

“A Journey with the Spirit”—John 16:12-15

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “A Journey with the Spirit”, is John 16:12-15 → Jesus said: *I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 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. He will glorify Me, for He will take what is Mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is Mine; therefore I said that He will take what is Mine and declare it to you.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

A question I frequently ask people is: “Tell me about your spiritual journey.” Depending upon the person’s definition of “spiritual” it is quite interesting what people share as they strive to put into words their understanding of “God.” They may share how they were raised religiously in a particular kind of church or system. They may simply say they believe in God and pray or try to live a good life. Some may share experiences in their life which eventually led to a specific experience of submitting to Jesus, repenting of their sins, committing their life to Him and living for Him. No matter what the circumstances, beliefs and stories

they all have one thing in common: It is a continuous journey with the expectation of arriving some place spiritually.

In our text Jesus spoke to His disciples in the midst of their spiritual journey yet to come. Their spiritual journey was a given, having been born into Yahweh's covenant people which defined every area of their lives. As Jews, they were probably brought up attending synagogue, being instructed in the Old Testament Scriptures by a local rabbi and observing the strict rituals of Judaism. Because many of them viewed their spiritual journey as bound up in their political nationalism, it too was a continuous journey with an expectation of arriving some place—in the Promised Land, which was under Roman occupation at this point in their spiritual journey.

Then came Jesus. How many times have you read the Gospels and wondered in awe how Jesus' simple command, *Follow Me*, caused these men to drop everything and take a new route on their spiritual journey (cf. Matthew 4:19; 9:9; Mark 1:7; 2:14; Luke 5:27; John 1:43)? It is very probable that they did so simply because they saw a part of their spiritual journey materialize in the Person & Work of Jesus as the Christ, the long awaited Messiah of Yahweh. Finally they were in the presence of the One Who would restore the Promised Land to their people and reign as their king. This is even reflected in their question to Jesus before His ascending into heaven in Acts 1:6 → *Lord, will You at this time restore*

the kingdom to Israel? This is where three plus years of experiencing the presence, teaching and miracles of Jesus led them in their spiritual journey? No wonder Jesus told them in verse 12 of our text that He still had *many things to say to them, but they could not bear them* at that point in their spiritual journeys.

His answer to them at His ascension was a continuation of His teaching given in our text—they were supposed to wait to *receive the Holy Spirit* (cf. Acts 1:4-8). He told them in verse 13 of our text: *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.* On their spiritual journey they needed the Holy Spirit to lead them into a clearer understanding of *the truth* as they made their way into the future. *The truth* does find it's meaning in Jesus as the Messiah, as He said in verse 15 of our text: *All that the Father has is Mine.* The truth is, His Messianic kingdom is much different than where they thought their spiritual journey would lead them.

First of all, this journey with the Spirit would guide them to trust in Jesus as the One Who delivers from the power of sin and the devil, not some nationalistic deliverer. After receiving the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection was embedded in their hearts, creating a trust in Jesus as their only Savior from sin.

Only the Holy Spirit can give you an understanding of Jesus offering Himself as the perfect sacrifice for your sins. The words of John the Baptizer about Jesus in John 1:29 now have meaning. Seeing *Jesus coming toward him*, John said, *“Behold, the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world!”* Only the Holy Spirit can bring you to *the truth* that *Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed* (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:7) to deliver you from your bondage to sin and the devil. Thus, the Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus (verse 14) by creating faith in Him as the One Who fulfilled the Old Testament Scriptures. *The Spirit of truth . . . will guide you into all the truth* as revealed in God’s written Word, because God’s *Word is truth* (cf. John 17:17).

Secondly, this journey with the Spirit would guide them to know the universality of the atonement of Jesus. Notice Jesus’ promised in verse 13 of our text that the Holy Spirit *will declare to you the things that are to come*. One of those *things* was an understanding of Christ’s death and resurrection **for everyone**. Even after receiving the Holy Spirit the apostles needed to be led to an understanding that the Gentiles can also receive the benefits of forgiveness of sins and eternal life through faith in Jesus.

This took some strange events on Peter’s spiritual journey for him to declare a number of years after Jesus’ ascension into heaven: *Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who*

fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him. (cf. Acts 10:34-35)

Once again, since this was being declared by *the Spirit of truth*, Peter understood this experience and *the truth* to which he was led in the written Old Testament Scriptures. He said in Acts 10:43 → To Jesus *all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name.* By the way, dealing with this truth declared by the Holy Spirit on their spiritual journey continued to 49 AD when the church met to discuss what they had learned and to act appropriately.

Finally, this journey with the Spirit would change their expectations about it's goal: their arrival would be eternal life. No longer were they concerned about a restoration of the Promised Land to the Jews. No longer were the comforts of this life a primary concern as they endured hardships, imprisonment and persecutions of various kinds for proclaiming Jesus as the Christ. No longer did the fear of death hold sway over them as they truly found themselves in company with the people of faith in the Old Testament Scriptures. Along with them they were *looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God as they desired a better country, that is, a heavenly one* (cf. Hebrew 11:8-13).

What about your journey with the Spirit? You are on a spiritual journey as well. However, it is not some journey upon which you are left

to yourself to try and figure it all out somehow. Yours can be a journey upon which your direction is clear because it is filled with the revelation of the Person & Work of Jesus **for you**. You know Who God is because Jesus has made Him known to you. You know His love for you because He sent Jesus as the perfect sacrifice for the forgiveness of your sins. Even though you don't know the arrival date of your journey you know it's destination: heaven.

Naturally, your journey takes you through many experiences through which *the Spirit of truth* will teach you and *guide you into all the truth* by bringing you to God's written Word, which again reveals your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. You will experience the Holy Spirit bringing forth truths from the Bible which help you *grow in the grace and knowledge of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to Whom be the glory both now and to the day of eternity* (cf. 2 Peter 3:18). On your journey you will also speak *the truth in love* and *grow up in every way into Him Who is the head, into Christ* (cf Ephesians 4:15).

As you grow on this journey, your growth will also be displayed as you feel a need for Jesus and His forgiving work more and more each day. It will lead you to His Word and means of grace to receive that forgiveness and the Holy Spirit's power to live a new life in Him. A journey with the Spirit will always lead you to Jesus according to His words in John 15:26 → *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. Amen.*

Go in peace.

The journey on which you go is under the eye of the LORD.

(Judges 18:6)

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