



Minding the Gap - May 2014

A Faith and Work Publication

Welcome to Minding the Gap, a monthly thought about faith in the workplace!

"The Problem with Truth"

Often in life, we wrestle with the issue of "truth". In our day-to-day life, truth is usually associated with pain. We hear the phrase of "Well, the truth of the matter is...", and we tense up because the next part of the sentence will usher in some pretty bad or hurtful news. Or, who can forget the memorable statement by Jack Nicholson from the movie "A Few Good Men" when he confronts Tom Cruise in exasperation with the statement of: "You can't handle the truth!"

In my experience from the world-of-work, pain is the 'close companion' of truth. The result is that "truth" is circumvented and thus we avoid the pain. Or, perhaps more accurately said, pain is "kicked down the road". A number of organizational studies have shown when truthful thoughts and feelings are buried about any given problem, the ability to successfully resolve the issue is significantly delayed. The example given might be of a supervisor announcing a change in accountability for duties. In the meeting, the supervisor then asks if there are any questions. Everyone appears to be in agreement, but after the meeting, there is countless complaining and even bitterness toward the change, thus fulfilling the saying of "the chart has changed, but not the heart". Truthful reaction ranges from shock & denial to anger & resistance, and when not addressed it can create what's known as a "corporate heart attack".

However, there is another take on truth from the Scripture when John records Jesus as saying: "...and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free."(Jn 8:32). So....What is it that allows Jesus to know of this different understanding and experience with truth - with being able to experience truth in such a freeing manner? I'm convinced, simply stated, Jesus sees the other person(s) with affection - clearly views and experiences

him/her as a creation of excellence and delight for the Creator. The ensuing result is that in situations of conflict or pain the critical elements of honesty and compassion are part of His relationship to the other(s). It is the combination of the two (compassion & honesty), which free relationships to be authentic and responses to be "truthfilled". As He speaks to the person - such as the woman He meets at the well (Jn 4:16-18), she knows that in the face of being told the truth (which I'm sure was hard to hear), Jesus treasures her and is committed to being in an honest and caring relationship with her --- He won't allow their relationship to diminish or end. So, maybe remember and think about this in your next episode of conflict at work.

Clearly Jesus, and we as His disciples, will be far, far ahead in our work when paying major attention to matters of the "heart" (person) and not only the "chart" (organization/task). In this manner does the freeing truth of the Gospel trump the enslaving standards of the Law.

Blessings to you in your work,

Jim Grubs

Incarnation Lutheran Church, 4880 Hodgson Road, Shoreview, MN 55126