



**Ephesians 4:25—5:2; John 6:35.41-51**  
**Reverend Giuseppe Mattei (August 11, 2024)**

Lucille Ball once said: “The secret of staying young is to live honestly, eat slowly, and lie about your age.” It may seem that lying is not a good idea unless you really must.

Maybe you might tell a small fib to save face, but are you lying to yourself? Maybe you have made life choices you’re not proud of, but your strategy is to disregard the nagging feeling and keep on with the same behavior. Or maybe you’re using lies to gain favor or popularity or even to grow your wealth.

Although lying to yourself can soothe you in the present moment, it’s not doing you any favors in the long run. If you are a healthy person, you can tell this behavior is making you miserable. So, what are you trying to achieve?

The apostle Paul opened the fourth chapter of his letter to the church in Ephesus explaining our nature in Christ this way:

I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: there is *one body and one Spirit*, just as you were called to the one hope of

your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, lying works against the “one body” and is not supported by the “one Spirit.” It is destructive of the Body, and it grieves the Holy Spirit of God. In fact, Paul writes:

We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine by people’s trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love.<sup>2</sup>

*This* is justice: to allow the whole body to function together “properly” and in alignment with the will of God experienced as love toward all for the growth of the body.

After creating the spiritual foundation to his argument, Paul concludes: “So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another.”<sup>3</sup>

You know you can’t build a life on lies. Lies catch up with you. You can’t hold a relationship together based on lies for too long. Relationships thrive on trust: they need to be based on truth-telling. You cannot hold down the simplest job or lead a country on lies: Those who are engaged in this kind of behavior are not healthy and cannot be engaged in justice-making.

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<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 4:1-6

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 4:14-16

<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 4:25

The Bible teaches us that “the LORD detests lying lips, but he delights in people who are trustworthy.”<sup>4</sup> And there is a commandment or two about lying, robbing your neighbors of what is theirs, including the ability to know the truth.<sup>5</sup>

At this juncture of our life together, maybe we need a new spiritual movement intent on seeking justice, revealing justice, inspiring justice. What if we all participated in Making America Truthful Again?

Scholar and author, bell hooks, clearly states that “The heart of justice is truth telling, seeing ourselves and the world the way it is rather than the way we want it to be. More than ever before we, as a society, need to renew a commitment to truth telling.”<sup>6</sup>

It’s OK to be angry but do not sin. At the end of the day, do not write people off and go to bed angry. Turn it over to God. God is going to be up all night anyhow. Stop stealing so you may enjoy giving from your own labor: generosity is a divine trait. Watch your mouth and use it only to uplift others. Such a behavioral change is pleasant to the Spirit. For that reason, Paul encourages us: “Be imitators of God...and walk in love.” (Ephesians 5:1)

But how can we work on that behavioral change?

Maybe it’s’ time to trust the Spirit. We can start by taking our spiritual life more seriously. Do we need to deepen our prayer? Do we want to relish the Sacraments in a new way?

Jesus said: “I am the Bread of Life.”<sup>7</sup> There is a constant in that “I am.” Jesus is someone solid: we may trust him. The kind of stuff he gives us, the Bread of Life, is nothing to lie about or to

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<sup>4</sup> Proverbs 12:22

<sup>5</sup> Leviticus 16:11

<sup>6</sup> bell hooks, All About Love, 2018

<sup>7</sup> John 6:35

keep as a secret. It's Bread and not a stone, not a snake.<sup>8</sup> It's the Truth of God and not a lie. It's Bread, sustenance that gives Life, and fills us with joy and hope.

When you come for Communion, when you come for the Bread of Heaven that communes us to God and to one another, don't come lightly, distracted, doubtful. Let the gift of Life fill you. Let the Spirit of Jesus fill you. Let the Love of Christ fill you.

When you come, know that you are drawn by the same Father who sent Jesus. Come in reverence. Come in awe. Come in humility. If you do, this will be the last day of your unreligious life. This will be the day of your resurrection. This will be the day you start enjoying eternal life.

When we surrender to the Spirit of Jesus then we will know real life. Then there will be no longer fear and malice, no more craving and plotting to steal, no more quarrelling and slander.

Once we surrender to the Spirit there will be self-control, justice, and courage, and we will abandon any inclination to seek revenge and to do harm. We will see people in a new way.

“To be religious is to give your life so that the world may be more beautiful, more just, more at peace; it is to prevent egotistical and self-serving ends from disrupting this harmony of the whole.” (Arturo Paoli, priest and missionary, 1912-2015)

The story goes that an old rabbi asked his disciples how they could tell when the night had ended and the day had begun, for that is the time for certain holy prayers. “Is it,” proposed one student, “when you can see an animal in the distance and tell whether it is a sheep or a dog?” “No,” answered the rabbi. “Is it

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<sup>8</sup> Matthew 7:9-10

when you can clearly see the lines on your palm?” “Is it when you can look at a tree in the distance and tell if it is a fig or a pear tree?” “No,” answered the rabbi each time. “Then what is it?” the disciples demanded. “It is when you can look on the face of any man or woman and see that they are your brother or your sister. Until then it is still night.”<sup>9</sup>

There are many forces at work that are disjointed and disconnected from the Truth and Life of God. Those forces bring darkness to people’s mind and poison to people’s heart.

Paul counsels us in no timid ways: “Do not make room for the devil.”<sup>10</sup>

So, let the Bread of Heaven, the Life that Christ wants to give us, make us whole and give us Peace. Amen.

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<sup>9</sup> Jack Kornfield, *After the Ecstasy, the Laundry*, 239.

<sup>10</sup> Ephesians 4:27