

Day of Pentecost

FROM KEEPING TO GIVING

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

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Analysis by Eric W. Evers

15:26 “When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. 27You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.

16:4b I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. 5But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ 6But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. 7Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. 8And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: 9about sin, because they do not believe in me; 10about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; 11about 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. 13When 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. 14He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 15All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

DIAGNOSIS: Keeping, Keeping, Kept

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Keeping It to Ourselves*

"You also are to testify," Jesus says (v. 27). And isn't that what Pentecost is about? The Spirit blows and fills, and those who are Spirit-filled testify, miraculously, in a manner that all can understand. It's the Gospel's "public offering," given away to create faith like crazy. But that's not how it generally happens with us. "Evangelism" gets segmented off into a little committee (perhaps even smaller than the "stewardship committee?"), and isn't the life-blood of the congregation, never mind the daily activity of the believers. We love our faith; sometimes, we seem to love it so much, we're afraid to share it! Or sometimes, in our desire to point people to Christ, but not knowing how (or by Whom) to do so, we try to gussy up the Gospel with pop psychology, slick marketing, or political agendas of one flavor or another. Unfortunately, the basic task of "testifying" on behalf of the resurrected Jesus often gets lost in that shuffle. Jesus said "testify," and alas, we are poor at it.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Keeping Our Own Truths*

The Spirit "will not speak on his own" as he "guide[s] you into all truth" (v. 13). Now wait a second! This puts the breaks on our testifying, doesn't it? The Spirit won't speak on his own? But isn't the ultimate measure of truth in our day that which is authentically from our selves? "To thine own self be true"? What is true "for me" is what matters, or at least it matters as much as what is true "for you." But what it seems Jesus is calling us to declare isn't a truth about ourselves, about what is in us, so to speak, but about something above us. Unfortunately, the

reason we are so bad at testifying to such a truth is that we are so bad at believing in such a truth. We want to speak what is in us, what is authentic to our own experience and sense of truth, not what someone else tells us to say.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Kept in the Wrong*

But what we're facing here is not just a failure to build an organization or to communicate effectively. The Spirit confronts us truth-dodging non-testifiers with conviction and a proof. "When he comes, he will prove the world wrong" (v. 8). This isn't marking the wrong answer on an exam. It's being proven wrong about "sin and righteousness and judgment." The Spirit proves us to be on the wrong side of every question that really matters. And that puts us on the wrong side of God's judgment, an eternally bad place to be kept.

PROGNOSIS: Given, Given, Giving!

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Given a Way out*

But while the Spirit proves the world wrong, he also gives those who believe an unbelievably good gift. "He will lead you into all truth... he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (vv. 13, 15). The Spirit will take untruthful non-testifiers and lead us into the truth! And he will give us who are false all that belongs to Jesus! We who are proven wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment have our sins swallowed, are given righteousness, and have the just judgment against us reversed through the cross and resurrection. Such is the amazing gift of the Spirit given on Pentecost.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Given a Living Truth*

This Advocate, this Spirit-for-us, gives us the Truth. Let's be clear, though: Pentecost does not solve all our doctrinal disputes. The Spirit has not removed all ambiguity from our theology, nor has he created a Church that can authoritatively

declare ethical norms in a compelling, binding, persuasive way. But that's not what the Spirit is sent to do. He is sent to give us living truth, Jesus. He is sent to give us Jesus, not as proof of our wrong-ness, but as the gift that makes us righteous. He guides us into all truth by speaking what he hears, and what is to come. And what he hears, coming from the voice of the Father, is the promise of forgiveness, grace, and resurrection. This is the Truth that matters.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Giving Away What We've Been Given*

Such living Truth has been given to you, freely! And while it is a gift for you, it is not really "yours." You do not possess Truth, but rather Jesus possesses you. And claiming us, he gives us a new freedom: a freedom to declare aloud the Truth that makes us new. We can share, because the truth that now matters to us isn't what is authentic about my heart, or what will capture a larger market share, or what is appealing to the intellectually sophisticated audiences. What we've been given is grace. And in the company of grace that, all else fades away. All that's left is to declare it to the world!