

Holy Trinity Sunday-June 12, 2022
Baltic and East Nidaros Lutheran Parish

John 16:12-15

“Declaring IT” *Sermon by Pastor Randall J. Questad*

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

In these few verses in today’s gospel, it seems that Jesus is very ambiguous. Jesus talks about the “many things” that he still has to say to his disciples. Jesus says that his disciples cannot bear hearing “them” now. He says “whatever” the Holy Spirit hears, he will declare those “things” that are to come. Then Jesus concludes by saying that the Holy Spirit will take what is his and declare “it” to you. Words like **things, them, whatever, and it** are not very descriptive and may leave us wondering why Jesus doesn’t just say what he has to say. However, Jesus is preparing his disciples for his departure from this earth when the Holy Spirit will come and be his voice to the world.

Jesus begins by saying that he has many things to say. I have learned from my own experience and from hearing from you, a worship service lasting about an hour is long enough. And this amount of time includes everything in the worship service. We know that a 15-minute sermon is pushing its limits for keeping people’s attention. It isn’t that after an hour, a pastor has run out of things to say. Pastors agree with Jesus when he said, “I have many things to say to you.” It is more likely that after listening for about an hour, you cannot bear much more. This reality is true for most learning. Many schools class periods for students still hold to 45–50-minute class periods for the same reason. After about 50 minutes, student’s hearing starts to shut down and so does their learning.

These few verses from John that seem unclear about what Jesus is withholding from telling his disciples is not because Jesus would have a problem keeping his disciple’s attention any longer because they wouldn’t find “it” of interest or importance. Often, the people that gathered to hear Jesus were amazed at what he said and could not get enough of what he had to say. But Jesus is simply preparing his disciples and you and me to know that one day, a day that is coming soon, Jesus won’t be speaking to us face to face. He will take the words of his father and be speaking to us through the Holy Spirit.

Jesus never gives his disciples a lesson on the Trinity so that they will understand the workings of God the three persons in one which we sang about in our opening hymn “Holy, Holy, Holy”. Jesus often taught using parables, but Jesus never used a parable to explain the Trinity. Jesus didn’t set his disciples down and use an illustration about how He and his Father and his spirit are just like the shell, the white and the yolk of an egg. Three separate parts, but one egg. He didn’t use the example of the skin, the flesh, and the seeds of an apple in the core as an explanation on how the parts of the trinity are connected but serve different purposes. Jesus didn’t use an ice cube, a glass of water and a burst of steam to demonstrate how different parts of the Trinity exist in different forms but all come from the same source as water does. It is preachers of today that have come up with these weak illustrations for the Trinity. In fact, the term trinity is never found in all of scripture and likewise Jesus never even mentions the term Trinity even though we are celebrating Holy Trinity Sunday as a special day in the church year today.

I listened to a podcast about the Trinity that suggested that this is the only special day of the church year where instead of celebrating an event in the life of Jesus such as his birth at Christmas or his baptism by John in the Jordan River or his rising from the grave on Easter, where on this day we highlight a doctrine or teaching of the church. I thought about what this podcast speaker asserted, but I would add that Holy Trinity Sunday is more than just a teaching of the church. Holy Trinity Sunday is a day that we can remember not just one specific event in the life of Jesus, but we remember several events in the life of Jesus where God the

Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are working together. In fact, every worship service should be a Holy Trinity event where Jesus is speaking to you through the Holy Spirit and declaring to you what God the Father knows you need to hear. If the Trinity was simply a doctrine of the church, there would be disagreements, but most Christians agree and believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Pentecost was not the first appearance of the Holy Spirit. Nor is this day, Holy Trinity Sunday, the first time we learn that all parts of the Trinity are at work in the same place. The Holy Spirit was present with God the Creator and Jesus the word of God when all creation began. It was the Spirit of God that moved over the waters and guided us to know that God was about to create all things simply with his speaking. The Holy Spirit was present when Elijah was commanded by the Lord to preach in the valley of the dry bones. It was this Holy Spirit, the breath of God, that gave these lifeless bodies life where there were once only dry bones. It was the Holy Spirit that descended like a dove on Jesus when the heavens opened wide when Jesus came up out of the baptismal waters. It was this Holy Spirit that allowed Jesus to hear his heavenly father claim him as his beloved Son. It was the Holy Spirit that was also with Jesus and his father on the mount of transfiguration who told Peter, James, and John to "Listen to Jesus". Holy Trinity Sunday is more than a celebration of a teaching of the Trinity. Holy Trinity Sunday reminds us of what Jesus told his disciples that whenever we hear God speak to us after Jesus ascended into heaven, it has been delivered to you through the work of the Holy Spirit.

And the heavenly Father has much to say to you, but you cannot bear hearing all of **IT** today. Therefore, we give you an opportunity to worship each week so that we can receive a little more of what God has to say to you. Therefore, each week you get a sampling of scripture from the Old Testament, the Psalms, a New Testament reading and a reading from one of the gospels each week. Any more than this would be more than what you could bear in one sitting.

We attended the Rise Fest ministry event at Sheldon, Iowa Friday afternoon and all-day Saturday. This event is a good reminder for me that although I don't engage with all the songs that others may enjoy and I would not say in my sermons the things other I hear other preachers say at this event, this is a place where the Holy Spirit gathers a large group of people for the Father to take what is his and declare **it** to ears that the Holy Spirit has opened.

On Friday evening, Megan Fate Marshman, someone I had never heard of before but someone who has spoken to groups around the world, delivered her message on just 7 verses from Romans. Since our evening Bible Study just completed a study on Romans, I was curious what verses from Romans she was going to highlight in her message. She also caught my attention when she used a ladder for an illustration for her message. I did the same thing in one of the very first children's sermons when I came to this parish. She demonstrated that most religions have some form of ladder theology where you need to make a movement toward God. She declared to us that this is not what Jesus heard from his father and it was not the message delivered to Paul. We are not holy people moving toward Jesus, but sinners that Jesus is seeking to find you.

Jesus is not ambiguous in what he declares to you. The words of God are very specific. The text from Romans is an example of this. Paul declared that since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand. This is one of Christ's specific messages for you today. You are made right by your faith in Jesus Christ and this faith has been given to you simply through the hearing of his word. The Holy Trinity has been at work again today, drawing you into this place and giving you peace. Peace knowing that all your sins are forgiven. Jesus, God three in one, has come down to you with his Father's word today. Amen