

Sermon for Easter 5 – John 16:5-15

In the Name of the Father and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

At His trial Pontius Pilate asked Jesus, “What is truth?” It’s a good question: Can you know the truth? Or must you always be searching for it? The word “agnostic” comes from the Greek word ignorant. Agnostics are people who claim to not know whether or not God exists. Atheists deny that God exists. Theists believe that God exists.

Many people are theists—they claim that God exists. But they become agnostics when it comes to who God is and what He says. They just don’t know and they think that you can’t know either. The spirit of agnosticism is so strong in our country today that if you express any kind of conviction you may as well be regarded as some kind of religious extremist. Who claims to know the truth these days? Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and the other door-to-door pests promote their misguided opinions about their god. Mainstream Christianity is not so sure of what it believes, teaches, and confesses, as is evidences in recent years by the splitting of denominations over the one-man one-woman marriage issue, among other topics.

But our Lord promises His disciples that they would know the truth. They wouldn’t have to wonder. He didn’t give them instructions on how to search for truth. He did even better: Jesus sent them Truth: the Holy Spirit. They were not ready to hear it directly from Jesus. Something had to happen first. He had taught His apostles for three years. But they would be in no position to understand His teaching until the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost. Why was that? What had to happen before the Spirit of truth would find the apostles to guide them into all truth? Christ had to die and rise from the dead.

So to know the truth about God is to know the truth about how God comes to us. God isn’t a mathematical problem for us to figure out. He isn’t like a jigsaw puzzle that we must put together. He isn’t a riddle for us to solve. God comes to us and reveals Himself. We don’t figure Him out. He shows Himself to us. If anything, He figures us out.

How can we finite creatures possibly know the infinite God? How can fallen and sinful creatures come to know the holy God? He lives in the pure light of holiness that no sinner can approach. Yet He makes Himself known to us where we can boldly come before Him without fear of judgment or punishment. The cross is where God suffers for us. Fearless we approach water, Word, bread, and wine and know unity and peace with our God.

To know the Father is to know Him in the sending of His Son. The love of our heavenly Father is the love that sent His Son to suffer and die for us. To know the Son is to know Him in His suffering and death. As He lays down His life for us we find true love. In dying for us He washed away our sin and took God’s anger away. To know the Holy Spirit is to know Him as He glorifies Christ by taking what is Christ’s and declaring it to us. He directs us to the suffering and death of Christ on the cross for our salvation.

The Holy Spirit is the author of the Holy Scriptures. This is how we know the Scriptures are true. The Spirit of truth wrote them. The Holy Scriptures contain all that we need to know about God. The apostles wrote the New Testament Scriptures. St. Matthew wrote the Gospel bearing his name. The same for St. John. These men were eyewitnesses of Jesus’ ministry. St. Mark was not an original apostle, and neither was St. Luke, but both men were close associates of the apostles. St.

Peter confirmed what St. Mark wrote. St. Paul confirmed what St. Luke wrote. These are still apostolic in the fullest sense of the term.

The reason why we know that the New Testament Scriptures are God's Word is because they have the testimony of those men to whom Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit. Our Lord promised the authors of the New Testament that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth. All truth! This makes the apostolic Scriptures, along with the prophetic books of the Old Testament, the only standard for the Church's teaching. Christ didn't promise the apostles that the Spirit of truth would guide them into some truth, with more and more truth to be revealed gradually throughout the history of the Church. Christ said that the Spirit will guide you into all truth. We can be confident that the New Testament Scriptures are God's final word to us. There is no more truth to be revealed than what is written down by the apostles.

Just how does this apply to us? The Holy Spirit convinces us of Christ's righteousness by what Christ has actually done in history. Jesus really suffered, died, rose again, and ascended into heaven. These are the Holy Spirit's irrefutable arguments. Eyewitnesses record this testimony in the apostolic Scripture.

And this testimony is priceless. It's more valuable than anything the world could ever give us. To know gardening, nursing, how to teach, how to run a business, how to design something, how to cook a good meal, or predict the weather – doing any one of these things and a host of others is valuable knowledge. But to know God – that is the best knowledge of all.

We know our Lord went to the Father. We know His passion, death, resurrection, and session at the right hand of God. Because Jesus goes to the Father; because He suffered, died, rose again, and ascended into heaven the Holy Spirit convinces the world of this.

We know the truth. We know the truth about God. The Father is our Creator, who governs the world for our benefit. He provides us with everything we need in this life. He's not some mysterious and absent deity about whom we can only speculate. He is our dear Father.

We know His Son. He's not only our God; He's also our brother. He was obedient for us. He endured suffering for us. He does what He does and He suffers what He suffers for us. He frees us from our sins and sets us before God as holy people. We are free from guilt and righteous before God.

We know the Holy Spirit. He comes into our lives in Holy Baptism and makes His home with us. He creates faith in our hearts and sustains it through the written, preached, and sacramental Word of God. He's always glorifying Christ by showing us that His suffering, death, and resurrection make us pure and holy in God's sight. The Holy Spirit fills us with good desires, love, peace, joy, and every good and perfect gift that is from above, from the Father of lights in whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

Since we have the Holy Spirit, we have truth. It won't change. It can't become obsolete. That's because God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – lives with us today. He doesn't grow old. His mercies are new every day. His love will never grow cold. He remains with us. Amen.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. ✠BJF✠