

It's the Truth
John 16:12-15
June 16, 2019 – Trinity Sunday/Confirmation Sunday

If you were in church last week, you heard me state that the Holy Spirit was not born on Pentecost. Indeed, the Holy Spirit, that spiritual nature of God was one with the creator from the beginning. The Holy Spirit always existed and always will exist; but, it was at Pentecost, that the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples in such a miraculous way as to initiate the spreading of the Good News of God's amazing love as personified in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ to all the world. And the result of the spreading of the Good News was the beginning and the amazing growth of the Christian Church. But today, let's fast forward two thousand years.

Over the past two thousand years, there have been many changes in the church. There have even been changes in doctrine, the theology, the basic ways in which we understand God and God's call on our lives. But the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Living God, the Spirit of the Risen Christ has not changed. That Spirit has been ever present and always the same since the beginning of time, and it will be the same until the end of time. Theologians have a word for it; they say that God is immutable, unchangeable. The Holy Spirit is, has always been and will always be the Spirit of Grace, the Spirit of Goodness, the Spirit of endless love, the Spirit of truth.

Our very short Gospel reading for today states this emphatically: "When the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you into all truth... He will take what is mine and proclaim it to you." The Spirit will guide you into all truth.

A few months back I, while driving home from church and listening to the radio, I heard a leading politician state that there is no such thing as "truth." I almost drove off the road. I did find myself shouting at my car's radio. Friends, I'm here to tell you today as I have emphasized to our confirmation class for the last several months that this is one great overarching truth, a truth that will never change, a truth that will never die; and that is the amazing love of God.

As I have met with these two wonderful young ladies for the past six months, we have covered a lot of subjects, some fairly simple and straight forward and some a lot more complicated like the doctrine of the Trinity and the two natures of Jesus; and I have been very realistic in telling them that I know they will not remember everything that we covered.

I address the two of you again, and I invite the rest of the congregation to listen in. I hope there is one thing that you will never forget; and that's the nature of Grace. What's Grace? Grace is God's love of all God's people. And we talk about the various ways we experience that love. First, there is Prevenient Grace – the love God has for all people, even if they don't know it, even if they don't believe it. God loves all people; and all truly means all. That is truth. The truth is: God loves all people, no exception.

Then there is Justifying Grace – that point when we come to truly realize how much God love us. God loves each of you, every person in the sanctuary, and every person on this planet; and that is also truth.

And once we realize how much God loves us, we cannot help but share that love; we can't help but spread that love to others; and that's Sanctifying Grace. If God loves

every person on this planet, we are called to do likewise. And loving them means loving them in our prayers, in our thoughts, in our words, and in our actions. Indeed, we are called to “minister” to those in need, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, house the homeless, and visit the sick and imprisoned. We are called to spread the love of God; and that’s truth.

What is truth? God loves you; and you are called to respond by sharing the love of God with others. That’s the truth which the Holy Spirit brings to us; that’s the truth that has always been; and that’s the truth that always will be.

Jesus tells us that the Holy Spirit will “take what is mine and proclaim it to you.” What’s that? Often I have stated that Jesus is the personification of God’s love. Jesus truly was love in human form. It was in the first sermon that I ever preached from this pulpit that I stated that, with the sin of Adam and Eve, humanity intentionally separated itself from God. Genesis 3:8 states that “the man and his wife hide themselves in the garden from the presence of God”; and the rest of the Old Testament is about God trying to reestablish a divine and loving relationship with humanity. And then, in the person of Jesus, God said, “Okay, if you won’t come to me, I’ll come to you,” and the Word became flesh and blood to walk with us, to teach us, to heal us, and eventually to die for us only to rise again to a fullness of life with the promise to be with us always, even to the end of the age. Friends, that’s truth. That’s the ultimate love of God personified.

So what is it that is of Jesus? What is it that this Spirit of Truth proclaims? You know the answer as well as I do: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength; and love your neighbors, all your neighbors, as you love yourself.” That’s truth, the truth that will never die.

I can’t count how many times in the past eight years I have stated in our Children’s Moment that the greatest gift in all the world is the gift of God’s Love. I told this congregation recently that, when the great German theologian Karl Barth was asked to sum up his many volumes of writings, he quoted a simple children’s song: “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” That too is truth.

May we never forget that truth. May we never forget to share that truth. May we never forget to live that truth; as we thank God for the greatest gift in the world, the gift of God’s amazing love.

Let us pray,

God we thank you for the gift of love.
May we always live life out of that love,
as we experience that love,
as we share that love,
as we live that love,
in your holy name. Amen.

Rev. Mark L. Steiger, Pastor
North Olmsted United Methodist Church