

342 She told him all the truth

In the Gospels of Mark (Chapter 5.25-34) and Luke (Chapter 8.43-48) we are told of the woman with “an issue of blood” who struggled through the crowd and touched the hem of Jesus’ garment. Praise the Lord, she was instantly healed, but suddenly Jesus stopped and asked who had touched His clothes (Mark 5.29-30).

Equally suddenly, it was now “decision time” for the healed woman! Slip away into the crowd? Bluff her way out by denying everything? Or own up? We read that – “fearing and trembling ... (she) came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth” (5.33). In so doing she took a great risk but Jesus’ reaction was wonderful: He spoke to her of her faith, her peace, and her wholeness. Then we hear of her no more.

“Telling all the truth” has always been a vexed issue! – for we find it so very, very easy to wriggle when the truth about us puts us in a bad light. In Genesis 3 Adam starts well by owning up to the Lord God – “I was scared ... I was naked ... I hid myself” (v.10). But then the wriggles begin with his words – “The woman! – the one you gave to me! – she gave it me!” (v.12); and then from Eve – “The serpent!” (v.13).

Later on we see that Cain had learnt well from his parents. In reply to the Lord’s question, “Where is Abel thy brother?”, the essence of his reply was “I dunno, what’s it got to do with me?” (v.9): so much for “telling the whole truth”.

Then we have that nasty little plot by Rebekah and Jacob to deceive old Isaac and rob Esau of his father’s blessing (Genesis 25.28 and 27.6-24). What misery and enmity followed from this flouting of “the whole truth” (27.30-45), with consequences still present today in the Middle East.

King David kept his appalling behaviour regarding Uriah and Bathsheba “nice and quiet” for a time, and broke forth in anger on hearing the story from Nathan the prophet of the rich man seizing the poor man’s lamb (II Samuel 12.1-6). But of course there was no hiding “the whole truth” from the Lord, and finally David was forced to confess (v.13); even then he wriggled, doing his best to persuade the Lord to preserve the life of the child he had fathered with Bathsheba. Be he the king or not, David had to learn the hard way that “Truth will out” and that sinful actions always produce painful consequences. Those simple words in Numbers 32.23 comes to mind – “Be sure your sin will find you out”.

Later on we come across false prophets who loved to claim they were speaking “the whole truth”, but were doing nothing of the kind. Examples include the hundreds of the prophets of Baal, answerable to dreadful Jezebel and who overtly defied Almighty God by proclaiming Baal (I Kings 18.19); Zedekiah and his pals came up against Micaiah, claiming that they, not Micaiah, were the Lord’s true prophets (I Kings 22.11-28); and then Hananiah took on Jeremiah (Jeremiah 28) – not a good idea (28.15-17).

King Herod also had an interesting approach to “telling the whole truth” to those wise men from the east, claiming he wanted to worship this new-born king also (Matthew 2.8). Simon Peter wriggled away from the whole truth in those pitiful denials, to save his own skin (John 18.15-18 and 25-27 and parallels), and the fibs of Ananias and Sapphira were quickly found out (Acts 5.1-11)

Like that needy woman in the crowd, “Christ’s faithful sheep” are to be people of truth. Whenever our conduct has made this necessary, we own up, tell the truth, say sorry and ask for forgiveness. No wriggling!

There may also be times when we are called upon to tell “the whole truth” sensitively to others, perhaps in difficult pastoral situations where God’s Word has been ignored and now needs to be re-affirmed. Such telling may be painful for both hearer and speaker, but can be the first step on the path towards God’s healing and restoration.

In the Gospels the Lord Jesus always told the whole truth to whoever He was with, no matter how people regarded Him. When speaking the truth about Himself – unlike us, He of course never having to own up to anything He had said or done – He simply showed in word and deed who He actually is, with all that follows for mankind from that single, central Truth.

This is summed up in those words spoken by Jesus to everyone on Planet Earth, both then and now - “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father, but by me” (John 14.6, KJV).

There in the proverbial nutshell is “the whole truth” - as true today as it has ever been.