Continuing Education

John 16:12-15

INTRO:

In Jesus Christ we have seen the fullness of God . . . but not all at once. Jesus tells us he will give us the “Spirit of truth” who will continue to uncover all the aspects of Jesus for us. The Holy Spirit reveals the Son, who is the Revelation of the Father. The educating, revealing, self-disclosing work of the Holy Spirit is . . . a wonderful thing for us to think about on Trinity Sunday!

ME:

I love continuing education because I love to learn! I usually have no problem getting the number of credits I need to get to satisfy the requirements. Especially with that class I took of Spiritual Direction at Richmond Hill! I got 35 Continuing Education units! I need to have 2 a year, so I am good!

YOU:

Do you like to learn? Or, do you already know everything? I bet you probably know a lot, but I suspect that you don’t know everything. Do you think you know everything about Jesus? Well, you probably don’t. But it
always good to learn more about Jesus though the continuing education of the Spirit of Truth.

Let’s pray together and see what this means...

GOD:

**John 16:12** “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 When 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. 14 He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 15 All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

WE:

Jesus says there are things about him that the disciples cannot bear that will be revealed to them by the “**Spirit of Truth.**” He says that the Spirit will re-declare, or **re-proclaim** what has already been **declared** and **proclaimed**.

The Paraclete, the Spirit, will teach a refresher course in the unfolding importance of the Christ. Christ is the fullness of God’s self-disclosure. It’s a promise of the continuing, unfolding revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Discipleship is a journey or a pilgrimage in which we follow the Christ to learn more about the him as the journey continues. The truth of Christ is too much to be mastered in a moment or at a weekend retreat or workshop.
We must be ready for fresh and new insights into the ancient truth, because the work of the Spirit of Truth continues in the world today among us.

A few years ago on Trinity Sunday, a pastor worked hard on a sermon on the Trinity. He had been reading in Augustine on the Trinity and was eager to show the congregation all the neat things he had learned about one of the most difficult to understand doctrines of the church. He told the congregation, “You think because it’s a beautiful Sunday in June, that I should cut you some slack, allow you off the hook, let you out of here with a tastefully short sermon. Well, this is Trinity Sunday so you can forget that. I’ve got a lot to say about a large idea of the church so you can settle back and relax because this is going to take a while.”

After his Trinity sermon, at the door of the church, someone said, “I’ve been a Christian for thirty years and never have I ever heard about the Trinity. Do you clergy sort of keep this heavy stuff hidden away, waiting to spring it on us until later, after we’ve already signed up and you have our initiation fee in hand?”

Of course not. But that’s just what Jesus says that he is doing as he continues his farewell to his disciples. For so many long passages Jesus has been explaining his mission to his followers. He has used a variety of images and touched on a number of heavy ideas. He is leaving them, he tells
them, and before he goes he dumps on them some of the most impressive teaching that is recorded in the Gospel of John.

Then Jesus says that he had so much more to tell them, but he won’t! There are things about him they cannot handle yet. He is saving them for later. Later the Spirit, the Advocate, will share it with them.

A little weird if you think about it, tough. Jesus has said many times that he had made known everything there is to know from the Father. John portrays Jesus as the full and complete revelation of the God. We look at Jesus and we see as much of God as we can see.

Oh really? Is that the case? Are these words of Jesus all there is to know about God? Jesus says that there are things that the disciples can’t handle at the moment. What does that mean?

Some think he meant that they could not bear knowing what he must go through with the cross and his suffering and death. Eventually, when it had all happened and had all be accomplished, then . . . . then they will know the depth of his love for the world. There is something to this idea, of course.

Others think that Jesus is probably saying that revelation is a continuing process. That it is an ongoing process that will continue even after the New Testament is closed. This is because the “Spirit of Truth,” the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised, will be our guide into all truth as our continuing edu-
cator. Jesus called himself the “truth” earlier, so the “Spirit of Truth” will continue to unpack the truth of Jesus. This doesn’t mean the Spirit will tell us something secret and unknown later, but will continue to unfold, disclose, and hand out more of the significance of Jesus.

It has been said that Christians all need to cultivate the “spirit of the amateur.” That there can be no “professional Christians.” Karl Barth said this and he was probably talking to us clergy, but everyone needs to hear this. We must always guard against pride and conceit. We never really arrive in our faith. There is never a time when there is not more growth for us to do, as if the Spirit of Truth has taught us all we need to know.

*No one gets a Masters degree in Discipleship!*

Because we never master the art of following Jesus. Christianity was first know as “the Way” in the book of Acts. So, to be a Christian is to be a part of “the Way,” or on the Way with Jesus.

We saw today that the Spirit of truth is busy in our lives, our congregation, our worship, our life together revealing and clarifying the great mystery of God in the person of Jesus Christ. There are so many beliefs that are dear to us now that we use couldn’t understand when we first believed. That’s why we worship every week! Fifty-two Sundays a year! This way the Spirit of truth works on us to show us new insights and new revelation. That’s what happens when I or some other preacher says something that strikes
you as interesting or new! It means the Spirit of Truth is working on you. See? 

**God is not done with you yet!**

I found Jesus, the new Christian excitedly and proudly announced to the gathered group. As he described his new-found faith in Christ, it seemed that what he meant was, I got Jesus. He was speaking of his faith as a sort of finished work rather than a work in progress. He was speaking just a bit too confidently of all that he now knew. We don’t want to take anything away from his enthusiasm and self-confidence. But, he needs to know that he was just beginning to grow as a Christian, that God still had more surprises in store for him.

**THE SERMON IN A SENTENCE:**

*Discipleship is a journey of Continuing Education taught by the Spirit of Truth.*

**YOU:**

*How has the Spirit continued to teach you after you first believed? Does he continue to teach you? Do you show up for class? How might you increase your awareness of the lesson of the Spirit?*

**CLOSE:**
Thank God we don't have to figure out everything about Christianity in the beginning!

I read about a civil engineer who was made to take a long involved exam, demonstrating that he knew everything, absolutely everything, about engineering before he would be let near a construction project.

Discipleship is NOT like that. Paul tells one of his churches that he fed them any food at first that was soft and easy to chew before he gave them substantial nourishment.

The Spirit of truth is like that. Don’t be so surprised when you grow in your faith. And don't be discouraged if you find something new and confusing. The Spirit of Truth knows just what you need to know and when you need to know it. This Spirit knows enough about you not to tell you more than you can bear at the moment.

Sophomores.

You may have heard of people known as sophomores. You know who they are, don't you? That name means wise fool. The designation, whether fair to actual sophomores or not, names the one who knows just enough to be dangerous, the one who, having learned a great deal his freshman year, now thinks he knows everything.

Lord, deliver us from sophomoric Christianity!