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The 18th Sunday after Pentecost
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True U-He, She, They or ?

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Well today we begin a new sermon series it's titled **True U** - standing for Truth University. When I think about truth today, it reminds me of something I heard on the radio recently. I like to listen to Armstrong and Getty, and they said, and I quote” We’re living in the spicy times.” In fact, they they're making a T-shirt about living in the spicy times. What are they talking about?

Well first of all when you hear spicy, you probably think of hot food; food that's quite spicy. But they're talking about society and the world we're living in right now. It's a world that's hot, it's contentious, it's acrimonious, it's spicy. After all, we have a war in Ukraine which led to a referendum a week ago for voting that the areas that are still not fully occupied by the Russians, voted to say they want to be a part of Russia. And Vladimir Putin has said that if you strike them, you're striking us and that could lead to nuclear war. And then in the midst all this, somebody sabotaged the Nord Stream One and Two pipelines and released all sorts of methane into the air.

But if we just stay here with the United States, I think you will agree it's ‘the spicy times.’ It's rather contentious. There seems to be a great divide like no other since the time of the Civil War. Yeah, not the North and South, but the right and the left. And so, we have disagreements on to vax or not to vax; that is the question. We have questions on climate change; is it man caused, is it natural? Are we all gonna die? And then there is of course, the latest craze gender issues. What's your pronoun? Are you a he, she, a they? Or maybe you're into little more esoteric ones like feline. Oh indeed, it is spicy times.

What really makes food spicy? It’s an ingredient, in particular, capsaicin. Capsaicin is what makes food hot. What makes society or the

spiritual world spicy? What's that ingredient? Well, I think Paul clearly identifies it in our New Testament reading this morning as he writes to Timothy and says: "For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching but having itchy ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions." What's the spicy ingredient? People! And notice that Paul sets up a little bit of a dichotomy or a contrast here. You have people and some of them are driven by passions, by emotions, by love; and others are driven by sound teaching. Those who are following the passions, the emotions and lust surround themselves with a great number of teachers who will accommodate what they want to hear. On the other side you've got evangelists. Over here myths, manmade stories. Over here, truth-God's word. And so when we look at that, we end up asking that question much like Pilate did, what is truth? Paul's answer is quite clear; "be ready to preach the word in season and out of season."

And when we preach that word and teach that word, we are to do so in the following ways he says. We are to reprove, which means show someone who is in the wrong, their wrongness, and correct them with the truth in a loving way. But of course, if they don't listen to you, we have to up the ante, and so he says, rebuke. And to rebuke is to condemn. It's a flat out lie and if you don't change your ways, you're going to be in big trouble. We oftentimes forget the third use of God's word as we preach and teach it, and that is to exhort, encourage the person that we see following God word, by sharing God's word with them and encourage them by saying, 'you're doing just what Jesus said, or you're doing just what Saint Paul said.'

But it doesn't stop there we are to reprove, rebuke, to correct, and to train in righteousness, and where to do it with complete patience. That means we can't get mad. We have to take the time, have the concern for that lost soul because that's our goal; to give them a Saint Paul says, 'complete teaching.' Don't leave anything out. Stay with God's word, all of it. Why? Well, if you look at Paul's letter to the people of Ephesus, they had a struggle with that.

So, in Ephesians, 4:27 Paul told them, “do not give Satan a foothold.” That's the NIV version, the ESV says “don't give him an opportunity,” the new King James Version is “don't give him a place.” In other words, keep him out. But the way you keep him out is by complete teaching and not leaving out any parts of the Bible. Because if you leave those things out, he'll take it and run with it. In fact, when it comes right down to it, I'm sure you've heard, “the devil is in the details.” And, that's incorrect! The devil hates the details. So, when we look at Genesis one, he hates the message that God created the world everything starting on day one through day six rested on the 7th. He doesn't like those details. And so when the church says well doesn't really matter. He quickly slides in and says, ‘it doesn't matter, its evolution, you came about through random processes beginning with a giant explosion. But the complete teacher will say no, that's nonsense, think about what you're saying, if evolution is true then that means that as things modified and slowly evolved, they were all dying. But the reason Jesus came is because man sinned. He crossed his boundary, that's when death came into the world. The wages of sin is death. If death was always there, Christ came for nothing. You know what I shared that with people they kind of look and say, gosh I never thought about that. Do you see? It's the details.

Go to the Reformation. What was the Reformation about? Details. the Catholic Church at that time I've left out many of the details but this focusing on just one part of the scripture the lower part that can fix and then kind of adding to it by saying since you're convicted and you're going to hell because of your sin, you need to make penance and well buy a few indulgences and if you spend enough and give enough to the church God will let you in. Luther came back with, ‘we've got to get back to the details.’ Yes, the Law convicts but the gospel shows us the grace of God. His love and we are saved by grace through faith. It is not our own doing it is the gift of God and I would contend that today the modern-day church is again beginning to forget the details. Leave out the parts that show that God is the judge and only focus on God is love. Therefore, God accepts the sin of people. No, he doesn't. And within the church, we see certain groups of accumulating a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear; whether it be the scientist who says

evolution is true or the psychologist who says, yes all of the many different genders are true you need to go with he, she, they, or even feline which by the way is an accepted pool now and I actually listened to a lady who identified as feline it was sad. It's spicy, spicy, times.

The reality is found again in scripture. When we look at that passage from second Timothy and we put it together with Revelation 13. I've seen the very embodiment of the 666, the mark of the beast. What does 666 mean? Man puts himself before God. It is God who created man and woman and they were a quote; "fit for each other." But when we wipe out creation, we give a foothold to Satan and he then works through emotion, through love, through passion, whatever you want to say; and it really boils down to this the great lie it's on about you. And so, everyone needs to listen to you, because your truth, is your truth, and it really matters. And so, we must listen and accept and then identify what it is you want and what you feel. And then we must; listen to this word very carefully; I'm sure you've all heard it- "empower you." Empower you with what, godhood, whereby you can say 'I choose to be this gender, this is my truth, ruff luck, if you disagree. And if you do happen to disagree, then you're a hater.

Let's go to the great truth: the great lie-it's all about you. The great truth, well it's all about you. You see just like we saw that contrast in second Timothy, there's a contrast in the it's all about you. And from a biblical standpoint, it really is all about you. The he, she, they, feline, the spicy times of today, it's all just a distraction to get us off the reality of what scripture says. If you look at our introit from this morning from Isaiah, he says: "I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I will take you by the hand, and keep you. I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations to open the eyes that are blind. It really is all about you it's an I-God, you- His people relationship. It's a covenant. Two groups working together. What does God do? He called you, empowers you. What's our responsibility? So that we can be a light to the nations. And then that opens the next covenant. We are a covenant to them. We're the light. What's their responsibility? To see the light and to lose their blindness and to turn to the truth.

It's really all about you, not he, not she, not they, not anyone else. You cannot pass the buck. You should consider our gospel and what is said in the gospels. Notice how Jesus begins His parables, His teachings. He says, "I tell you." Or he says, I tell you the truth, which literally in the Greek is Amen. Amen. It is so. It is so. Everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God. Stand firm in God's word. Be a part of that covenant and be a covenant to the people of this world by standing firm on God's word because at the end of time, the Son of Man acknowledges you because you stayed true. He also tells us; "I tell you don't be anxious, don't worry about the he, she, they, and all of the other stuff that makes up the spicy times. He's got us. We're in His control. In Luke 13, we hear Him again saying, "I tell you, unless you repent, you will perish." And then He repeats it to show how important this is. We cannot forget the Old Testament, the Law. Sin kills. And then later in Luke 13, he says, "I tell you the truth many will seek to enter, but that way is narrow." Over and over and over Jesus says, "you, you, you, not anyone else." Yeah, it's always you.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we are living in spiritual, spicy, times. And you, we are to do the work of the evangelist. It begins by not giving Satan a foothold and standing on God's word. Ephesians 6 tells us, "put on the full armor of God." And after having done everything to stand. Stand on God's word. Even after you've done everything and maybe it's not going the way you wanted, to just stand. Stand on God's word because it is right. And stand on that complete teaching; the Law, the gospel completely taught through word and then deed; doing what you teach. And then we become that covenant, that light, so that others may see Christ through us and in us. Don't be distracted, it's all about you. Because he has called you. Not he, she, or anything else.

So be spicy, be seasoned with God's truth, be seasoned with God's love, be seasoned with God's grace. Be seasoned with God's word and tasty to the nations. In our Savior's Name, Amen.