

Sermon – June 12, 2022
“He will guide you into all truth”
The Rev. John C. Wright



Text: John 16:12-15

Pray with me: Father, let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. Come, Holy Spirit, come, visit, fill and anoint the sharing of these words. Make them a blessing for your people that leads to life eternal and fruitful labor as we labor with Jesus on this mission field. Amen

Good morning. Welcome to the first Sunday after Pentecost. On the Christian calendar, today is Trinity Sunday, the Sunday the Church sets aside to focus on the Trinity, the loving relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Trinity is the three in one that are three persons but one God. It is fitting that we look at the Trinity as we journey through the season of Pentecost as Holy Spirit always points us to the other two members of the Trinity. This morning I am not going to attempt to explain the mystery of the Trinity, but will let the Word of God we have heard speak to this holy relationship, so that we may grow in our grasp of this great holy mystery.

The names of the members of the Trinity are both familiar and unfamiliar. There is God the Father, the creator and sustainer of all. There is the Son, Jesus, who reveals the Father, who is the Word made flesh and died that we might be reconciled to God the Father, to have a personal relationship with the Father. These two members of the Trinity are more familiar to us. The third member of the Trinity is not a holy Spirit, but is Holy Spirit. The third member of the Trinity is named Holy Spirit. We often put an article in front of the name of the third member of the Trinity, but the third member of the Trinity is named Holy Spirit. In this morning's text, Jesus also calls the third member of the Trinity the Spirit of Truth. Notice that when we pray, we pray,

“Come, Holy Spirit.” We don’t pray, “send some of the holy spirit.” We use the name of the third member of the Trinity, Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit is a person. Jesus refers to Holy Spirit in this morning’s text as He. Jesus is emphasizing that we can and do have a personal relationship with the members of the Trinity including Holy Spirit.

Last week I shared a prayer for us to begin using during the weeks of Pentecost to help us open our hearts to Holy Spirit. Today we will find that prayer printed on the back of our bulletins. Remember, our challenge as a congregation during the season of Pentecost is to pray this prayer daily and then to sit quietly for 5 – 15 minutes listening for Holy Spirit to speak into our hearts. I also encourage us to record any impressions we receive as we listen and to be willing to share our gifts with each other. We are to be risk takers with what we receive from Holy Spirit, sharing what we receive with each other. Let’s take a minute and turn our bulletins over and pray that short prayer together. Pray with me, “Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in them the fire of your love, Amen” And remember the short version of this prayer is “Come, Holy Spirit, come.” Paul tells us to keep our worship services orderly, so if we have something we would like to share, first come forward during the last hymn and share it with me, and I will add a time of prayer to our service. Let me encourage us to put our bulletins where we will see them and daily pray this simple prayer and listen for the voice of Holy Spirit.

While we have our bulletins out, let me give a word of praise to Margaret who blesses us each week by putting together these written guides for our worship service. Thank you, Margaret, for all of your help and hard work each week to guide our worship. Our bulletins are our approach to worship in that we step through the items listed in the bulletin each week as we worship. We seek to order our worship and control what happens during worship through the steps found in the bulletin. As we journey through the season of Pentecost and seek to be a congregation more open to the guidance of Holy Spirit, we will need to become those willing to give up this idea of control over our worship and become those who are more open to what Holy Spirit is doing among us as we experience the gifts of the Spirit in worship. We will work to keep order in our worship, but we also want to be sensitive to the presence of Holy Spirit among us as we worship. We should keep in mind that the choice made in the Garden by humanity was to control our lives and this is how we tend to live. We choose to be in control and we take that as an expression of our freedom. But we were not made to be in control of our lives. We were created for an influence relationship with God. That is another role of Holy Spirit, to influence

us, to guide us, to teach us, and to remind us of God's Word given to us through Jesus that we might be influenced into a relationship with Jesus and the Father. When we accepted Jesus as our savior and were baptized, we were sealed with Holy Spirit. It is possible that we have Holy Spirit resident in us, but not president in our lives. We have Holy Spirit, but we are still in control of our lives, exercising our free will to keep control of our lives. The lordship of Jesus Christ becomes a key idea for us as we seek to grow in the influence of Holy Spirit. As we welcome Holy Spirit into our lives, we are to seek to surrender ourselves to the lordship of Christ through the influence of Holy Spirit in our lives. This is influence and not imposed control. Holy Spirit does not seek to control us by imposing Christ's will, but through Holy Spirit's actions, influence becomes control leading to perfect freedom. We begin to make the choice to align with Christ's will, and as we do, we begin to become truly who we were meant to be. We grow into our true selves and leave behind our false selves. We are seeking to surrender ourselves to the lordship of Christ through the influence of Holy Spirit.

On a Sunday morning when we come to worship, we should not be exclusively focused on the hymns, readings, and proclamations that have been prepared, but we should also be growing in our openness to what Holy Spirit is doing in our lives to build up the body of Christ. The arrival of words of knowledge that build up and encourage someone present should be our anticipation as we worship and allow Holy Spirit to guide. We have learned to share our joys and concerns that are on our hearts and that we desire to share with each other and to have lifted up to Jesus in prayer. But Holy Spirit is present and if we will open our hearts to His action, we should expect other gifts of the Spirit to be active among us. We are to be orderly in their sharing, but we are also to be those who will take the risk to share those gifts and to encourage each other.

There are some other attributes of Holy Spirit found in these verses. In verse 13, Jesus tells us, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears and he will declare to you the things that are to come." We have already learned that Holy Spirit will remind us of Jesus' words and will teach us. Now Jesus tells us that Holy Spirit will guide us into all the truth and will declare to us the things that are to come. We have two additional attributes of Holy Spirit to consider and add to our growing list of Holy Spirit attributes. This morning, let's look briefly at what it means to be guided into all the truth.

The truth that Holy Spirit guides us into is what he hears from Jesus and the Father. Holy Spirit guides us into the truths that came from the Father through Jesus. The truth spoken of here is not some new truth or some different truth from what Jesus has already given. Jesus tells the disciples there are things they will need they have not been told as they cannot bear them at this time. We might wonder what things Jesus is referring to that he has not shared. We can put together a list of many possibilities. Death and resurrection are certainly candidates for our list, as are suffering and persecution encountered in the world for those who join Jesus' mission. The Book of Revelation that John was given in the Spirit is another item to add to our list. Revelation does not give new truths but begins to develop a vision for God's mission and its endpoint. The Book of Revelation speaks to churches seeking to follow Jesus' words in the world, tells them of the persecution they will experience, and gives the Church a vision for the return of Jesus in power and final reconciliation of believers with God speaking to a time when "the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away" (Revelation 21:3b-4).

Let me share another example of Holy Spirit leading the early church into all the truth. Take the early understanding of the disciples that Jesus' gift of salvation was only for the Jews. They did not understand that this gift was for all believers, Jew and Gentile. Peter in Acts 10 has a vision where he is told to kill and eat unclean animals and, in response, Peter has claimed that he has never eaten anything unclean, but in the vision, he is told "that all are clean." Peter ponders this vision and Holy Spirit tells him to go with the men who are sent from a Roman centurion to ask him to come with them. Peter goes, shares the gospel with these Gentiles, they believe in Jesus Christ, and Holy Spirit falls on them as on the disciples at Pentecost. Through Holy Spirit's influence, Peter and the Jewish believers are led by the Spirit of truth into a new understanding of Jesus' words.

Our struggle today, following the close of the canon of Scripture, is determining what new truths we are we to receive from Holy Spirit. Scripture has been given; the Word of God given through Jesus and Holy Spirit is closed. Now the Spirit leads us into the truth of the Word we have been given. We have Holy Spirit present to remind us of these words and to teach us what they mean. But we still need to understand how Holy Spirit leads us into all the truth. There are too many times in the history of the Church when the Word of God is interpreted in a manner

that is inconsistent with Jesus' teaching, and it takes the guidance of Holy Spirit acting in peoples' lives to lead the Church back into all truth. When the believing Jews thought that Jesus' message was for them alone, Holy Spirit led them to understand that they were wrong. When the Church in the Middle Ages brought in new teaching about what the Scriptures held, it took Martin Luther, led by the Spirit of truth, to return to the truth that salvation was by faith in Jesus alone. If we look to the history of the Methodist Church, we find John Wesley seeking to bring the Church of England back into the truth of the Word of God as he was led by the Spirit of truth to bring revitalization to the Church of England. Today, we also struggle to follow the guidance of the Spirit of truth into all truth among the conflicting teachings found in the world, and too often we bring those teachings into the body of Christ. This is the struggle found within the United Methodist Church (UMC) since its inception and it is a struggle found in all denominations. It is to the Word of God and the leading into all truth by Holy Spirit that we need to look today in the UMC, and we need to be open again to the guidance of Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth. In these passages heard this morning, we should note that what Holy Spirit leads us to is not into new truths or new revelations but into new understanding of the truth consistent with the words of Jesus, words that Jesus heard from the Father. So, we start with the Scripture. We need to be those who are like John Wesley, a people of one book. We need to read the Bible, dwell on the text we read, get God's Word in our hearts and minds, and come together and share what we are reminded of and taught by Holy Spirit as we read the Bible by ourselves and in groups and as we hear the Word of God proclaimed.

Let me help us to grow in our understanding about what "all the truth" is and is not. "All the truth" is not the latest scientific truths that are always changing as new scientific evidence is discovered and weighed. God's creation is such a complex entity that as we turn our minds to aspects of creation and probe them, as we are equipped and encouraged by God, we learn more about God's creation, and as we do, our science knowledge grows and changes. Many of us were taught the simple structure of an atom as protons, electrons, and neutrons in school. That "truth" has long been updated as new understanding of the subatomic world was discovered. "All the truth" is also not a philosophical truth about the natural world that has been developed through debate, rational thought, inquiry, and observation. "All the truth" is what the Father gave to Jesus to make known to his disciples. It is what we have been given in the Bible, and it is the interpretations that have been developed by the guidance of Holy Spirit that the people of God

have held in all places for all time. Today these traditional truths are being challenged and revised even if their revision is inconsistent with Jesus' words. Holy Spirit will not lead us into "all the truth" that contradicts or sets aside Jesus' words.

Understanding and following Holy Spirit into all truth is our challenge today as the world moves and changes while seeking and embracing false teaching. We are to open our hearts to the leading of Holy Spirit into all truth. We are to be those who are seeking a new openness of heart to be led not by the world but by the Word of God as we are led into all truth by Holy Spirit. How we meet this challenge is not by becoming students of the world, but by moving deeper in the Word of God, reading, studying, and building up each other in a manner led by Holy Spirit.

Don't forget that as we are led into all the truth there are still many things that Jesus has to say to us, as individuals and as a church. We are to be those who are always ready to extravagantly love others as we are loved by Jesus. Don't be surprised if we find ourselves growing in love for each other as we join together to be led by Holy Spirit into all the truth. There is much that Jesus, through the actions of Holy Spirit, still has to say to us. We should be those who are seeking to be more open to Holy Spirit's guidance. Take the challenge, set aside some time, pray the prayer, quiet our minds, listen for Holy Spirit to speak, and then learn to discern, obey, share, and follow the guidance we receive, seeking to build each other up in love as we with open hearts receive the gifts of the Spirit of truth.

Pray with me: Jesus, we think we have all the truth. Send Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth. Holy Spirit, come and teach us to listen for your guidance and then to love others as we see the love between the members of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Come, Holy Spirit, influence us, guide us into all truth, perfect our love. Amen