

## 1. Vision Statement at St. John's

- Four parts: Welcoming Everyone, Making Disciples, Trusting Jesus, Empowering Leaders.
- Words can become familiar but misunderstood (*Princess Bride* illustration: "I do not think it means what you think it means").

## 2. The Challenge of "Welcoming Everyone"

- Common phrases: "All are welcome," "Come as you are."
- But what do they really mean?
- Two mistakes Christians make:
  1. **Truth without love** → judgment, harshness, older brother mentality.
  2. **Love without truth** → cheap grace, no call to transformation.
- The gospel holds both together: "*Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*" (John 1:17).

## 3. The Parable of the Two Sons (Luke 15)

- Younger son: rebellion, repentance, welcome by the father.
- Older son: obedience, pride, resentment—also lost.
- Audience = Pharisees (religious but judgmental).
- Message: both sinners and the religious need grace.

## 4. God's Radical Welcome

- Ephesians 2: once outsiders, now brought near by Christ.
- God welcomes the unexpected, the broken, and even the ones we may not want to welcome.
- Welcoming everyone = extending the same grace God gave us.

## 5. Grace and Transformation

- True welcome = come as you are, but don't stay as you are.
- Grace saves; truth transforms.
- Jesus welcomes us all (younger sons, older sons, Pharisees, prodigals) to be changed by the Holy Spirit.

## 6. Call to Action

- St. John's is called to radical welcome:
  - Invitation into relationship with Jesus.
  - Challenge to live a new kind of life.
- Welcoming everyone = helping people encounter Jesus, be forgiven, and become disciples.

## Reflection Questions

1. When you hear the phrase “Welcoming Everyone,” what do you usually think it means?  
How has that changed after hearing this message?
2. Read Luke 15:11-32. Do you identify more with the younger son (running from God) or the older son (prideful and entitled)? Why?
3. Read John 1:17. In what ways have you (or the church) been tempted toward **truth without love**?
4. In what ways have you (or the church) been tempted toward **love without truth**?
5. Read Ephesians 2:11-13. How does remembering God’s welcome of you shape the way you welcome others?
6. What would it look like for St. John’s to be known as a place where everyone is welcomed *and* challenged to be transformed?
7. Who in your life might God be calling you to welcome—even if it’s uncomfortable or unexpected?