

24-Hour Support
Romans 5:1-5; John 16:12-15
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Introduction: This is Trinity Sunday. The term “Trinity” is never used in the Bible although there are a few times when the three persons of the Trinity are witnessed during the baptism and at the transfiguration of Jesus. The theology of the Trinity is an attempt to put into words a mystery.

Our passage is John 16:12-15. It is part of Jesus’ Farewell Discourse, but this passage is before the passage we studied a few weeks ago, which was the end of Jesus’ prayer on the night He was betrayed.

He’s gathered the disciples around the table. This is the last time Jesus will speak to them, but it is clear that there are many other things He wants to say to them, but they can’t absorb them now. In this passage Jesus is telling them that in the future He will communicate with them through the Holy Spirit.

John 16:12-15

¹²“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³When 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. ¹⁴He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Prayer: Come, Holy Spirit, Come. Guide us to a new understanding of Your Word in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

For me the most important promise any computer or software company can make is “24-hour tech support.” Unfortunately, that promise doesn’t mean you won’t wait on the line for that support, but it is a relief to know there is help out there somewhere.

We all need guidance once in a while – some of us more than once in a while. I was thinking about the help we need because today’s passage is about the assurance of help that Jesus gave His disciples and gives to us. When Jesus was physically present, all the disciples had to do to get His help was talk to Him. He was their teacher, rabbi, but Jesus knew that He was going to the cross. He knew that he was going to leave them to be in the full presence of God, but there was more that Jesus needed to teach them and us – things they weren’t ready to learn yet. That is why Jesus says to them, “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.” And today there is still more for us to learn. How did the disciples cope? How can we cope? The answer is the Holy Spirit. God sent the Holy Spirit to continue the revelation of the truth through all ages.

The revelation of God is a continuing process. Anyone who has been a parent, aunt or uncle, or teacher or trainer knows that learning is progressive. As the foundational knowledge grows, the student's ability to learn increases geometrically.

The progressive nature of the revelation of God is wonderful news. Among other things it helps us to understand aspects of the Old Testament that baffle and upset us. In the Old Testament, God was working with the Hebrew people in ways they could understand. Just like children, the people saw things in simpler terms of right and wrong. At the right time, when people were ready to grasp more fully the loving identity of God, our Savior came. As He prepared for the cross, an act that was confusing to the disciples, Jesus explained to them that His teaching would not end. Revelation would continue through the Holy Spirit and it continues today. That is our first lesson from this scripture: the revelation of God is progressive and continues in us today.

The second lesson of our scripture is that revelation is of the whole truth. The truth of Jesus Christ is self-giving love. If our actions mirror Jesus' love we will know the Spirit is leading us in truth. Don't forget, of course, that the values of the world do not mirror the truth of Jesus' love.

Some years ago I read *Tuesdays with Morrie*, by Mitch Albom. Morrie Schwartz was a much-loved college professor of Mitch Albom who was a sports writer. Albom saw an interview of Morrie by Ted Koppel because as Morrie as his ALS progress, and he lost his physical powers and approached his death; his gentle wisdom was making him an inspiration to many people. In the book Albom wrote he recorded some of the most powerful words about our culture and our lives that Morrie Schwartz said:

"Wherever I went in my life, I met people wanting to gobble up something new. Gobble up a new car. Gobble up a new piece of property. Gobble up the latest toy. And then they wanted to tell you about it. 'Guess what I got? Guess what I got?'"

"You know how I always interpreted that? These were people so hungry for love that they were accepting substitutes. They were embracing material things and expecting a sort of hug back. But it never works. You can't substitute material things for love or for gentleness or for tenderness or for a sense of comradeship.

"Money is not a substitute for tenderness, and power is not a substitute for tenderness. I can tell you, as I'm sitting here dying, when you most need it, neither money nor power will give you the feeling you're looking for, no matter how much of them you have." [Mitch Albom, *Tuesdays with Morrie: an Old Man, a Young Man, and Life's Greatest Lesson*, (New York: Doubleday, 1997), p. 123-125]

The Spirit of Christ reveals the truth and that truth is the centrality of Christ's love for us.

There is one more thing I want to say about the presence of our teacher, the Spirit. It is a living presence. Pablo Picasso said, "Computers are useless; they can only give you answers." I think that's right. I think the ultimate problem with computers – the reason we need 24 hour 7 days a week technical support – is that computers aren't living beings, they can't think like we do.

We need the living presence of God in the Spirit. One of my favorite stories is about an African village that purchased a television set.

For weeks all of the children and all of the adults gathered around the set morning, afternoon, and night watching the programs. Then after a couple of months the set was turned off and never used again.

A visitor to the village asked the chief, "Why do you no longer watch television?"

"We have decided to listen to the storytellers," he replied.

"Doesn't the television know more stories?" the visitor asked.

"Yes," the chief replied, "but the storyteller knows us." [William R. White, *Stories for the Journey: A Sourcebook for Christian Storytellers*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), p. 32-33]

The wonderful news is that the Spirit knows us, too, and is here to teach us all that we can handle of the love we find in Jesus Christ. Amen.