

Meditation – “Speaking Truth”
Sunday, August 8, 2021
Scripture Reading – Ephesians 4:25-5:2
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Today’s scripture reading is Ephesians 4:25-5:2. As we prepare “to taste and see that the Lord is good” in the Sacrament of Holy Communion, let us pause to reflect on Paul’s practical instruction to young believers on how to live their new life in Christ. Listen to what the spirit is saying.

²⁵ So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. ²⁶ Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and do not make room for the devil. ²⁸ Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. ²⁹ Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. ³¹ Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, ³² and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. ⁵¹ Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, ² and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. Amen.

The title of the meditation: Speaking Truth

The text: *...let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. Ephesians 4:25*

Let us pray. Holy and loving God, thank you for the gift of our neighbors and for the home we have found at Westminster. As we reflect on your word, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of each of our hearts be acceptable in your sight. Amen.

Westminster found a home in this neighborhood outside the capital in 1908. A century later when other churches were moving westward, Westminster remained steadfast in the neighborhood and committed to invest in our home and in the homes around us. The Steadfast Neighbor Endeavor, through both matching grants and annual service weeks, provides an opportunity for our congregation to uplift our neighbors and for our members to labor with their own hands, and by so doing, speak the truth about God’s kindness.

As we prepared to spend a week helping our neighbors uplift and attend to the details of their homes, Westminster’s Steadfast Neighbor Service Team began with a reflection on the meaning and significance of homes.

According to Diana Butler Bass, an American Historian of Christianity, in her book Grounded, “The places we come to know as home involve an intangible flash of recognition, a soul connection that brings forth a different sort of knowing about God, nature, or oneself.” Home is an inhabited place where God somehow meets us –where we “belong.” Home is a place

where we never doubt that we can be ourselves, a place where we can grow into our best selves. Home is where we feel secure, centered, loved, and valued.

Paul's hope and prayer for the Ephesians is that they find a home in Christ. In chapter three, Paul prays for God's spirit to strengthen their "inner being," their sense of themselves as God's children, so that they may be rooted and grounded "at home" in Christ's love! Paul's prayer for the young believers in Ephesus is that Christ might find a home in their hearts and that they may find a home in Christ.

The home we find in Christ is our bedrock, our foundation, where we center ourselves and build the meaning of our lives. As Christ finds a home in us and we in Christ, Paul says, we learn the "breadth and length and height and depth" of Christ's love, and we are filled with the fullness of God.

Many of us have found a home at Westminster, a worship space that honors the spoken Word, liturgy, and music... and a family with whom we can work, play, eat, agree, disagree, study, sing, serve, pray, celebrate, cry, and laugh. Our faith and sense of ourselves as children of God are nourished and strengthened in this spiritual home. More than one person has shared with Rev. Choi and me that when they walked into the church for the first time following the separation during the pandemic, they wept for the joy of being home. Deep gratitude has also been expressed to our video team for bringing worship into their homes.

Our homes are also holy spaces that nourish our faith and deepen our connection with one another and God. Our homes reflect so much of who we are...filled with music, books, artwork, stories, memories, quiet places, and gardens. Home is where our children learn to walk, to talk, to read, to pray, to say please, thank you, and I'm sorry.

Our homes are our personal, intimate space and precisely because of this, we recognize what a privilege it is to be invited by our neighbors to uplift and attend to the details of their homes. We are thankful for their trust, for their partnership, and for their gratitude. We cherish the growing friendships and connections within our neighborhood as we continue to be steadfast in our commitment to invest almost a half million during the next decade.

Following Paul's prayer for the young believers in Ephesus to find a home in Christ and for their identity as the children of God to grow and to mature, he provides practical advice in today's scripture reading. Things to do to imitate God include (1) speaking the truth; (2) being angry without sinning; (3) laboring with our hands; (4) sharing with the needy; (5) using words that build up (6) being kind; and (7) forgiving one another.

As we continue this steadfast endeavor in honoring our homes, it is our hope and prayer that through giving, acting, and working side by side with our neighbors, we are speaking the truth of God's kindness and generosity.

Yes, indeed it is a beautiful day in the neighborhood! Amen.