

## TUESDAY COMMUNION

**Hymn:** 724 Blest are the pure in heart

**Reading:** James 5. 12. Matthew 5.33-37

### Prayers:

I remember when we first moved to Chapel Caroline used to buy her vegetables from a very plain speaking greengrocer. One day she came home and told me that he'd been giving off about politicians who never told the truth. Caroline, to keep the conversation going had asked that famous philosophical question, "What is truth?"

He'd replied, "When you don't tell a blanketyblank lie!"

James and Matthew both knew that Jesus taught his disciples not to make oaths in order to be believed.

Perhaps it reminds us of when we were younger and we would say, "Scout's honour, I'm telling the truth" or as we sometimes here people say, "Honest to God". The oath is meant to make what we say a solemn statement that we're not lying.

But Jesus and James encourage us to live lives which are honest and truthful. Both in great affairs and in the ordinary social intercourse of daily life we should seek to be people whose words are true. Indeed, we should seek to create communities in which we should expect to hear the truth and see the truth in action.

When the great novelist Alexander Solzineistin received the Nobel Prize for literature he gave an address which was entitled "One word of truth". It's many years since I read it but I remember how he'd been accused on a trumped up charge and convicted by a court which had no concern for the truth.

For years he had lived in an almost unbelievably harsh labour camp where the promises of those in charge could never be trusted. The whole terrible system of the Russian prison camps, the Gulags, was built lie upon lie upon lie. For him, the duty of the writer, the novelist, was to speak a word of truth about the reality of what was happening in the darkness of communist Russia.

Lies corrupt our world. Today is a sad day for me and I suspect it is for my two sons. We lived in Leicester and on many Saturdays we would go to watch Leicester Tigers playing rugby. My sons' great hero was Dean Richards, the policeman and a great Number 8 who also played in many great matches for England.

Yesterday, Dean Richards, the former manager of Harlequins, was found guilty of cheating and of failing to tell the truth. He has corrupted the game of rugby and the game has been diminished by his words and deeds.

The same is true of a politician, a doctor, an industrialist, a campaigner in some good cause, a Methodist minister, who deliberately tells an untruth and thereby releases corruption into our world.

We make the world one where we trust each other less, where we feel less confident and secure because the truth has been clouded over by that which is false!

At the other end of the scale, there is, of course, the truth which is wielded like a weapon. Anyone who has lived in the Black Country will know how some people there who prided themselves on telling the truth in a way that could be very hurtful to others.

Paul, perhaps out of his own experience both in dishing it out and being on the receiving end of "truth", recognises that the Christian way of speaking the truth is to tell the truth in love.....

The truth is not a weapon with which to cause unnecessary hurt and alarm.

There are tactful ways of telling the truth.....

Yet, there is also the danger that we are so concerned for the feelings of others that we never speak a word of truth. Sometimes, we must either speak a word of truth or listen to a word of truth spoken to ourselves which may disturb and challenge us greatly.

We are more likely to hear that word and allow that word to have a good effect upon our lives if it comes from someone who we know is honest and truthful in the whole of their life and has a real concern for our well being.....

Such words of truth, however difficult they may be to hear are ultimately life giving and life enriching.

Jesus and James urge us to be the kind of people whose words can be trusted because they come from an honest heart.

Amen.