

May 20, 2018  
Sermon for The Day of Pentecost  
St Peter Lutheran Church  
Bowie, TX  
Larry Knobloch, Pastor  
John 15:26–27; 14:4b-15

*J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus*

John 15:26–16:15 (ESV)

<sup>26</sup> “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. <sup>27</sup> And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning. . . .  
... “I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. <sup>5</sup> But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ <sup>6</sup> But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. <sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. <sup>8</sup> And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: <sup>9</sup> concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; <sup>10</sup> concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; <sup>11</sup> concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. <sup>12</sup> “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. <sup>13</sup> When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. <sup>14</sup> He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. <sup>15</sup> All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

Many of us fear the truth when it comes to revealing something about us. We all know things about ourselves we just don't want to face. I confess that I had a hard time facing up to the fact that once I turned fifty-one, every form that I had to fill out contained an age category that put me in with 64 year olds. And there is only one bracket higher than that!

If I decide to run another 5K I am now in the senior age group. And now I'm eligible to sign up for an AARP card. I really don't want to face the truth that I am getting older.

All of us have things to which we refuse to admit. We eat too much, we're poor housekeepers, we have poor study habits, we're disorganized, we're not where we should be in life . . . but don't let anybody try to tell us any of this "ugly truth!"

Well today we celebrate the coming of the Spirit of truth—the Holy Spirit promised by our Lord Jesus shortly before going out to Gethsemane for His betrayal. It's great to remember Jesus' promise made manifest by the rushing wind, the tongues of fire, and the apostles' ability to preach in languages they'd never learned.

But what exactly does this Spirit of truth mean for us? It must be pretty important, since John refers to the "Spirit of truth" many times throughout his gospel. We tend to approach truth with fear and trembling, and we're supposed to be happy about this Spirit's appearing?

In fact, our fear of truth has pretty much put its meaning up for grabs in today's world. According to apologist Greg Koukl, truth in our postmodern day and age is so nebulous that we're living with our "feet firmly planted in midair," with nothing absolute in which to ground ourselves. The assertion that there is an absolute truth by which we measure ourselves and others guarantees we'll be branded as "mean." Yet we're likely comfortable using that measuring stick on someone else, and resent its use against ourselves.

That's exactly how King David in the Old Testament felt. Giving in to his own lustful thoughts, David has an affair with Bathsheba. She becomes pregnant. He's not worried about the evil he's committed

David worries about his reputation and what people will think of him! Quickly, he has Uriah killed. Then, in a "noble" gesture, David takes this grieving war-widow in as one of his wives.

David hopes that no one will suspect nor will anyone be none the wiser—but God knows. God sends His prophet Nathan to David. Nathan appears before the king seeking advice. The problem, as Nathan narrates it, is that a rich man with a large flock had a banquet to prepare for a guest. Instead of taking one of his many lambs for the feast, he snatches instead the single ewe lamb of his poor neighbor. Upon hearing this, David, the former shepherd, is enraged. He demands justice.

Full of indignation, David proclaims, "*As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die.*"

Here things take a dramatic turn. Looking his king in the eye, Nathan exclaims, “You are the man!” (2 Sam 12:5, 7). Nathan, speaking prophetically, announces the Ugly Truth about David.

The Ugly Truth is hard to swallow when it’s applied to us. David found it easy to deal in abstract justice, or justice as it applied to somebody else, that didn’t touch him.

In dealing with truth, he was still avoiding truth, for David didn’t allow truth to address him. David was so blind to the truth that he didn’t see himself mirrored in the description of the rich shepherd. But then, through the power of the Spirit, those words cut through, “you are the man.” David knew the Ugly Truth.

He knew it not merely because his ears heard it. His heart heard it and accepted it. He accepted it as God’s verdict. God’s indictment led him to the truth from which he was hiding, which he had committed murder to cover. Suddenly, with his sham exposed, David stood before God. *“I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me,”* he says in Ps 51:3.

People have a hard time believing there is truth. We’re stung by government: we’re stung by scandals in the church: we’re stung by big business: stung by the education system.

We have become cynical and not surprised when people or institutions fail. It’s no wonder that the masses today believe that truth is what you feel is right for you, and we are taught to “create your own reality.” We can well understand Pilate’s cynicism in his question to Jesus, “What is truth?”

But the “Spirit of truth” that Jesus describes is sent not merely to get us to say, “I’m telling the truth” or “honestly, it happened this way.” The Spirit testifies and points to the Word, revealing that God is truth, Jesus is truth, the Spirit is truth.

God not only knows truth in a way that is beyond us; God embodies all that is real, for God is truth, and He is true to his Word.

He speaks His Word, and it *is*.

Truth, when identified with Jesus, means reality—the reality of God.

This is the reality that confronted King David. This is the reality that exposes the ugliness of our soul when it’s turned away from the goodness of God. The Spirit worked through Nathan the prophet, and David repented.

Now, this same Spirit of truth comes to us in the way it was promised, convicting the “*world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment*” (Jn 16:8–9).

We can really identify with David. We would prefer that the ugly reality of our sin remain comfortably hidden.

We concoct some pretty good stories to ward off suspicion so that we keep our reputation. We consider ourselves better than the average unbelieving sinner and, in doing so, exchange “*the truth about God for a lie*” (Rom 1:25).

Sure, we may accept the truth that God lives in heaven, that He created all things. That doesn’t hurt. But the truth that exposes us and makes us vulnerable before the Holy One—we don’t address it to ourselves.

We go out of our way to make up for it, thinking, “Well, there are so many others who do worse than me. Surely if I make up for it with some great work of kindness or generosity, God will let it go.”

But the Spirit of truth pierces our darkness and brings the hidden things to light. The Spirit comes just as Jesus promised: *“I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment”* (Jn 16:7–8). The Spirit pierces our hearts and opens them to reality. He comes and says, “You! You are the man”—not somebody who’s on the late-night news, convicted of a felony. It’s not about some great evil “out there” or the evil in my brother or in the world—but *you*. *You* have been convicted. It’s the Ugly Truth.

And yet there is another truth—a Beautiful Truth—that is revealed by the Spirit. This is something for which we can truly praise God! Jesus promises, *“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me”* (Jn 15:26). Just as the reality of God’s Word convicts us concerning sin and judgment, the Spirit will convict us of righteousness (16:10).

The Spirit delivers to us the righteousness that our Savior has won for us by shedding his blood on the cross. Where the truth of the Law convicts us of the Ugly Truth of our own sin, the Gospel delivers the Beautiful Truth that, despite our sin, God is for us.

This is God’s reality. God is true to His Word. We can celebrate the coming of the Spirit without fear of the truth that it brings. This Jesus died *for us*, rose *for us*, reigns *for us*, prays *for us* (Rom 8:34).

The Spirit of truth continues to bear witness, that because of Christ’s redemption nothing *“will be able to separate us from the love of God”* (Rom 8:38–39).

The Spirit causes us to believe the miracle that when we confess our sins, God “is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from *all unrighteousness*” (1 Jn 1:9).

God did not reject David, confessed sinner, adulterer, and murderer. Neither does He reject us. “*And the blood of Jesus . . . cleanses us from all sin*” (1 Jn 1:7). God loves you. God loves me. We can live with this reality!

God welcomes us into fellowship with him. It is to this Beautiful Truth, this Gospel truth, that his Spirit bears witness!

The truth is, the cynical world is conscious of its sin. They have the Law of God written on their hearts. They know the Ugly Truth. But no one likes admitting, “Hey, I’m a sinner,” especially after they’ve tried and tried and tried. That’s why even someone convicted of a felony is willing to exchange the truth for a lie, as in, “Hey, I’m not a monster. I’m a good neighbor and nice to kids,” thinking that his good qualities should outweigh what he’s done and overturn the verdict. People grow weary. The verdict stings, and in their despair, they think God will reject them, that there’s no hope, no truth that could help them.

This makes someone a prime candidate for the Spirit of truth to work through the Gospel, the beautiful revelation that God knows about everyone’s sin, and despite us being his enemies, Jesus still comes to die for us, the godly for the ungodly (Rom 5:6–10), so that he might make us his sons and daughters.

On Pentecost Sunday, we rejoice at the creation of the Church, the Spirit guiding us into all truth (16:13). We rejoice that the Spirit will glorify Christ, take what is his, and give it to us, for “all that the Father has is mine; therefore I said

that he will take what is mine and declare it to you” (16:15). That is the reality of God’s Word!

In Ezekiel 37, the Spirit of the Lord brings the prophet to the valley of the dry bones. And speaking by the Spirit, Ezekiel prophesied as commanded that the breath of life enter into those dry bones, which consisted of the house of Israel. By the power of God’s Spirit, the bones rose up, came together, bound together with sinews, and were covered with skin. Breath came into them, and the Spirit was placed in them, and they lived. That same Spirit has entered us. We who were dead in trespasses and sin were brought to life so that we could be children of God and part of his household.

The Spirit of truth gives faith so that we may receive the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation through the gifts of God’s Word and Sacraments. As the ugly, dry bones came together with sinews and flesh, our old Adam is put to death and we rise as beautiful new creatures in Christ through the waters of Baptism. We are absolved from our sins as we hear the Word of forgiveness spoken by God’s servants. We stand in fellowship around the Lord’s Table in the presence of “angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven” to have Christ’s own body and blood placed in our mouths, the sign and seal of the forgiveness purchased on the cross.

In God’s household, there is life. It’s the life of Jesus Christ for the death of this world—for all those who struggle with the ugly truth of pain and suffering in this world,

for all those who demand to have their own choice and make the wrong choice, and for all those who see their sin and repent of it. For each and every one of us who bears a load of deep guilt,

In Place of the Ugly Truth, the Spirit Gives This Beautiful Truth:  
Righteousness in Exchange for Guilt, Forgiveness in Exchange for Shame, and Life in Exchange for Death.

And that's what we need. That's what the Spirit of truth has come to testify about. The Helper has come. He has revealed the truth, the truth that is reality. The truth that brings us life.

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

S.D.G.—Soli Deo Gloria

### **Sermon Outline**

#### **The Ugly Truth, the Beautiful Truth**

*John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15*

- I. The ugly truth is hard to swallow, especially when it is applied to us.
- II. Then there is a beautiful truth revealed by the Spirit.
- III. Since Pentecost, we have this truth in the Word and Sacraments.