

A Well Needed Introduction
May 30, 2010
Luke 16:12 – 15

Today's Scripture reading comes from the 16th Chapter of John's Gospel; verses 12 through 15. Listen now for the reading of God's Word for the people of God.

¹²"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. ¹³But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. ¹⁴He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. ¹⁵All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

This is the Word of God and It can be trusted. Thanks be to God.

Let us pray:

God of all Creation, you sent your Word to bring us truth and your Spirit to make us holy. Through them we come to know the mystery of your life. Help us to worship you, one God in three persons, you reveal yourself in the depths of our being, by proclaiming and living our faith in you. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.

Amen.

Last week we had the pleasure of celebrating yet another of day of celebration of the ancient church, the Day of Pentecost. The altar was draped with red linens and many who were in attendance topped of the celebration by wearing red or shades of red in celebration of the coming of the promised comforter, the Holy Spirit. The Day of Pentecost is not just another day of celebration for the church; rather it is a time of awareness of the revelation that God plays many roles in our lives. We have come to recognize, during the Easter Season, God's presence in our lives, to listen for God's voice, to hold strong to God's Word and in celebration of Pentecost we come to see and experience the revelation what many have come to describe as the mystery of the Trinity; the existence of the Triune God. The role of the Holy Spirit, as we

discussed last week, is to come along side each of us and to open our eyes, to catch our attention by jabbing us in the ribs and reminding us of all that Jesus has spoken to us through the written Word and to remind us that the larger truth about Jesus is that God had been; through the life, ministry and teachings of Jesus Christ, been revealed to this world in a way that had never been seen before. How wonderful it is to know that the New Covenant we speak of each week during our time of Communion is so much more than a tradition; but rather is a reminder that God reached out to the people of Creation with a not only a message that was radical, but with a promise that was radical, as well. God, in a time when the world was holding strong to tradition without any real sense of understanding; granted this world an opportunity to return into relationship with the Godhead by introducing the world, once again, to the elements of the Trinity; our Creator in God the Father, Our Redeemer in the only begotten Son of God; our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and our Sustainer; the very Spirit of God that dwells is said to not only dwell among us, but also within us at the time of our Salvation.

The disciples have had quite the experience over the past few weeks as they have traveled to Jerusalem with Jesus. Jesus' Maundy Thursday comments to his disciples given to us in John 13-17 are a reminder of all that has been heard, seen and experience on their Exodus to the capital city. Jesus' comments have anticipated his suffering and death in the 24 hours that would follow; his comments have also anticipated his resurrection, his ascension into heaven and the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit would miraculously come upon the disciples. The information that the disciples were being fed during these last few days before the crucifixion was a lot for the disciples to absorb at once. Jesus knew how overloaded their hearts and minds felt. He expressed this to them verbally when he said, **"I have much more to say to you, more**

than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.”

Jesus would have said more and taught them more if the disciples could have handled it. But that didn't mean he lost his final opportunity to instruct them. He pointed them forward to the day of Pentecost—the day we celebrated last Sunday. When the Holy Spirit came, Jesus instructed them that he would miraculously continue to teach them and to remind them of all the spiritual and eternal truths Jesus himself had taught them. And so it is for us today, 2000 years later. Again, we are enslaved to a world that holds to tradition, is politically driven and consistently in search of how we, ourselves, are in control of our destiny. But God has provided us with much better than what the world has to offer. That's why Jesus called the Holy Spirit the **“Spirit of the truth,”** and that's why he said the Spirit would **“guide [them and in turn each of us] into all the truth.”** That little word, “the,” in the phrase “the truth” isn't in our English translation, probably because its inclusion doesn't sound as natural in English. But the little word “the” as I have just read it is significant. The Holy Spirit wasn't going to fill them with a mystic feeling that would provide them with just isolated moments of spiritual ecstasy or produce for them a vague understanding of spirituality. The Holy Spirit would lead them into **“the truth.”** The Holy Spirit would reflect the same truth and facts that Jesus taught them, including truths about the future of God's kingdom. We, as the chosen people of God, have an incredible responsibility to bring forth God's kingdom into a lost and dying world and it is the power offered to us by the Holy Spirit that enables each of us to do so with authority and assurance. As Jesus said it, **“He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”** What is it that you hear the Holy Spirit saying to you today? What path and in what direction are you being led today? The Holy Spirit *does not*

speaks on his own, Jesus reminds us, yet he *speaks only what he hears*. The Holy Spirit is the line of communication between God and the people of God; between God and each and every one of us here today. What is God speaking to you?

Equally important, we should note in Jesus' words here today that the Holy Spirit's work also serves to point the way to Jesus. **“He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.”** That's the Holy Spirit's job—to bring glory to Jesus, to point people to Jesus' work, to bring people to faith in Jesus. The Spirit takes the truth about who Jesus is, that is the only begotten Son of God and combines it together with the truth about what Jesus, through his death and resurrection, has done, and that is offered an opportunity to enter into a reconciled relationship with the Father. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, all that Jesus has taught us about love, acceptance, service to one another, encouragement and relationship with the Father would continue to be fostered in the life of the disciples and then to all others who would come after them; those who would come after them into the kingdom of God. Isn't this what we are reminded of each week during our communion service when we recount the Word of Jesus as he speaks, *This is my blood, shed for you. It is shed for the remission of your sins and for the sins of all those who come after you. It is a sign of a New Covenant between God and the people of God. In as much as you do this, do so in remembrance of me . . .*

Last week we alluded to the importance of good theology in addition to good doctrine. To me, the construct of doctrine lends itself to church tradition for the sake of tradition, whereas theology speak more to the truth offered to us by the Holy Spirit. There is a motto that I've heard in some Christian circles: “Doctrine divides; the Spirit unites.” Some may not agree with that motto because they perceive doctrine and theology to mean much the same thing. I kind of like the statement because to me it speaks to the danger of tradition for the sake of tradition;

tradition without an awareness of the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church and in the lives of God's people

We must, however, be careful when we seek to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. What are we really "reading" when we look inside our hearts and minds for a spiritual message? Could it be that we are looking at just ourselves? Is it possible that, at times, we confuse *our* emotions and thoughts with the Spirit of truth? After all, our own lives are filled with plenty of mistakes that are better named sin. Our lives are filled with plenty of poor choices that are more accurately labeled rebellion against God's will. Our lives are filled with repeated patterns of turning away from the Word of God instead of listening to the true voice of the Spirit of truth in the Word of God. We would do well to take Martin Luther's advice to heart: *"If we are to hold to Christ's Word ... and to judge all teachings and signs, life and activity, according to this, the Holy Spirit himself must be present with His revelation. If teachings, signs, life, and activity are in opposition to [the] article of Christ ... one should ignore and reject them, even if it shows miracles every day."*

Don't listen to the rumblings of your sinful flesh. Listen to the true voice of the Holy Spirit, the voice found in the Word of God that points you to Jesus. For when you hear forgiveness announced, the Holy Spirit takes the *not guilty* verdict Jesus earned by his innocent life and gives it to you. When you hear the Word of God read remember that it is more than just another literary work. The Holy Spirit takes the birth, life, ministry, teachings, death and the resurrection of Jesus and applies it to you. For those of you here today who have entered into relationship with our God and Creator through the affirmation of the belief that Jesus died for the remission of our sins, then the Holy Spirit has cleansed your heart with Jesus' cleansing blood and has washed away your sins. Each week when we receive the Holy Supper of Jesus, the Holy

Spirit takes Jesus' own body and blood and feeds our soul with the food of heaven. That's how you know the Holy Spirit is truly at work, because the Spirit's job is to point you to Jesus.

If you have not yet entered into the relationship with our God and Creator through the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, then won't you do so today? As we sing our sermon hymn, *Jesus, All for Jesus*, won't you come to this altar and reconcile your life with your God today.

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