

Trinity Sunday B, 2012 – Undone and remade by the Truth

1. Today is Trinity Sunday, the one day of the year that we recite the Athanasian Creed but we did it in a little different form this year.
  - a. It's an uncomfortable Creed isn't it? (not just because it's long)
    - i. **Whoever desires to be saved must, above all, hold the catholic (not Roman catholic – catholic means universal) faith. Whoever does not keep it whole and undefiled will without doubt perish.**
    - ii. Sounds so hard on the multicultural ears of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but it's truth, Absolute Truth
  - b. What is it about the Truth, real, absolute truth that scares us so much?
    - i. Truth is stark, though most of would like to soften the edges a bit, hide in the indefinites and "gray areas" – there really are no gray areas
    - ii. Poet Virginia Woolf writes, "**Illusions are to the soul what atmosphere is to the earth... By the truth we are undone. Life is a dream. 'Tis waking that kills us. He who robs us of our dreams robs us of our life.**"
    - iii. One author referring to this said, "Perhaps our illusions, like all wishful or magical thinking, contain core truths about who we are — after all, our hopes and fears both spring from and in turn inform our identity."
    - iv. She contends that people often live in a fabricated reality, that truth about us and our world is a lot more stark than we would like so we prefer illusion until we can't avoid truth any more.
    - v. Jeffrey Epstein and Harvey Weinstein, not to mention countless others, lived behind illusions of wealth and status that were undone by the truth
2. Of course, most of us don't live in fear that the truth is going to expose some great crime like theirs, so we tell ourselves we like the truth until we are confronted with real, absolute truth that dispels our delusion.
  - a. That's what happened to Isaiah in our OT reading from today, he was "undone" by the truth to use Virginia Woolf's idiom.
    - i. After hearing the seraphim declare the holiness of God he said, "**Woe unto me, for I am undone (KJV), I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell among a people of unclean lips.**"
    - ii. Remember this is the OT prophet Isaiah saying he's unclean, he's sinful, he doesn't belong in the presence of God.
    - iii. If this is a prophet of God saying this, where do we rank in worthiness to stand before God?
  - b. We'd like to think that we're pretty good, certainly no worse than the next guy and a heck of a lot better than some
    - i. We want to look like the perfect man or woman who has the perfect life and the perfect job, 2.5 kids in the suburbs with the white picket fence – no problems here.
    - ii. This is the ideal that is continually presented to us by Madison Ave, it's what our economy thrives on, it's an ideal life for ideal people.

- iii. But it's all just a veneer that hides a much different reality that is anything but ideal and we all know it.
  - c. When push comes to shove and the right external circumstances are applied the ideal gives way to reality quickly
    - i. Mr or Ms. Congeniality turns into a screaming banshee; with the right temptations Mr. or Ms. Upright fall into covetousness and lust – “if only my spouse was like them, if only my life were like theirs”
    - ii. Someone hurts you or your loved ones and the inability to forgive the person or even look the other person in the face sets in
  - d. Even Christians are not immune from this, how many of our lives are as perfect as we let on, as we project to our fellow-believers in church?
    - i. If the surveys from groups like Barna and Gallop are in fact accurate our lives look very similar to the lives of the unbelieving masses around us.
    - ii. Christians suffer from broken families, substance abuse, and addictions at slightly lower, but still very significant rates as non-Christians.
    - iii. Yet we paper over all that with a veneer of righteousness, an illusion that lets us live with ourselves and God (we hope)
  - e. However, when you come face to face with the Lord Almighty as Isaiah did no amount of makeup can cover over the real you
    - i. When you come face to face with all of your sin: your greed, lust, anger and unforgiveness in light of Divine Truth you are exposed, you are undone
    - ii. Not many of us have been called to the throne room of heaven to face God like Isaiah, right? That's a relief we can keep pretending we're someone we're not.
    - iii. Or have we? What about God's Word, perhaps that's why more people don't come to church on Sunday, why most people including Christians don't read the Bible
    - iv. We're afraid that the Word will reveal us for the sinners that we are, **“The Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two edged sword piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow”** (Heb 4:12)
    - v. By the Word the illusions of our lives are undone and we know that kind of Truth by itself leads to despair and hopelessness as Virginia Woolf noted
- 3. But we don't have to fear the truth we don't have to keep on dreaming to avoid reality
  - a. Unlike Virginia Woolf's assertion that we are only undone by truth, God's Word, reveals that we are both undone and remade by the Truth
    - i. Waking from the self-induced dream that we're pretty good isn't death, but eternal life.
    - ii. Think of it: surgeon has to expose the full extent of the disease to cure it
    - iii. The Word calls a thing (us) what it is – sinner in thought, word and deed by what we have done and by what we have left undone - it exposes us.

- iv. But a surgeon doesn't leave their surgery undone after removing or fixing the problem, they put you back together.
- b. That's the way it is with God's Word: at the moment of despair when all pretense is shattered, like Isaiah in the OT, the Word also provides the answer, the cure for what it has exposed – we are undone and remade by the Word of Truth
  - i. Just as the coal that touched Isaiah lips was God's divine pardon, so the shed blood of Christ covers us and all of our sin.
  - ii. It is the Gospel that we read today, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.”**
  - iii. And that is why we can unflinchingly look into the truth of God's Word about who we are because He saved us out of the very depths of our depravity as Paul tells us, **“God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”** (Rom 5:8)
- c. Our Lord and Savior bore our sins in His body on the cross that we might have abundant life in Him!
  - i. We don't have to hide from Truth because Christ came into our brokenness to restore us, to dispel the illusions we create and replace it with a living reality better than anything we could dream up for ourselves.
  - ii. In his first epistle Peter says, **“you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God.”**
- d. And having been undone and remade by that Word of Truth we are also given a new purpose - to share that life giving message with others
  - i. As our passage from Isaiah ends the Lord asks, **“Whom shall I send who will go and speak for us?”** (Is 6:8)
  - ii. And having been undone and remade by the Truth, sins purged away, Isaiah answers, **“Here am I send me.”**
  - iii. And we too, having our sins forgiven, fed by the body and blood of Christ are prepared to share the joy found in the One and only Truth, that God so loved you that He gave His only begotten Son to die for you so that believing in Him you would have eternal life.