

Getting at the Truth

John 14:16-17

Truth is hard to find these days. Perhaps it's always been hard to find. Remember Diogenes - that ancient guy who walked around with a lamp, shining it in men's faces, saying he was looking for an honest man? Diogenes felt that he never found a truthful person.

A little later in history Pontius Pilate reflected a similar skepticism, when at the trial of Jesus he asked cynically, "What is truth?"

The Declaration of Independence begins by saying, "*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights,*" But we, who live 200 years later, are not so sure that truth is self-evident to everyone.

Truth is truth is hard to find these days. We struggle to find truth in advertising, in labeling, in packaging, even in medicine, law, business, and religion. With such charlatans as Jimmy Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart, who deceived millions, clergy are more suspect than ever before. Truth is hard to find these days.

And in families, too, truth is hard to find. Parents and children regularly deceive each other. Husbands and wives cheat on each other. Some of us even deceive ourselves. If Plato advised "know thyself," and if his teacher, Socrates, said the "unexamined life is not worth living," many of us are afraid really to examine ourselves too closely, or to come to know who we really are.

So truth is hard to find these days, partly because we do not want to find it. Yet it was Jesus who said, "**I am the way, the truth, and the life.**" He said, "**You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.**" The Psalmist prayed, "**Send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me.**"

In our text, Jesus promised he would send his Spirit of truth to teach and to comfort his people. And it is the **Holy Spirit who helps us get at the truth by teaching us the truth about reality.**

Many of us are more or less children of the enlightenment. And like our American founding fathers, we believe that truth is self-evident to the reasonable, rational mind. We nod our heads and agree with philosopher John Locke who put forth that truth is based on objective facts that we can believe.

Underlying this conviction is a deeper conviction that at the bottom of things, the world is orderly. The late Harvard mathematician and philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead, maintained that the whole scientific enterprise of the western world rested upon the belief that at the bottom of things science would find order rather than chaos.

If animists were afraid to probe a world enchanted with demons and spirits, western scientists dissected, investigated, explored, and probed into the depths of the atom believing order and organization would be found rather than disorder and disarray.

And at the bottom of this conviction, Whitehead believed, was the theological concept of the Logos, the Word, the reason or mind of God, which held everything together. Why do things cohere and hold together? Because the Word of God holds them together.

The Word of God became manifest in Jesus. You'll remember that the prologue to John's gospel says that "**the word became flesh and dwelled among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth**" (1:14).

Because Christ is a manifestation of the very word of God, Christ and his Spirit will lead us to the truth about reality.

And the truth about reality is that God is order, not chaos; love, not vindictive destructiveness. The truth about reality is that the world makes sense; that there is purpose to life; that our striving is not futile.

Secondly, Christ's Holy Spirit helps us get at the truth about our mental, spiritual, and psychological reality. We can probe the depths about ourselves believing order will prevail over chaos.

Unfortunately, this is where many people get cold feet because we're afraid to examine or reveal ourselves to others fearing it will bring us harm.

One married man told me he rarely confides in his wife or confesses to her any of his failings or weaknesses, because during arguments she uses that very information to berate him and tear him down.

However, other people have experienced something different. The twelve-step groups such as AA know that when they entrust their lives to a higher power and bare their souls to that power, they begin to get in touch not only with themselves but with reality.

Last October Pastor Billy led the study at our men's retreat and based the study on a book called, "The Man Code". The Man Code is a series of numbers: 1-3-12-120-3000.

- 1 is God
- 12 is a broad circle of good friends, not all of whom are in your church
- 120 stands for your church family
- 3000 symbolizes our need to *reach* and *serve* the world around us.

But it's that number 3 that is the kicker and the real challenge. Number 3 are the 3 men you have in your life that you can count on to be totally honest and vulnerable with. Men who I allow to know my mind and my heart. Men who agree to hold nothing back and tell no one else what they've heard and shared. Men helping men come to the truth about themselves and reality.

But many of us, like Adam and Eve, hide from God and from ourselves. We're fearful and defensive: fearful of too much self-knowledge that might require change, and defensive of our immature or immoral behavior that if known, might bring judgment and destruction.

The ultimate reality that Christ, the Word of God, reveals is this: God is love and uses his judgment not to destroy but to purge, to purify, to bring spiritual health. If we let him, the Holy Spirit will bring us to the truth about ourselves and ultimate reality.

Lastly, **the Holy Spirit of Christ helps us get the truths about ourselves to God.**

When John's gospel speaks of the Holy Spirit, it speaks of the comforter, counselor, or advocate. The Greek word used by John is *paraclete*, which comes from a word meaning "to call alongside." A *paraclete* is one we call alongside us, to be with us, to be our advocate when we seem powerless to advocate for ourselves.

The Holy Spirit is our advocate. Jesus has called the Spirit to our side to be our counselor and comforter. When we approach Almighty God, we have an advocate, because as Paul says, "*The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of the Father*" (Romans 8:26-27).

In other words, not only does the Spirit help us get to the truth about ourselves, it helps God understand the truth or reality about our situation. If the Spirit is a channel of God's reality to humanity, the Spirit is also a channel of humanity's reality to God. The Spirit pleads our case before the almighty, and Christ himself sits at the right hand of the Father, making eternal intercession for humanity (Hebrews 7:25).

The world in its darkness and immorality is afraid to come to the light. Praise be to God that He has come to us and forgives our wrongs, our hurtful words, our damning actions.

Perhaps most encouraging of all is the assurance that the Spirit represents our truth before God — the truth of our disease and our pain, the truth of our tragedy and our despair, the truth of our injustice and our exploitation, the truth of our depression and our death.

The Spirit of Christ is our paraclete, our advocate, our counselor, assuring us that God is not chaos and destruction, but order and love. We give thanks that the Holy Spirit helps us get at these essential truths. Amen.