

First Sunday after Pentecost – June 12, 2022

[Jesus said,] 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.”

Jesus, what are you talking about?

I find the rhythms of this passage confusing. Like I’ve got to keep my head on a swivel. As the English Presbyterian theologian Meda Stamper points out, this text “moves from Jesus through the Spirit to us and from Jesus back to the one who sent him ... (in this) Jesus—us—Spirit—us—Spirit—Jesus—Spirit—us—Father—Jesus—Spirit—us pattern that ... I don’t know, maybe I should have skipped writing a sermon this week and set up a screen up here and played a nice cat video from YouTube. One where they chase

a laser pointer around or something or watch a tennis ball speed back and forth. Because it feels pretty much like that.

I'm sure Jesus had many things to say to his disciples before he went to the cross and more after he was resurrected and emerged from the tomb and if he hadn't ascended to Heaven ... well, he could still be dropping Wisdom right now, without a doubt. That's God for ya.

But he did. I mean: he did die, rise again and ascend into Heaven. And he did leave us with Wisdom for the ages. From the ancient days, for today and into the future of eternity. It's just in a different form. It's in the gift of the Holy Spirit.

I hope I'm saying that right. That's the challenge of the celebration of Trinity Sunday. It seems like just about every other festival in the church is tied to a specific event.

Christmas the birth of the infant Jesus, Epiphany the visit of the Magi who followed a star's light to the Christ child, the

Transfiguration upon a mountaintop in the Holy Land, Easter the resurrection of the crucified Jesus and Pentecost the Spirit's arrival among the newly gathered church in Jerusalem ... and so on and forth.

But Trinity Sunday marks a theological concept. A central one to our faith and also a befuddling one. It's a brave attempt at describing the indescribable. Every metaphor falls short, if not proclaiming an outright heresy. It defies logic. $1+1+1=1$ will get you flunked out of first-grade math but will help you ace Sunday school. That or the transitive property of the trinitarian formula: $3=1$ and $1=3$, while 3 still equals 3 and 1 still equals 1.

But the words of Jesus while still in a body walking this Earth continue to echo, continue to resonate with us, as a gift of the Holy Spirit who carries them, who multiplies, who magnifies the beauty of God's creation, and lead to a wonderful reality. And I love the way our siblings and

communion partners in the United Church of Christ phrase what it is: “God is still speaking” and “Never place a period, where God has placed a comma”

God did not create this universe and say I’m done with it. That’s not what we believe. But sometimes we might forget that God is still creating. That everything around us, like us, is still a work in progress. And that’s OK. It’s not a race to the finish line.

It's a journey. The Spirit is our guide and the path is truth. That is so important right now. In a time of so-called fake news and alternative facts (catchphrases that inherently contradict themselves) ... when sound bites and speaking with the loudest volume are valued over critical thought and carefully considered commentary based on in-depth analysis, we need a guide to the truth desperately. And we need God’s forgiveness when we get caught up in lies that we find more alluring than the truth -- because we have, and

we do, and we will. And we need the humility to recognize that we don't know all that there is to know -- and we can't possibly know all that our creator knows and is and does.

I'm not sure I know quite what Jesus means when he says the Spirit doesn't speak on his own but only what he hears. On its surface, it sounds as if the Spirit then is not equal, as if the Spirit is taking orders, or just the messenger. But there are other times when we hear Jesus say he doesn't know things his Father knows. How does that work in a relationship among equals?

I don't know. I end up choosing to take him at his Word, even if I don't quite comprehend it. I find myself drawn to the relationship even if it's a mysterious one because it models a closeness we can't grasp but we can admire. We try to model it in our own fragile and imperfect human relationships. In marriage, we say two become one, but know that it's more metaphorical ... and certainly flawed. The dance of the Trinity

does not know the steps of putting a foot in one's own mouth and having another watch with smugness as they try clumsily to extract it.

But as I try to absorb and process these notions like a Spirit speaking only what is heard and a Son submitting himself willingly to a Father while having every right and ability to say no, I do admire the relationship of the Trinity, the closeness so as to be inseparable and the trust that it takes to have such a relationship. I want to follow that example in relationships in my own life, even while knowing I cannot ever attain such a thing in any of them.

I want to listen to the Spirit tell me what's been heard from the Father and from the Son and I want to make it part of me without understanding how it all works. And I want to be appreciative of the opportunity to wonder at it nevertheless. And I want to wonder with you, church, as one

body, awkward and clumsy as we might be, inspired by the model of the three-who-are-one.

Jesus, I don't know what you're talking about. But as you and your Father and your Spirit have shown us, because your relationship is love and you share that love with us ... by all means, keep on speaking. We want to hear all of it.

Amen.