

“Sprit of Truth”
John 16:12-15
Sermon #102
5.30.21
Trinity Sunday
64th Sunday in the COVID-19 Pandemic

John 16:12-15 CEB

12 “I have much more to say to you, but you can’t handle it now. **13**

However, when the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you in all truth. He won’t speak on his own, but will say whatever he hears and will proclaim to you what is to come. **14** He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and proclaim it to you. **15**

Everything that the Father has is mine. That’s why I said that the Spirit takes what is mine and will proclaim it to you.

The Word of the LORD. **Thanks be to God!**

Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O God, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Five years ago, I had the opportunity to embark on a pilgrimage to Floyd, Virginia with two seminary students. I was working with Union's Evangelism Professor on developing a new worshipping community in Richmond. Several of us were given the go ahead to travel to Floyd to do some homework.

Now, you may be asking yourselves: Why would anyone go to Floyd, VA to do homework for their Evangelism professor in Richmond? If you haven't been, Floyd is in the mountains of Virginia. Appalachian culture runs through its veins: Music, visual

art, literature, and food. Floyd is also home to one of the first new worshipping communities in the PCUSA that was part of the 1001 New Worshipping Communities initiative started roughly ten years ago: The Wild Goose Christian Community. Our teacher told us to go worship with them and discover more about them.

So, the three of us from Union left Richmond and traveled the interstates, highways, and country roads that eventually led to this spiritual community in just about the remotest place in the county. There it stood, an old church building. About 100 years old. It was a Presbyterian congregation, but it had closed just a few years before. The minister of this new community knew we were coming and was waiting for us.

The minister gave us a tour. As he showed us around, he told us a little bit about his story and how he was eventually led and given a blessing by the presbytery to begin this new community. We went into the sanctuary and noticed the missing pews. Instead, there were rocking chairs formed in a circle. No pulpit. Simply a table and rocking chairs were gathered around it.

None of us quite grasped what was going on until that night when the community met for worship. A Tuesday night in Floyd, VA was where 30 or so folks who were unchurched, de-churched, or simply curious would gather for a meal at the outdoor shelter on the church grounds and then make their way inside for Communion, song, scripture, and prayer. In that order.

The Wild Goose Christian Community listened to the Spirit of Truth.

What is the Spirit of Truth? Well, we don't get much of an answer in today's scripture. Actually, these four verses are nebulous. There are more questions than answers. Not everything was revealed to the disciples because they couldn't handle it. The same goes for us. God's ways are not our ways. The Spirit moves as the Spirit wills. We won't know nor can we understand everything. Our minds just can't grasp it.

But, in these selected verses, we do get a glimpse as to how the Spirit of Truth operates. Notice Jesus doesn't say to the disciples that they'll have all the correct answers, the right plans, or the five

steps to living up to their full potential. The Spirit of Truth will guide us in seeking the truth.

But, what is truth, especially in a post-truth world?

Eugene C. Bay has some thoughts on this passage.¹ There are plenty of congregations who claim to already know what the whole truth is. But, if the disciples couldn't understand the whole truth and if we, 2000 years later, have a hard time grasping the whole truth, then maybe we really don't have it all figured out! Maybe we have to rely on the Spirit of Truth to guide us in our journey to experience something we never thought possible.

¹ David Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, eds. *Feasting on the Word*. Louisville: WJK Press, 2010, p. 46.

Bay continues his commentary on these verses and suggests that the truth is not a matter of having it all figured out. It's not a matter of a "this or that" or "black and white" dichotomy, but something more complicated. Yes, there is no truth that goes beyond the Word Made Flesh who is Jesus Christ! Quite possibly, however, the Spirit of Truth shapes us on our journey and leads us to new interpretations of the truth given to us through the life, message, and meaning of Jesus! And then we are ultimately shaped by the Spirit of Truth to reflect the love of our Savior.²

We, as followers of the Living God, are not to be locked in the past, but are to look at the saving work of God through Jesus Christ as something that brings on new meaning every day! That is, we are to understand who and what Jesus means for us in our own time! And as we wrestle with the teachings, life, death, and resurrection

² *ibid.*, 48.

of Jesus Christ in the light of our own circumstances on May 30, 2021 and beyond, we are relying on the Spirit of Truth to guide us and to get us to re-examine how we do ministry. The Spirit has, is, and will give us the strength to remain faithful in all circumstances, much like our friends in Floyd, VA and the disciples in today's scripture.

There is no doubt the disciples were unsure of what was about to happen. There is no doubt the community in Floyd, VA had much uncertainty, too. Yet, the Spirit of Truth guided the disciples in the moments following the last supper, through the betrayal in the garden, the crucifixion, resurrection, and enjoying a meal together at the end of John. The Spirit of Truth led the disciples throughout the world to proclaim the Good News of God's love for a hurting world, which eventually led others to follow the call of the Savior,

including the Wild Goose Christian Community in Floyd. Including all of us gathered here.

The Spirit of Truth is alive and well, siblings in Christ. The Spirit of Truth opens our hearts, minds, eyes, and ears to the beautiful and surprising work of God who is on the loose in this world. This Spirit will continue to work through us and will continue to work through the next generations even after we have died because God isn't done with us.

Beloved, trust this Good News!

In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.