

SERMON – Oct. 29<sup>th</sup>, 2006

Mark 10 “Truth that opens the Eyes”

G&P.....

**In 1987 an IRA bomb went off in a town west of Belfast. Eleven died; 63 were wounded. Gordon Wilson, a cloth merchant and devout Methodist, was buried with his 20-year-old daughter under five feet of concrete and brick. "Daddy, I love you very much," were Marie's last words, grasping her father's hand.**

**From his hospital bed, Wilson said, "I've lost my daughter, but I bear no grudge. Bitter talk is not going to bring Marie back. I shall pray every night that God will forgive them."**

**Once recovered, Wilson crusaded for reconciliation. Protestant extremists who had planned to avenge the bombing decided, because of the publicity surrounding Wilson, that such behavior would be politically foolish. Wilson wrote a book about his daughter and spoke out against violence, constantly repeating, "Love is the bottom line."**

**He met with the IRA, personally forgave them, and asked them to lay down their arms. "You've lost loved ones, just like me," he told them. "Surely, enough blood has been spilled."**

**When he died in 1995, all Ireland and Britain honored this ordinary citizen for his uncommon forgiveness.**

Philip Yancey, *What's So Amazing About Grace?* (Zondervan, 1997)

A glimpse of God in Jesus Christ teaches the world the bottom line in Life: Love. To love when Love is hard. TO love when to love challenges the anger we feel. To love when we would just as soon walk away. To love because ..... this is what our Lord teaches us to do. It is the Truth of who Jesus is. Love is Jesus, the truth of God.

The Truth of God was walking through the streets of Jericho at the place where the walls had fallen, near the Jordan river where Jesus had been baptized some three years before. The Truth of God was walking amidst the crowds of people who had been following him for weeks and days. The truth of God was laughing and teaching as he walked. As the Truth of God walked on the dirt road at the edge of town. A voice of a broken man cried out. This voice was seeking the truth of God. He was blind, he could not see what everyone else was seeing. But this man broken in physical sight, knew in his heart

that the truth of God had just walked by.

He cried with a voice that came from the very heart of the soul:

“Son of David, have compassion on me!”

Many tried to silence him. “Be quiet, you blind guy. We don't like your kind!”

But the more they tried to silence his mouth, the more his soul cried out:

“Son of David, have loving kindness on me!”

The truth of God stopped in his tracks, turning in the direction of the voice of one crying from the very heart of the soul: “Call him over here.”

Now the same voices that wanted to silence him, were saying in amazement:

“He's calling for you!”

The one broken, the one covered with the shawl of brokenness, threw that shawl off and jumped to his feet. The one broken went to the voice who was calling him.

The truth of God asked him: “What can I do for you?”

There was no time to get the list out.

“Teacher, Please let me see again.”

A broad smile came across the face of the Truth of God. “Be on your way, your faith has saved and healed you.”

At once the scales fell like rain and he could see the truth of God standing before him. His heart jumped and rejoiced at not only seeing, but more importantly, seeing the truth of God standing in front of him. He followed this truth of God up the road to Jerusalem.

This truth of God had thrown the shawl of brokenness off of his shoulders and had set him free. This grace washed his eyes clean so that he could see with eyes as well as his heart.

**JN 8:31-37 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?"**

**Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.**

Jesus is the truth of God, he is the one who sets Bartimaeus free, he is the one who sets you and I free from the lies that bind us. Jesus, the truth of God, sets us free by the words of forgiveness so that

we can live such a word in a world that dearly needs such a word of life. We are so amazed at the power of a Gordon Wilson who dares to live this truth in spite of the senseless death of his daughter. Because he cannot live in the grief and anger that would surely kill him as well. He challenged the IRA and he challenges the way we live.

In Jesus, there is no eye for an eye. In Jesus, there is no retribution for the crime committed. In Jesus, there is only a death for a death. In his death, we also die in the waters of our baptisms to all those things that keep us blind to the love for our neighbor. In his death, we also die to the sin that binds us in the prison of sin.

It is only Jesus who can free us. It is the only the truth of Jesus that enables us to throw off the shawl of brokenness and walk in his grace. What is the shawl of brokenness for you? Is it disease that has your every waking moment? Is your shawl of brokenness a sense of loss of a loved one who has died? Is your shawl of brokenness something that you cannot let go of? Jesus is calling for you in this story. You and I are the ones by the road seeking mercy and compassion and loving kindness from the truth of God, Jesus Christ.

Let it fall off of your shoulders as the grace of Jesus Christ touches your heart. This certainly is the story of Martin Luther who gives us glimpse of his faith and the grace of Jesus in the song that we are going to sing following this sermon. It is a story of enduring the unspeakable and being called by the grace that heals, and the truth that sets us free.

**In intense turmoil, Luther wrote his greatest hymn.**

**It was the worst of times--1527--one of the most trying years of Luther's life.**

**On April 22, a dizzy spell forced Luther to stop preaching in the middle of his sermon. For ten years, since publishing his 95 Theses against the abuse of indulgences, Luther had been buffeted by political and theological storms; at times his life had been in danger. Now he was battling other reformers over the meaning of the Lord's Supper. To Luther, their errors were as great as those of Rome--the very gospel was at stake--and Luther was deeply disturbed and angry. He suffered severe depression.**

**Then, on July 6, as friends arrived for dinner, Luther felt an intense buzzing in his left ear. He went to lie down, when suddenly he called, "Water or I'll die!" He became cold, and he was convinced he had seen his last night. In a loud prayer, he surrendered himself to God's will.**

With a doctor's help, Luther partially regained his strength. But this depression and illness overcame him again. Looking back on one of his bouts, he wrote his friend Melancthon, "I spent more than a week in death and hell. My entire body was in pain, and I still tremble. Completely abandoned by Christ, I labored under the vacillations and storms of desperation and blasphemy against God. But through the prayers of the saints [his friends], God began to have mercy on me and pulled my soul from the inferno below."

Meanwhile, in August, the plague had erupted in Wittenberg. As fear spread, so did many of the townspeople. But Luther considered it his duty to remain and care for the sick. Even though his wife was pregnant, Luther's house was transformed into a hospital, and he watched many friends die. Then his son became ill. Not until late November did the epidemic abate and the ill begin to recover.

During that horrific year, Luther took time to remember the tenth anniversary of his publication against indulgences, noting the deeper meaning of his trials:

**"The only comfort against raging Satan is that we have God's Word to save the souls of believers."**

Sometime that year, Luther expanded that thought into the hymn he is most famous for: "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." This verse, translated by Frederick Hedge in 1853, comes from one of more than sixty English versions:

**And though this world with devils filled**

**should threaten to undo us,**

**We will not fear, for God has willed**

**his truth to triumph through us.**

**The prince of darkness grim? We tremble not for him.**

**His rage we can endure, for lo! his doom is sure.**

**One little Word shall fell him.**

"Martin Luther--The Later Years and Legacy," Christian History, Issue 39

This was the truth that set Luther free and you and I free indeed. Live that freedom of Jesus. Let this Word throw off your shawl of brokenness and be healed in the same truth of God, Jesus Christ our

Lord, crucified and risen!

Amen.