

Sunday, June 15, 2025

TRINITY SUNDAY

Festal Eucharist

11:00 am

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A Sermon by

The Rev. Preston Gonzalez-Grissom

on

Romans 5:1-5; John 16:12-15

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Cold Facts, Living Truth: Trinity Sunday

Blessed Trinity Sunday to you all. Preaching about the Trinity can be hard. That's why they say the Rector always plans their vacation to miss this Sunday. Now Fr. Turner isn't here, but I'm assured this timing is purely coincidental!

Trinity Sunday is the day where we proclaim the truth about God's identity: that God is Father, Son, and HS. Three-in-one and One-in-three, all co-equal in Triune Unity. Three Persons, One God, we call this the Trinity.

In our Gospel reading, Jesus references the Trinity and tells his disciples the Holy Spirit will come and communicate the truth to them.

He says the Holy Spirit will come and communicate the truth that it hears from him and the Father. Father communicates with the Son who passes the message to the Spirit, who gives it to you.

Truth is sounding a little complicated already.

It reminds me of a story. There was once a fifth grader bullying a new kid on the playground. He was messing with them by sitting on the one end of a seesaw leaving the new kid stranded in the air.

A 1st grader saw what was happening and ran over to help, pushing the fifth grader off. Right then, a teacher looked over, having seen only the push. She marched over and asked, "Did you push him?"

The 1st grader said, "Yeah, but..." Before he could finish, she cut him off: "Detention." He never got to explain what really happened.

It was a fact that he pushed someone. But was that the truth of the situation?

In his unfinished essay entitled "What does it mean To Tell the Truth" German Theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer concludes that something is true when it *reflects reality*.^[1]

Jesus tells his disciples "You cannot bear it now, so when I leave I will send the Spirit of Truth, who will guide you into all Truth."

And the Holy Spirit will remind them of what is to come, namely his death and resurrection. According to Jesus the truth exists, and we can know it. So much so, he even says “you will be guided into *all* Truth.” We see in the public square just how dangerous it is when people get to pass off lies as fact, or when lies do not seem to matter.

About six months into the pandemic, a major food company came under investigation. It was revealed that, because of their return-to-work policies, many of their employees had tragically lost their lives. Just a month later, I happened to drive past one of their large plants. On the marquee out front, it read, “We Put Our Workers First.”

I thought of the words of Flannery O’Connor: “The truth does not change according to our ability to stomach it.” ^[2] The facts matter. But they are not *all* that matters.

Telling the truth is more complicated than just collecting facts. Bonhoeffer calls people who only care about the facts “cynics.” He says, the cynic “wreaks havoc on the community” — caring nothing about their context but only cold, harsh, facts, that are “too dead to contend with living truth.”

The Truth is more complex than just the facts. Because, Truth is Context-dependent.

It is a fact that the first grader pushed the fifth grader, but the context-dependent Truth — *the reality of the situation* — is the first grader pushed him to save the new kid from being bullied by the fifth grader. The context matters, so does the relationship.

Bonhoeffer concludes when the Gestapo comes to one’s door you should not say “I am hiding Jews in my attic,” though that be a fact. The truth is that the Gestapo did not have the *relational authority* to ask the question in the first place!

In our Gospel, Jesus is set to deliver the most important fact in the history of the world — that he will die and rise again — but the context is that the disciples cannot handle it. Jesus is preparing for the loneliness of the jail cell, and certain death, being captured and taken to a place he does not belong and does not want to go. He turns to his disciples and says, “I have many things to tell you, but you cannot bear them now.”

The fact is Jesus is about to die, but the Truth was they could not bear it. If I were Jesus I’d be tempted to force facts down people’s throats and call it tough love. Instead, he sees the deeper reality. Their world is about to explode and they do not just need a lesson in truth — they need a *guide* to help them through it.

Jesus says I will send you the Holy Spirit, not to reveal all truth, but to *guide you* in all truth. The Holy Spirit does not help you escape the complexity of life, but guides you through it!

For Jesus, the fact of dying and rising again matters no matter what, and yet it will not matter to the Disciples unless they have the Holy Spirit to guide them through what this means for their lives.

What good is knowing the truth if you do not live it?

Jesus didn’t just tell the Disciples the truth, he prepared them to live it by sending the Holy Spirit. And this was a truth they did not want to live. Right after our Gospel reading, Jesus says he will be leaving and they cannot believe it — “What does he mean he is leaving in a little while?” We cannot do anything without him.

And they are not wrong. They can do nothing without him. But in our Epistle, the Apostle Paul writes: “Our hope does not disappoint us because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.”

Not shows you, not tells you God loves you, God Pours His *own* love into your heart by the Holy Spirit. You may discern the truth and you may feel you can do nothing about it, but Jesus’ promise of the Holy Spirit is not conditioned by you feeling it. For those in Christ, it is no longer just you that is living. God pours His own love into your heart, by the Holy Spirit, who now makes his home *in* you. It is not just you anymore, it is God in you.

French mystic Madam Guyon says, so many of us do not see God because we are only looking for him outside, up there, and not inside your very soul. God has poured out his own love *into our hearts* by the Holy Spirit. ^[3]

There is nothing the evil powers of this world want more than to convince us we cannot discern fact from fiction — or that we know the truth, but can do nothing about it.

Discern what the Spirit may be saying. Know what you can handle in this moment. But look inward — not toward yourself, what you can do, but what the Love of God can do through you.

Because in Christ, you have more love than evil has power. And that is the truth. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

References

- 1 Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Ethics*. Vol. 6 of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005, p. 601.
 - 2 Flannery O’Connor, in a letter written to Betty Hester, September 6, 1955.
 - 3 Guyon, *Experiencing the Depths of Jesus Christ*, Christian Books Publishing House p. 9-13.
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