

Half-Truth, Week #5

Half-Truth Explored: *“God doesn't give us more than we can handle.”*

Welcome to the fifth and final week of our series called Half-Truth.

Over the last few weeks we have been looking at some truths that our culture embraces that are half-true, they are kind of right but not completely right.

Throughout this series, we have looked at some of these half -truths. A few weeks ago we talked about the half-truth that there are many ways to God. It is true that other religions have truth in them, but the whole truth is that there is only one way to the Father, and that is through the person of Jesus Christ.

Three weeks ago, I talked about the half-truth that you don't need the Church to connect to God.

That's true if you mean you don't need a church building to connect to God...but we need Jesus to connect to the Father and we need the Church to help us to connect to Jesus. The Church is not a building, it is the movement of God's people.

Two weeks ago we looked at the half-truth that all religions are the same. The whole truth is this. All religions ask the same questions, but they come up with very different answers. For example, Christianity is the only faith that says there is a Trinity: one God in three divine persons. We focused on love being our greatest aim, because God is a community of love.

Last week we talked about the Eucharist and the half-truth that it's just a symbol. It is a symbol, but it is *much more* than that. It is truly the body and blood, soul and divinity of Christ.

If you missed any of the homilies in this message series or would like to revisit them, you can go to our website and read them. This whole series has been very good and very informative. Our website gslakeshore.com

As we close out this series, we are going to shift gears a bit. The messages so far have been on the basics of our faith. Today we are going to look at a saying we often hear in religious circles.

You've probably heard this before: "God doesn't give us more than we can handle." Often what is meant by that statement is that "God is Providential" or "God is in control of everything."

God doesn't control everything because we have free will, and sometimes what we choose may not be in line with what God would like.

And I think that it's not a question of God “giving” us something, but Him choosing not to interfere in our freedom.

It's not God's will when evil thrives, when we hurt each other, when we make bad choices or bad decisions or when there is conflict and painful relationships.

But, that being said, I also believe that God is able to take those painful times in our lives and work them for his purposes and for our ultimate good. There is no setback, no problem, and even no evil that God cannot take and use for good in our lives. None.

That's not even the message today, but for some of us it might have been worth coming to Church just to hear that.

It is true to say God won't give us more than we can handle, if we mean that God will never abandon us.

And that brings us to the whole truth: God won't give us any more than we can handle *without his help.*

Things happen to us all the time; things that are more than we can handle, right? We see this in the lives of every major character of the Bible: Elijah, David and the apostles are a few examples. Even Jesus was overwhelmed by what he had to do.

He agonized in the garden. Luke tells us that an angel had to come and *strengthen* Jesus because he was *so overwhelmed* by the prospect of going to the cross.

I've had many struggles in my life and I can say without a doubt that I've had more than I can handle. I have found myself many times struggling each and every day just to get through each and every day.

And many of you here today are suffering in your lives at this very moment. You understand what I'm talking about.

So yes, in a sense, God has given us more than we can handle.

The whole truth matters because life will at some point, bring us more than we can handle.

Jesus never promised us a care-free life, look at how much he suffered. But he did say to his disciples and to us, "...remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Sometimes we may start to believe that there must be something wrong with us if something bad happens. Why is God doing this to me? What have I done to deserve this?

Well, one thing I've learned from people of faith is that bad things can happen to any of us, and sometimes there's no explanation for it.

In those instances these people of faith have been an example to me of faithful trust in God's grace, regardless of what happens in their lives.

We might also come to think that there is something wrong with God. We might think that God isn't trustworthy, that he really doesn't care. Some people will turn away from God because of the things they suffer.

Have you ever said: Why me? I'm a good person, why is this happening to me?

This is what we need to hear: God never promised to shield us from problems and troubles. But He did promise us that He would always be with us. He promised to be faithful and to care for us.

Maybe right now you have a burden that is too great for you to bear. Maybe it's a financial burden and it's overwhelming you.

Your burden might be a health issue and
You are overwhelmed.

You may be overwhelmed by a problem in
your family that seems totally out of your
control.

You may feel overwhelmed in trying to
balance work and family life.

A couple of things can happen in these
instances. When we get overwhelmed we can
turn to God. This is an opportunity to reach
out to the One who loves us so much.

I've seen this in my trips to Haiti. People
there are overwhelmed; people there are
struggling to feed themselves and their
families each day.

I've also seen the people there turn to
God in their suffering. He is their comfort. He
is their strength. Sometimes He is all they
have.

You've probably heard me talk about their cars and trucks that are plastered with all kinds of slogans; a great many of them spiritual. On the side of a taxi you will see, Jesu fos, which means Jesus power, Another one has Thank you Lord or mon ami Jesu....the list goes on.

This is an indication of how much God is a part of their lives. Those in great need are drawn to God.

Often, we need to come to the end of our abilities before we can experience God's power. And His power is greater than our power. He can accomplish far more than we can.

As long as we think we can handle everything, as long as we say, "I got this" we will limit our experience of God's power in our lives.

Something else can happen when we have more than we can handle, and we find that in our reading today from Paul to the Corinthians. He acknowledges that his travels are wearing him down. He is tired and frustrated by his human frailty. He says,

¹⁶ So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ ...this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure,

Paul is telling us that even though he is physically overwhelmed and has far more than he can handle, he knows that God is doing something within him.

He continues:

¹⁸ because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, what cannot be seen is eternal.

So despite these problems Paul says that he and his companions remain focused even on what they cannot see.

And He then gives us this important insight. He writes,

⁷ *for we walk by faith, not by sight.*

He is saying that the journey of faith is about going forward, even if we can't see what's up ahead. When we have more than we can handle, we must walk by faith, not by sight.

I am grateful for the struggles in my life because they have kept me close to my comfort, close to my strength, close to my God. I don't know where I'd be without my afflictions but I do know that God has touched me through my struggles.

Our struggles shape us in amazing ways and make us the people we are today. Our struggles have the power to define us in life-giving ways, if we let them.

How has God been working in your life through your heart ache and your suffering?

This is a question I hope you will ponder today and in the days ahead.

My slogan is a little different than our half truth today, and I think it expresses the whole truth: God doesn't give us more than HE can handle.

The choice each of us faces is whether we take our struggles and put them at the feet of Jesus; in other words, do we trust our Savior to help us carry our burdens?....or not.

Do we use these problems to grow in faith or do they end up driving a wedge between us and God?

Do you allow whatever burdens you are carrying to drive you closer to God, asking for his strength and his comfort or do you just believe that God is letting you down again?

Whatever our challenges in life, we can use these struggles to reach out to God in our need. We can draw closer to him in our faith and trust in him.

That's what I do each and every day and it's what gets me through each and every day.

And remember.....we walk by faith and not by sight.