

"As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. "There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word, which I spoke, will condemn him at the last day. For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."

Jesus has just performed miraculous signs in front of a big crowd of people and as usual we have our dear friends the Pharisees in the crowd. They have just questioned Jesus about His up and coming death but they didn’t understand what was going on.
But this was no surprise to Jesus because He knew that the reason they couldn’t understand was because God had prophesied that this would happen through Isaiah prophet in Isaiah 6:10 where he says, “Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”

You see, like we saw a moment ago in 2 Timothy 3:16+17, the Bible says the Bible is good for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training. And it’s by teaching the truth that you can set people free, like we spoke about last time.

Now let me ask you, what is stopping you from becoming free? What’s stopping you from becoming a Christian? Is it embarrassment from your friends at work or school? What if you are already a Christian, what’s stopping you from becoming free? You see freedom is when your walk reflects the truth that you talk.

But how can you walk and talk the truth, if your best friends and your family don’t even know you’re a Christian? How can you say I’m a Christian and then go out and get drunk every weekend? How can you look like Jesus but at the same time, spend all your time gossiping about people? What’s stopping you all from walking and talking the truth?

You see for the religious leaders at the time of Jesus, it was the Pharisees who stopped some of people from becoming followers of Jesus. But it wasn’t just the Pharisees who stopped the religious leaders from becoming followers; it was their love of praise from men.

The Message puts John 12:42+43 this way, “On the other hand a considerable number from the ranks of the leaders did believe. But because of the Pharisees, they didn’t come out in the open with it. They were afraid of getting kicked out of the meeting place. When punch came to shove they cared more for human approval than for God’s glory.”

Remember these are religious men and they had a chance for freedom from all the religious ceremonies and sacrificing, which Jesus was bringing to an end anyway. But they were afraid of loosing their jobs, their highly paid jobs, I may add. But they liked their job, which was so much in the public eye, which was so well thought of by men and they loved it all. You see, the Jews had the emotions of religion but they didn’t want Jesus as He was. They looked good and that’s all that mattered to them, but God knows the hearts of men.

Isaiah 1:10-17 “Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; listen to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah! “The multitude of your sacrifices-- what are they to me?” says the LORD. “I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations-- I cannot bear your evil assemblies. Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are full of blood; wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.”

Now loved ones, that’s strong language but you need to understand that this is God speaking about His own people. And we as Christian can easily go through the motions of our religion but not have our hearts in it. We can easily talk the talk but never walk the walk.
Now that’s the truth and I know it hurts us sometimes but we need to be pleasing to God, not to people. You shouldn’t be ashamed of being a Christian because Jesus said, your not the light in your house; you’re the light of the world. You’re not the salt in a shaker; you’re the salt of the earth.

Jesus said in John 12:44-46, "When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me. When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me. I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness."

When Jesus came to earth, the world at that time saw God. But when He ascended back to heaven, He left His followers behind. And for just over 2000 years His followers have been trying there hardest to look like their saviour.

You see, you can’t mix Christianity with continuous immoral living. You can’t proclaim Jesus as Lord with your lips and then go out and have an affair with the man next door. You just can’t do it, because Jesus has brought you into the light and out of the darkness.

Colossians 1:10-14 "And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." You can’t mix an ungodly walk with a godly talk.

It’s like the man who goes to the doctors and says, “OK doc, give it to me straight, tell me in plain English, what’s wrong with me, I can take it? And the doctor says, “OK you just plain lazy.” The man says, “OK tell me the technical name for it, so I can go home and tell my wife.”

And that brings me to my next point; there are some people who are sharing the Word of God with others for the wrong reasons.

Jeremiah calls them ear-tickling preachers. In other words, they are just out to please people. They tell people what they want to hear, not what they need to hear. And there was a time just like that during the time of Jeremiah the prophet. He spoke to the Israelites when they were in captivity.

Jeremiah told them that they were going to be in captivity for a long time because their hearts were hardened towards their God. And much like the people of the world today, nobody wants to hear bad news. So the people tried and tried again to get rid of Jeremiah and kill him because they only wanted to hear good news.

God describes what was going on in Jeremiah 5:31. “The prophets prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own authority, and my people love it this way.” Jeremiah 6:13+14 “From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit. They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace,' they say, when there is no peace.”

I love that phrase in there, where Jeremiah says, “They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious.” In other words, they covered the seriousness of their spiritual condition with outwardly ceremonies. They looked great and they carried on as though everything was fine but spiritually they were dying. And God says, His people love it that way.
“The Truth hurts sometimes”

A mother put some turnip on her son's dinner plate, which was one of his least favourite vegetables, but she told him to eat everything. He cleaned his plate, except for the turnip. She pointed out to him that if he had eaten the turnip first; he would have not been left with its taste in his mouth at the end of the meal. The young boy said, "I suppose I was trying to delay the inedible."

And that’s why many preachers today like to give you nothing but good news. There sermons are designed to make you feel good about yourself but really they don’t promote a response from their listeners. They are trying to put off the inedible. They are trying to keep away from the subject of judgement.

John 12:47+48 "As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. “There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word, which I spoke, will condemn him at the last day.”

The very Word they are supposed to be preaching from will be the Word that judges them when Christ returns. Because many of these people just preach and teach some of the Word. They teach the parts of the Bible that having nothing but good news in it. The parts of the Bible that doesn’t promote a response from their listeners.

You never hear words like “Repent or Turn from your wicked ways.” You never hear words like “Hell or Condemnation.” And the reason you don’t hear these words is because those words are offensive and the people love good news.

And we can’t have people repenting now can we? We can’t tell people that Hell is a very real place can we? We can’t tell people that if they haven’t fully obeyed the gospel of grace they are in trouble on judgement day can we?

Well you see as God’s children we are His ambassadors; we are God’s delivery people. 2 Corinthians 5:20 “We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.”

So we are to preach the truth to people on God’s behalf. But like I said the last time, we need to preach the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. But the truth hurts sometimes doesn’t it?

Sometimes that is how it needs to be, now please don’t leave here today all fired up thinking I am going to go out and tell everyone in the world they have it wrong. Because how you handle the truth and arrogance are two different things.

The truth may offend people but it’s your intent that counts. You see even when Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law in Matthew 23 where He continually says, “Woe to you Pharisees and teachers of the Law.” And He calls them “Blind guides and fools.”

Jesus said these things with the intent of getting them to look at themselves. He wanted them to realise that their ways were wrong and so bring about their repentance. Now you might ask, where does it say that in the text?

Well I show you, in Luke 23:34 when Jesus was on the cross, he said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." He rebuked them because he loved them. “For God so loved the Pharisees, he gave His One and only Son.” He was still willing to die for them.
Do you remember in Acts 2 when Peter preached the first gospel sermon and many responded? He repeatedly told the Jews that they were the ones who killed Jesus. They were the ones who had crucified the Christ. The long awaited Messiah, God Himself, was brutally killed by them.

Now can you imagine what that would have been like to have been there and been told that you are guilty of killing the anointed one? Well, in a sense you were there because Jesus died for your sins too. So we are just as guilty as those who were there at that time.

But in Acts 2:37 it says, "When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" The reason they were cut to the heart was because they understood what they had done and now they are panicking. Panicking because they probably thought that God Himself was going to appear in front of them at any moment.

They were expecting God to wipe them off the face of the earth. They were probably expecting bolts of lightening to come down from heaven to zap them all to death. And the reason they were expecting all this to happen to them was because they realised the seriousness of their crime, they deserved to die.

Now Peter’s sermon offended many of them who were listening and so some people just went on their way because the truth hurt them. But there were also 3000 other people who were offended but wanted to know how to make up for what they had done.

That’s why they said, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And it’s because Peter was preaching for a response, that’s why he got a response. He may have offended many people but it was for their own good.

And can you imagine how they would have felt after Peter told them what they must do? Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

I would imagine that they would be thinking to themselves, we’ve just killed the Messiah and now you’re talking about forgiveness and a gift! The truth hurts but sometimes people need to know the truth. The truth about God, the truth written within the Word of God and the truth about themselves. Loved ones, you need to know the Truth.

You need try and get to know your God and Saviour, Jesus Christ a just a little more each day of your life. You need to try and understand a little more of His Word, the Bible, everyday. Do you know one of the things that scares me the most about being a preacher and teacher of the Word of God? James 3:1 “Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know one of the things that scares me the most about being a preacher and teacher of the Word of God? James 3:1 “Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.”

Now that scares me but the good news for me is that, I won’t be judged on how you receive the Word of God. I won’t be judged with what you do with the Word after you’ve heard it being preached. But I will be judged with what I do with it after I have heard it being preached to me. 2 Timothy 3:16+17 says “The Bible is also useful for correcting”.

A three-year-old boy decided to put his shoes on by himself but his mother noticed that the left shoe was on the right foot. She said, "Son, your shoes are on the wrong feet." He looked up at her with a raised brow and said, "Don't kid me, Mum, they're the only feet I've got"

And the point is that “There is only one body and one Spirit-- just as you were called to one hope when you were called-- one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”
And you need to understand that there is only one road to heaven. There is only one truth. In Matthew 15:3-9 when the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law questioned Jesus about His disciples not washing their hands, Jesus said to them.

"And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, 'Honour your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,' he is not to 'honour his father' with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: "'These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.'"

You see if we don’t practice what we preach, we nullify the Word of God. And so we need to be corrected from time to time and there’s nothing wrong with being corrected. And let me just say this, if ever I preach or teach anything which isn’t in line with God’s Word, then it’s your responsibility to tell me. Because I will stand corrected and be forever thankful that you were honest enough to tell me of my error.

And when Jesus was talking about the words He spoke, he said in John 12:49+50 “For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."

Jesus spoke the very words the Father told Him to speak. He spoke in the very way the Father asked Him to speak. We have the Word of God today, which according to Hebrews 4:12 is “Living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

Loved ones, preachers don’t make Christians. All the sermons and funny stories I ever share with you will never make someone become a Christian. It’s the Word of God that creates Christians. Because it’s a living Word and it’s active in the lives of those people who are Christians today. Romans 10:17 “Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”

Let me finish by saying this, “You can know the truth, and the truth will set you free." The truth hurts sometimes but it could be for your own good. Many other people believe they are following the truth and we are going to look at whose truth they are really following in a few weeks time. Some people like to say that they are true worshippers of God because they have seen miracles and received visions and they’ve seen wonders.

Well, Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 2:9+10 “The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.”

People are going to perish because they refuse to love the truth and they want to feel good and look good. They fail to see that the truth will set them free, Oh, I’m sure it will hurt but it will hurt because they will have realised they have been deceived.

I know this has been a tough sermon for you to listen to but believe me it’s even tougher to preach. But it’s also tough when you have to examine yourself before you go out and help others understand the truth. It will hurt, just like it hurt God when he got inspired men to write all the bad reports about His own people in the Bible. It will hurt, just like it hurt God to have to send His one and only Son into the world to pay the price for your sins.
The truth is so vital to what we believe. The complete revelation of God is the only thing that we can be sure of to give us life to the full as Christians and to lead us to eternal life. The Bible is the only reference book we have to fall back on and trust and I get concerned when people start studying other books in place of the Bible at Bible study.

Let me leave you with the words of Solomon, who had the right attitude towards our God. Ecclesiastes 12:13 “Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”

We are here to obey God and to please Him, not ourselves. And if you’re not a Christian this morning then you too can please God by being obedient to His word. The truth will set you free and maybe it will hurt but it’s for your own good.

If after reading this you want to know more about the truth of God’s word or if this sermon has raised other questions in your thoughts then please just contact me and I will get back to you as soon as possible.

God bless and thanks for taking the time to grow in your understanding of God’s Word.