

Chris Murphy

May 5th, 2024

Scripture: John 16: 1-15

Sermon Title: The Spirit of Truth

Prayer...

Introduction:

Last Sunday I gave a message about the Holy Spirit. Today, I want to continue to reflect on the Holy Spirit and highlight Jesus' teaching that the Holy Spirit leads us to truth. What is the truth? This is certainly one of the big questions in our world today.

Truth is a tough topic because in our society and particularly through news and social media, truth seems to be up for grabs.

Depending upon your news source including your selected influencers who share insight on podcasts or posts, you might come to a very different understanding of the truth than your neighbor.

According to Jesus in our passage today, Jesus sends the Holy Spirit so that we may be guided into truth. We read in our passage this morning, Jesus' words to his disciples.

12 "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14 He will glorify me because he will take what is mine and declare it to you."

According to Jesus, the Holy Spirit is sent as our advocate, our perikletos- the one who comforts and counsels. The Holy Spirit reveals the truth about who Jesus is and the way of Jesus in this world. The Holy Spirit takes what is from Jesus and gives it to us.

The word truth reminds me also of the word wisdom. Wise people follow what is true. Wise people make good decisions based on insights about the truth. The Holy Spirit in the book of Proverbs is

imagined as a wise woman who offers truth to a young man seeking guidance. In Proverbs 9:1-5, we read...

9 Wisdom has built her house;

she has hewn her seven pillars.

2 She has slaughtered her animals; she has mixed her wine;

she has also set her table.

3 She has sent out her female servants; she calls

from the highest places in the town,

4 “You who are simple, turn in here!”

To those without sense she says,

5 “Come, eat of my bread

and drink of the wine I have mixed.

6 Lay aside immaturity and live,

and walk in the way of insight.”

The way of insight and wisdom in the book of Proverbs is the way of truth. It is the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It ultimately become a reflection of the way of Jesus.

So what does this way of Jesus look like in the world.

I do not claim to fully grasp all the wisdom of Jesus, but I want to suggest that Jesus and the Holy Spirit do offer us guidance on how to live in this world.

I wish to call it the middle way.

The middle way is not easily swayed by extreme views. The middle way or the Jesus way looks for wisdom wherever it is to be found.

The middle way is not partisan, not driven by political ideology.

Instead, the middle way is open for insights from a diverse spectrum of people and viewpoints.

Let me give you an example of the middle way as we look at one current topic in our news. This last week especially, we have been hearing about the protests happening at various colleges and universities over the topic of the war between Hamas and Israel and the human rights concerns regarding the treatment of Palestinians. Protesters are asking for universities to divest from companies that support military weaponry used by Israel. There are also calls for a ceasefire and an end to the war. Unfortunately, the protests in some instances are leading to significant unrest and criminal behavior related to breaking into buildings or other actions of violence. Many Jewish students are experiencing anti-semitism and are feeling endangered. Some Jewish students are the victims of violence. Many students are also being prevented from finishing classes. Some schools have closed down for the semester due to the unrest. Not all the protesters are students and some protesters are being paid and are part of organizations that are not peaceful.

The question is how might the Holy Spirit lead us in this situation. I suggest the Holy Spirit would invite us to follow the way of Jesus. The way of Jesus is the way of love and peace. Therefore, here are some possible ways to approach these protests.

1. First we acknowledge that in the war between Israel and Hamas that it is true that innocent Palestinian civilians are being harmed. We as followers of Jesus should cry out for those vulnerable Palestinians even as we cried out for the innocent Jewish people harmed by Hamas earlier this year and we continue to cry out for Jewish captives being held by Hamas. We should challenge any military operation by Israel or Hamas that is rooted in revenge instead of genuine desire to bring peace. Two wrongs do not make a right.
2. Even though we are sympathetic to the plight of Palestinians in Gaza, we need to also speak out against protesters at college campuses when they get out of control and use violence or

break into buildings. We can also critique police officers if they use inappropriate force against peaceful protesters. We can support our police while also asking them to use proper means to stop criminal actions. We can support causes while also judging actions that are not peaceful. The way of peace and nonviolence is what gives credibility to any protest, so when this does not occur, we need to speak up.

3. Ultimately, the Jesus way or the middle way is about love. We must never let our zeal for any cause keep us from loving our neighbor or even those who we might be tempted to call an enemy. I know we might say that Jesus had his enemies, since the Roman soldiers put him to death, but I am not sure Jesus thought of anyone as his enemy. He loved everyone. He spoke out against injustice, but I do not think he thought of another human being as an enemy. He was not naive, but neither did he stoop to hate or violence.

Do you see that the middle way is the way of Jesus? Over the course of this summer and into the fall, we will be entering our election season. It will be tempting to side with one side or the other. You may be tempted to side with the left or the right. What if instead we stay in the middle, listening to one another. We can bring up our various causes and values, but then seek wisdom in the middle. This will help us avoid partisanship and judgement. The way of Jesus is the way of the middle, the way of listening to others and seeking to bring peace. It involves truth telling and honesty but never name calling or lying.

Some of you are aware that next year, I will serve as the moderator of the Cascades Presbytery here in Oregon. This is a volunteer role that I do on behalf of our church and as one pastor serving in our presbytery. My job will be to organize and help guide four presbytery meetings beginning this coming fall. A

moderator's job is to be a peacemaker who helps facilitate conversations in a thoughtful way. Some presbytery meetings involve controversial topics and as a moderator, I will need to stay calm and supportive of everyone. Pray that I do a good job and that my sabbatical helps me be rested so I come back and lead with gentleness, boldness, and wisdom.

I think good leadership in our presbytery or our church or anywhere else requires a middle way approach that listens to different ideas and that helps center us in the way of Jesus, the way of peace and love. It is not easy. It is much easier to lean far left or far right on topics. It is easier to get caught up in political ideology or the latest vitriolic remarks highlighted in social media. Jesus has a higher standard and the Holy Spirit leads us to the truth.

Will you partner with me in making our church a middle way church, a Jesus way church? Maybe we might be one of the

Christian community's in town that foster peace and wholeness while caring for justice and compassion.

Remember sometime last year I preached a message about the heart. A heart is formed when a left hand and right hand curl into one another and form an image of love. This is the middle way, the way of truth, the way of love, the way of Jesus.

Please pray with me...

AMEN

John 16

16 “I have said these things to you to keep you from falling away.[a] 2 They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, an hour is coming when those who kill you will think that by doing so they are offering worship to God. 3 And they will do this because they have not known the Father or me. 4 But I have said these things to you so that when their hour comes you may remember that I told you about them.

The Work of the Spirit

“I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. 5 But now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ 6 But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. 7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate[b] will not come to you, but if I go, I will send him to you. 8 And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about[c] sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 about sin, because they do

not believe in me; 10 about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, and you will see me no longer; 11 about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

12 “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14 He will glorify me because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 15 All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.