

## THE TRUTH ABOUT JESUS

**TEXT:** John 16:12-15

I suspect that you all would not appreciate it if I began today's meditation by saying: "There are things that are essential in our faith, but I can't speak about them because you would *not* be able to understand. They are far too complicated and way over your heads."

Really? Well, that is how our scripture for today starts out. I find it somewhat disconcerting when I hear Jesus' observation that "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." My goodness! What are these things? Tell us, Jesus! Don't just leave us hanging. We want to know. We can take it. We have heard so many things from you. You told us that we are to be merciful, pure in heart, and peacemakers. You explained that we should not worry.

You reminded us that we are to love God and love our neighbor. And you told us that things would not always be easy or go smoothly for us. Remember, you said: "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me". The call to take up our cross is definitely a hard saying. What else could you have possibly told us? What did we miss?

In this brief portion of Jesus' farewell sermon we are not told what those many things are, only that Jesus will not tell us. But, we are told that, in the future, in the unfolding of time, we will be told them. And we are told how we will hear of them. It is the Spirit of truth who will guide us, speak to us, and declare to us all that we need to know. We are given a portrait of the three persons of the Trinity. Jesus speaks of himself, of the Spirit's activities, and of the Father.

Today is designated as Trinity Sunday, the day we recognize and honor the Triune God. And perhaps this is what Jesus was concerned that we might not be able to understand. Admittedly, it is a concept that is hard for many of us to truly grasp. It is

one of those difficult, challenging, thought-provoking doctrines of our faith. But we should not think of it as an exam question that must be answered before we will be admitted to the heavenly banquet. Nor is the Trinity an IQ test to identify the superior intellects and weed out those who are not worthy. It is, as Catherine Mowry LaCugna explains in her book *God for Us*, “ultimately a practical doctrine with radical consequence for Christian life... (it) is the specifically Christian way of speaking about God, and what it means to participate in the life of God through Jesus Christ in the Spirit.

Well, okay, so far so good. But that still doesn't clarify today's reading. John tells us that when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide us into all truth. So, didn't we celebrate that last week on Pentecost Sunday? Three times in John's gospel, we hear about the “Spirit of truth”. And we want to hear what the Spirit has to say. We want to hear the truth about Jesus.

In fact, we want to know the truth about everything – about the universe and how it works; the truth about the sun, moon and stars. We want to find out the truth about medicine and diseases. We want to find out the truth in history. We want to find out the truth about politics.

In this short passage from John we are told that “When the spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth”. This is the Holy Spirit, whose arrival we celebrated last week in Pentecost. And this is the Spirit that will lead us into truth about Jesus, God, ourselves, human relationships, science and everything else under heaven.

John reminds us that God is Spirit and that God is the source of our drive for truth. This is the spirit that will guide us into all truth. God wants us to know the truth in every aspect of life – all things like science, history, math, music, medicine, psychology, sociology and everything that is here in our universe. The history of all civilization is about the search for truth.

Jesus tells us that the Holy Spirit is the Counselor, the Strengthener, the one who will bear witness for him. That is the purpose of the Holy Spirit – to testify and give evidence and witness to the words and wisdom of Jesus Christ, his miracles and parables, his Good Friday and his Easter. This Spirit of Truth leads us to listen to Jesus so that we will discover the truth about God. The primary purpose of the Holy Spirit is to bring our image of Jesus into sharp focus so that we see Jesus as clearly and distinctly as humanly possible, so that we can begin to grasp the truth about God.

Today is Trinity Sunday, and we humans are on a quest to find out the truth about God. In our quest to find out the truth about God, we find that this comes to us in at least three ways: in the creation, in the Son, and in the Spirit.

There are many who have problems understanding the Trinity. How can there be three separate entities in one? The analogy of H<sub>2</sub>O is fitting here. So, what is H<sub>2</sub>O? (water). Yes, water. But how many forms does H<sub>2</sub>O have? Three. We all know that H<sub>2</sub>O comes to us in three forms: water, ice and vapor. So, imagine water, a glass of water, and drinking that glass of water. It has a definite texture, a definite taste, a distinct touch. Now, imagine a block of ice in your hand. Does that block of ice feel freezing and cold? In your imagination, let this block of ice start numbing your hand. The experience of ice is very different from the experience of water. Both are the same substance, but each experience is different. Now, imagine water vapor in the air. Imagine humidity on a hot summer afternoon. The air itself feels moist, wet, damp and clammy. But this moist air does not feel like water from the drinking glass nor like the block of ice in your hand. Yet it is the third experience of H<sub>2</sub>O. So we know that H<sub>2</sub>O comes to us in three different forms, but yet it is the same substance.

So it is with God. To know the truth about God, we need to know the truth about God the Creator, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. We have three distinct and different experiences with God in our daily lives. We have our personal experiences with God the Creator, with God the Son, and with God the Holy Spirit. They are all one, but we experience God in three different ways.

And we experience God in many different facets of our lives. We know God in nature, in the gardens, flowers, oceans and mountains, but we fully experience God in the person of his Son, Jesus of Nazareth. God's love was fully embodied in the body of Jesus. His teachings, his miracles, his way of life, his death on the cross, his resurrection

We experience God through his presence in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the experience of God here in our lives today. Just as we see God in nature, and see God in Jesus, so we also see God in the Church, the community of faith. We see God in the scriptures; and we see God in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. The bread. The wine. When we consume these elements, we are taking Jesus into ourselves, receiving with gratitude and humility his body and his blood.

So, what do we learn from the Spirit of Truth? The Spirit will lead us neither to brand new truths nor toward knowledge that will add to what Jesus has already bequeathed us. No, the Spirit will guide us to the fullness of truth from within, giving us a more correct understanding of that truth which is Jesus, making us aware of the impact that it will have in the new situations that we have yet to face.

The Spirit of Truth will be with us forever, in us and around us. From the Spirit of Truth, we will personally discover the truth about God the Creator, the truth about God the Son and the truth about the Holy Spirit, one God, forevermore. Amen.