

John 16:12-15  
Gifts of the Family  
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**“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. <sup>13</sup>When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. <sup>14</sup>He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. <sup>15</sup>All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.**

Well once again, good morning to you, and happy Father’s Day to all the dads in the room. It’s good to be together in worship this morning, and I hope that all of you dads enjoy your guilt free afternoon on the couch—or however you plan to spend your day. Summer is an amazing time of year, right? And not just because we get so little of it. It’s especially fun in our church, a lot of great stuff happens around here during the summer.

I also want to take a moment of personal privilege to thank you for the chance to get away and spend some time with my dad and mom and my children in the place where I grew up, Minneapolis MN. We had a great week of reconnecting with family, visiting with extended family who were unable to be here for Amy’s funeral, and just stepping aside from the normal flow of life to take a breath.

Something happens when I walk through the front door of the house on Buckingham Dr. It is as if I am immediately 16 years old again. Having not lived in my home state since 2004 it is a gift to spend time back there, which we did. We went to the parks, splash pads, sat and read at coffee shops, went to a 20-year high school reunion, saw many of the family members who weren’t able to make it to Amy’s funeral, and even took in a game of the first place, best record in baseball Minnesota Twins. It was a wonderful time. But like every trip, round about Tuesday of this week I began to grow restless for my home.

We came back to celebrate with the Frank and Unger Family in the marriage of Brandon and Emily yesterday afternoon. It was a great privilege to stand alongside those two who have been together since before I was your pastor, and affirm what the Holy Spirit is doing in their lives together.

There are moments in life that are perfectly poised for dads or moms to sort of look their child, their son or daughter in the eye and say something like: I need to tell you a few things before... In my family we call these Yoda moments, from that scene in Star Wars when Yoda tells Luke the important news: “there is another Skywalker.”

For some it may be sitting out on a boat or on a pier with a line in the water, for others it may be moments just before walking down the aisle, for me I can remember riding in my dad’s pickup truck going to pick up lumber for a deck project we were working on. At the time it felt completely out of left field, but looking back I know that was the perfect moment. Moments when everyone knew, life was about to change course, and its time you became your own man, your own woman.

This is precisely what is happening in John's Gospel before us this morning. Jesus is preparing the disciples for his departure from their presence—death on the cross. But for this morning's passage Jesus doesn't leave them hanging, but in fact gives some of the most pivotal instruction for the church going forward in his name.

Here in chapter 16 Jesus gives his most emphatic teaching describing the work of the Holy Spirit (*paraclete* – *advocate, counselor*) through the Church.

In these brief verses Jesus prepares his disciples for the advocate who will lead them forward who continues to lead the Church. The Spirit, the third member of the trinity will come and be our guide.

Jesus says in verse 13: When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth.

Leonard Bernstein is famous for saying what Beethoven's 5<sup>th</sup> did to him. Bernstein says, when he hears Beethoven's 5<sup>th</sup> he feels "there is something right in the world. Something that follows its own laws consistently. Something that checks itself. Something that will never let us down." What Leonard Bernstein is describing when he talks about this piece of music is in actuality what people know as truth. He's not describing a body of information, he is talking about pure and absolute truth in a person.

And if someone would have gone to him and asked him if he believes that there is a universally trustworthy body of knowledge, somethings that checks itself, something that will never let us down. Of course we know that Bernstein would probably say "no". And yet he's drawn to it in the music. We are drawn to pure beauty, we are drawn to pure joy, we are drawn to pure humanity, we are drawn to pure truth. And what Jesus says to his disciples as he prepares them is: even though I am going away, there is another who will come on my behalf and will lead you into this truth.

We are people who are created and yearn for the Truth. There is a theologian by the name of Anselm who once expressed our yearning for truth this way: Why does the baby want to eat? Because there's such a thing as food. Why does the duckling want to swim? Because there's such a thing as water. Why when you hear great music, especially when you've been raised in a culture that may not believe, do you yearn for the God of truth? And the answer that is most plausible is that there is a God who yearns to reveal himself and be in relationship with you.

Interestingly, Jesus doesn't say that the Spirit will guide you into all knowledge, nor does he say the Spirit will guide you in defining your own truth. Jesus is not saying that the Spirit's job is to teach us about quantum physics or biology, or mathematics, those are all bodies of knowledge and truth that we can discover and learn about through the gifts of our own faculties. Nor is he saying that the Spirit will be your tour guide as you decide what truth is.

No Jesus is saying that when the Spirit comes he will guide you into the Truth, or as our best Greek manuscripts render he will guide you by means of the whole truth. But what is the Truth in which he is leading?

The truth is not just a body of knowledge, facts about the world and faith and reality, like we were somehow just a brain on a stick that needed information downloaded into our harddrives. But here, as I read this passage, I envision the Holy Spirit taking us by the hand, like a parent leading a little

child, into something totally foreign, something incredibly new, and yet something that if we squint our eyes and turn our heads just so, we realize we've known all along.

I was trying to think of a good movie illustration of this experience and the best I could come up with was the movie *Hook*. Do you remember that rendering from the 90s where Robin Williams is a grown-up Peter Pan who, as an adult, is brought back to Neverland? And only after he's taken by the hand and led there, letting go of all of his worldly wisdom and sophistication, does he begin to see again the reality of Neverland. Here was a man who lost his sense of wonder, his innocence, and is taken by the hand and led back to a place they vaguely remember, yet something they've known all along but was buried under layer upon layer of cynicism, skepticism, and modernity.

Jesus says in Matthew 11: **“I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants.”**

It's not that Jesus is saying that only people who check their brains at the door will believe in me, but that those who check their sense of wonder at the door for cynicism, rationality, skepticism, and spiritual autonomy—where we no longer need God to answer our questions—will not be able to see all truth.

You know, it's interesting, we've been able to answer a lot of the questions about how the universe and the human body and the laws of the physical world operate. But what modernity has not been able to answer is the question of why? Why do these things hold together in such delicate beauty? Why, for what purpose, and to what end does humanity and the natural world exist the way it does. And the New Testament points clearly to a man, a person, Jesus of Nazareth, the Word of God, the logos, incarnate among the human race that he created, and for whom he would journey to the cross to bring reconcile them and forgive their sins and restore the relationship with God that has been marred by sin.

This is all correct, this is all what scripture points to as the end and the source of truth. But I think Jesus points us beyond the truth of the man, I think Jesus points us to an even deeper truth, something even fuller. Jesus points us to a community, a fellowship of all living in the movements of God's identity. Jesus says that the Holy Spirit the advocate will come and guide us into all the truth, and then he goes on to give a description of the Trinity.

**...he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come (Holy Spirit's revelation and witness proceeds from Jesus). <sup>14</sup> He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. <sup>15</sup> All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.**

The Spirit is wanting to take us by the hand and lead us into the truth and reality and relationship of the Trinity, the Triune Godhead. This truth is not just factual, Jesus died for our sins on the cross and was raised three days later. But the truth of how the act of redeeming and restoring our lives gets lived out and translated down through the ages, from forever to forever, is in fact in this community, this fellowship with and of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We as the Church, the body of Christ gathered, are sort of like the 4<sup>th</sup> part of this relationship that is being grafted into and brought up into the movement of God's Triune Family. These reciprocal acts of love and service, sending and obeying, praying for and renewing, all of these are acts that the

three part God offer to one another in this fluid movement, this dance of the Trinity. I think the Eastern Orthodox Church really gets this better than we do as they see God not just as a body of information to be agreed upon, but as a community of parts moving in graceful other-centeredness.

So what are these movements? I think they begin and end with worship—after all it's how the Scriptures begin and end. But it's not just people who get together once a week to hear a convincing lecture or slick message about God. But the movements are when communities are woven together in their life together, as they share their space, their resources, their food, their love and laughter and tears with one another. When each person no matter their ability has dignity and something to offer the community, and each are honored for their uniqueness. When those who are foreigners are brought in and a space is made for them, as Paul will later write in Ephesians 2:13 **we were all once far off but have been brought near by the blood of Christ.**

This community centers on worship and the act of gathering to hear and respond to the Word, and that abundant grace spills over into the rest of life as we live it together. It is deeply communal. It is deeply expressive.

The truth of our culture now is that people are not just leaving, they are running from a religion that is individualistic and only about the assent to certain doctrines that are lived in a vacuum. Doctrines are important, we're talking about the doctrine of the trinity today, But if Christian faith is about showing up in church and hearing a message about individual salvation that has no affective change in our community or in the world, people are simply uninterested. There is all sorts of places that they can find meaning in their lives, they're not asking for the church to give them meaning. They're asking for the church to point them to a greater community, a greater story. The Philosopher Alistair MacIntyre has a quote that says I cannot know how I am to act until I know what story of which I am a part. Jesus is telling the disciples, the Spirit is coming to lead you into this trinitarian community that embodies perfectly mutual love and totally honoring and completely sacrificial love.

What the "Nones" generation is hungry for, what I am hungry for, and what I hope you are hungry for as well is for the Holy Spirit to take us by the hand and lead us into the ways of all truth of worship, table fellowship where our dinner tables become the place of welcome and hospitality to our community, to our conversations and gatherings that invite people to find mercy and meaning and belonging.

But if you've been around churches long enough you know that they are places that are littered with the stories of people hurting one another. People who, in the name of Jesus, carry out their own selfish agendas and leave a wake of hurt-feelings in their path. A friend of mine tells a story of being on an airplane and sitting down next to a man who invariably asked him what he did for a living. Now usually when we tell folks that we are Presbyterian pastors we get one of two responses: 1. They tell us all about their horrible church experiences of long boring sermons, grouchy Sunday school teachers and congregations that are not so much like Jesus. The other response we often when people find out we're Presbyterian pastors is they try and convert us.

But my friend was sitting on the plane and the guy next to him chose option 1. To which my friend responded, listen, I've spent a whole lot more time around churches and church people than you have, and let me tell you, you don't know the half of it.

The truth of the matter is we're not always that great at living into this reality of the beautiful community of the Holy Spirit.

And that's why I intentionally left verse 12 until the end. Jesus says **"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now."**

The witness of the Scriptures is not about humanity's quest to finally make it up to God. What we read in Scripture is actually the exact opposite. It's more like humanity's experience of running as far and as fast away from God as we possibly can. We don't want to receive truth and meaning and purpose, we are independent autonomous meaning making people all by ourselves, thank you very much. But you can see where that's got us.

The real truth of the bible and here is where the Gospel message comes shining through this morning, blazing with truth and beauty. Is that no matter how far and fast God's people have run from God, the Grace of Jesus Christ always pursues us. The scripture is actually about God's mission to restore and redeem wandering people, like the Hound of Heaven he is.

Jesus through His Holy Spirit is continuing to pursue us as we continue to fiddle around trying to create our own lives. He's reaching his hand to take hold of ours and draw you into the beautiful, eternal, fluid, grace-filled movement of the triune family of God.