January 23
Greetings, DGCC Family.

“I mean it, mister!”
“I’m not kidding this time!”
“Don’t make me pull this car over!”
“I mean business!”

Maybe you heard some of those expressions when you were growing up. Or perhaps you even used some of them raising your own children. In any case, these expressions are “parent-speak” for emphasizing the fact that you “really, really” mean something.

Jesus had His own such expression that He used when He wanted to emphasize a point and make us pay close attention. That expression is “Truly I say to you…” In the King James version of the Bible, the phrase is “Verily I say unto you…” (Fun linguistic fact: The Greek word used by the Gospel writers for “truly” or “verily” is amen.) Additionally, if Jesus “really, really” wanted us to pay attention, He said, “Truly, truly I say to you…”

Since our Lord really, really wanted us to pay attention to these sayings, we’ll take a look at a few of them this week. Here’s the first:

“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God’” (John 3:3).

Here Jesus is famously trying to teach the Pharisee Nicodemus, who went to see Jesus at night so that no one would see him talking to Him. Pharisees adhered to a strict observance of the Law, almost always to the exclusion of grace and compassion. Jesus is telling Nicodemus that in order to “see” or understand and embrace, the Kingdom of God, one must be “born again.” That is, one must cast off their old way of thinking and believing and accept something brand new, something from God Himself.

Alas, like many people, Nicodemus just couldn’t do it. To his literal, legalistic way of thinking, he thought Jesus was talking about the need for a physical rebirth: “How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. ‘Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!’” (v. 4). But instead, Jesus was talking about a spiritual rebirth: “Very truly I tell you, [there it is again: “Very truly I say to you…] no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit” (v. 5).
And so it is. The words of the Savior captured for all time. Imploring us to listen, to pay attention, to learn, to etch these words on our hearts and embrace them in our spirit. My prayer is that you really, really Believe Him when He tells you that He really, really means it.”

IHS, Pastor Lou
Grace and peace to you this day.

We will continue this week with the “truly, truly” statements of Jesus.

One of the most powerful scenes in the Old Testament, if not all of Scripture, is when God appears to Moses as the burning bush and commands him to lead the people out of slavery in Egypt. Moses tries to dodge the job but God isn’t about to let him off the hook. Finally, Moses asks God who he should tell the Israelites sent him. God replies with this: “God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Exodus 3:14).

Without getting into too many technicalities, the Hebrew word used here for the word “am” has a past, present, and future tense. In other words, God is invoking His eternal nature in describing Himself in this way.

Fast forward from the Words of God to the Son of God. In speaking to a group of skeptical, cynical Jews, Jesus tells them this:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am” (John 8:58).

First of all, Jesus is saying: “Pay attention. This is important.”

Second, He invokes the name of Abraham, the patriarch of the Jewish people. This was never done lightly or casually, but always with reverence and with authority.

Lastly, He uses the phrase that was known to all Jews throughout the generations. The name God the Father used to describe Himself: “I Am.” The name that God said, “This is my name forever, the name you shall call me from generation to generation” (Exodus 3:15).

In doing so, Jesus is emphasizing His divinity. He is saying, “I know God. I am from God. And, I am God.”

With that, allow me a few of my own “I am” statements:

I am amazed.
I am humbled.
I am in awe.
I am on my knees.
Most importantly, I am saved.

IHS,
Pastor Lou
January 25

Greeting you today in the name of Jesus.

Continuing today with the “truly, truly” statements of Jesus:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man” (John 1:51).

Jesus is speaking to His recently-chosen disciples, who no doubt were, at best, confused about what He was talking about.

First of all, Jesus is describing a scene from heaven and the angels not out of some imaginary whim, but because He had been there. Jesus, as God, existed in the heavenly realm with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit in eternity. He is describing the scene out of His own experience.

Secondly, He uses a phrase that would have had deep meaning to the Jews: “Son of Man.” Here Jesus is invoking a famous passage from the book and prophet Daniel that would have been most familiar to the Jewish people:

“I saw in the night visions,
and behold, with the clouds of heaven
there came one like a son of man,
and he came to the Ancient of Days
and was presented before him.
And to him was given dominion
and glory and a kingdom,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him;
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
which shall not pass away,
and his kingdom one
that shall not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:13-14).

Jesus is saying, “I am the Son of Man prophesied by Daniel. I have been given dominion over God’s kingdom. All the people, languages, and nations shall serve me [this phrase is also reiterated in Revelation 7:9]. My kingdom cannot be destroyed and shall never pass away.”

Once again, this would have been shocking to the listeners of the day. No one had ever made these claims. And yet we see Jesus here, at the beginning of His ministry, saying “Make no mistake. I am the Son of Man spoken about by the Father through the prophet Daniel. Believe it or not. But truly, truly I tell you this because truly, truly, more than anything else, I my desire above all else is that you join me in heaven, which I have just described, and where I have been, for all eternity.”

IHS,

Pastor Lou
January 26

Greetings DGCC Family.

We will conclude our brief look at the “truly, truly” statements of Jesus with perhaps His shortest, yet most profound and everlasting statement:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life” (John 6:47).

This one statement says it all. Nothing for us to do but believe. No words of ours, no actions, can grant us eternal life. Just the simple act of believing in the One who makes this promise, and it is, in fact, a promise.

Someone once said that “There are no guarantees in life.” Perhaps that’s true if we place our faith in ourselves or in the world around us. But Jesus says, “place your faith in me. Place your eternal trust in me. And I promise, I guarantee, that you will live in eternity with me.”

Let me assure you that there is no wiggle room here. So for today, I would encourage you to reaffirm your faith in the One who truly, truly made this promise. If you have never placed your trust in Him, I would encourage you to do so now. It’s as simple as saying this prayer:

“Dear Jesus, I acknowledge that I am a sinner. I ask for your forgiveness. I know you died on the cross as payment for my sins. I put my faith in you and turn my life over to you. You are my Lord and Savior, and I want to be in heaven with you through eternity. Amen.”

It is truly, truly that simple. It is truly, truly that beautiful. And, Jesus is truly, truly waiting to hear from you.

IHS,
Pastor Lou

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January 27

Happy Friday everyone. My wife Judy shared a great worship song with me this week, so I am sharing it with all of you for our musical devotion for today.

Turn up the volume and enjoy!

https://youtube.com/watch?v=PPpGphzScjA&si=EnSIkalECMiOmarE

IHS,
Pastor Lou