

Romans 5:1-5

1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.
3 Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;
4 perseverance, character; and character, hope.
5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

John 16:12-15

12 'I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear.
13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.
14 He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you.
15 All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.'

The Spirit of Truth John 16:12-15

I think we have maybe heard too many sermons attempting to explain the Holy Trinity so for Trinity Sunday I am going to talk again, as we did last week, about the Holy Spirit, and particularly about Jesus's description of Him as the Spirit of Truth.

13 when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth.

A couple of things we need to remember - God is personal. God is a person. Jesus is a person. The Holy Spirit is not some sort of Star Wars type cosmic force, the Holy Spirit is not an 'it', He is a person. Luke describes Him as 'the Spirit of Jesus' in Acts 16:7. And His very nature as Jesus says, is Truth.

The next question which follows on from this of course is what is truth? *John 18:37 Jesus answered [Pilate], "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."* 38 "What is truth?" retorted Pilate.

Pilate probably asked the key question for the ages when he was confronted by Jesus, the prisoner who broke all the rules, in the sense that he actually broke no rules whatsoever. In fact Pilate's comment is not even a question, it's a contemptuous dismissal of the very idea of truth being something which you can define.

The opposite of truth is lies, and so what it comes down to is whether as human beings we acknowledge our lies, whether they are to ourselves or others.

I don't generally on principle get political in sermons but sometimes you have to deal with it. Jesus himself, although he wasn't involved in politics, nevertheless provoked the political authorities to impose the ultimate criminal penalty. What is really the central issue of the political problems in the UK is *not* whether or not there were parties or inappropriate cakes. It's not even so much as whether the rules were kept. The real issue is whether or not the truth is told. That's what makes people angry, because if powerful people cannot be trusted to speak truthfully then there is a serious problem. And this is a wider problem than any particular government. The constantly repeated argument is that all politicians lie, which is an obvious generalisation, but it does contain some truth. The real issue is whether (using a medical term we're now familiar with) lying becomes endemic. The danger is that it becomes acceptable, and that it has no consequences.

In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act.

This quote, if you investigate, was *not* from George Orwell's *1984*, in fact it's difficult to pin down who said it.

But it's repeatedly proved true, and retrospectively it was also true in the time of Jesus. Political prisoners like Jesus the world over can testify to the danger of speaking truth to power.

The heart of the gospel message to all of us is right here in this observation, because to a smaller or lesser extent each one of us has lied *to ourselves* about our relationship to the truth. Jesus said *I am the way, the truth and the life*. And we have all, at one time or another, like the apostle Peter, denied Jesus.

We cannot move on until we come to our knees before the cross, and admit the truth.

The Spirit of truth is the one who bestows on us our consciences. This is something which is true of all people as created by God, *whether or not* they believe in Him. Our conscience is there whether we like it or not. We all have some sense of right and wrong. The Spirit prompts us, if we are open to Him, as to whether or not we are doing wrong. I think it is possible to deny what our conscience tells us to the point which we can be said to have no conscience left. The point when God abandons us to our own rebelliousness.

12 'I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. 13 but when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

Remember that Jesus is speaking to the disciples on their last night together before his crucifixion. By '*more than you can now bear*' He means he has no time to elaborate but they all need time to grow in their faith. And anyway 99.999% of his disciples will come to faith after he has returned to the Father.

The point is that the Spirit guides us into *all the truth*, and also *makes known to us* what the Father and what Jesus say. But this cannot possibly happen instantly. This is a journey. We're so impatient, and so used to a fast lifestyle, but following Jesus is a relationship with God which grows and matures over our entire lives. I heard the Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, speak on Thursday and he said this - "if you make your goal your destination then you'll never know how to travel well". Faith is something we deal with on a daily basis, so we must walk slowly and listen to the Spirit at each step.

The coming of the Spirit was the gift to the church on its birthday, Pentecost, and He is still our gift now because He helps us to understand what we could not understand until we gave ourselves to Christ.

And what He reveals to us is truth, whether we just understand it as being true facts about who God is, and who Jesus is, or truths about ourselves and our relationship with God or maybe our lack of relationship with God. Truths about scripture and what it has to teach us. Truths about the world. At the point we're at in our reading the disciples had a very hazy understanding because it was not yet Pentecost. In fact John describes Jesus breathing on them and saying '*receive the Spirit*' before his ascension (20:22), and yet he still commands them to wait until Pentecost, to wait for the Spirit to come in His fullness.

Maybe one of the things we so often miss about the Spirit is how present he is in our lives if we trust God, and how He is able to equip us for things He needs us to do. And how little we often draw on that resource, as the disciples did after Pentecost.

To finish, two truths about the Holy Spirit from Paul and Luke:
Romans 5:5 God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

Acts 1:4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, [Jesus] gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

If we think of the importance of baptism with water as a sign through which we proclaim our faith to others then we should also pay just as much attention to what Jesus says about us being baptised with the Spirit. The image is of literally being bathed in God's presence and His desire is that we're transformed on a daily basis, but we need to be open to the possibility of transformation because amazingly God cannot change the world without believers like us, who are transformed and formed by the Holy Spirit, and equipped by Him to spread the good news of the gospel to a world which is desperate need of hope..