

Holy Trinity

“The Truth about Us—in Christ”

John 16:12-15

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Analysis by James Squire

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: The Truth Will Destroy You

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *The Truth Is Unbearable*

By this time in the Upper Room discourse (John 13-17), the disciples could hardly be accused of being comfortable. Now they are told that there is news that is so bad they “cannot bear [it] now” (v. 12). As a result, they feel like they are being left behind. The last thing we want to hear is that we can’t handle the truth. Jesus means well, but his disciples are in no mood to be treated like children (see chapters 13-14). Our loyalty should earn us a seat at the table, and a say in whatever Jesus has in mind. But Jesus knows the Truth is too hot for us to handle.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *The Truth Is Untrustworthy*

Actually, the Truth is too hot for us to trust. Throughout the Upper Room discourse, Jesus has met each question with a reminder of something he already said to the disciples. They have heard all they need to hear to trust him, but it has inspired doubt instead. The more they hear of Jesus' game plan, the more doubtful they become. "He was in the world, and the world knew him not" (John 1). This is what is happening here as well: his disciples no longer really know him. Neither do we: we think we should have a say in the agenda because we think we might know better than Jesus what we should be doing. We don't trust him to know what's best. If Jesus had shared everything with them that night, would that have made things better or worse?

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *The Truth Is Deadly*

Instead of trusting him on the matter of things they could not bear now, the disciples were kept in the dark. In other words, their lack of trust excluded them. The Truth is like that. Trust it in patient waiting, and it will set you free. Pursue it relentlessly, and it will keep you in the dark. Just ask Peter. He had to know for himself what Jesus was going to do in that courtyard, and for his trouble he succumbed to the ultimate temptation: denial. We are no different. Our lust for power and control in our relationship with Jesus ultimately sinks us. The moment of Truth (in Peter's case when Jesus confronts him, 13:38) is a killing blow.

PROGNOSIS: The Truth Will Set You Free

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *The Truth Defeats Death for Us*

The sweet, blessed surprise in our life is that this Truth came not to condemn us but to save us (John 3:17). What is this

mysterious Truth? “He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you” (v. 14). It is the kind of Truth that can only be unveiled on the Cross, not simply broached at supper. The glorification of Jesus is precisely that fortunate exchange (Luther) that takes what belongs to Jesus (all that the Father has, v. 15) and declares it to each of us. Life eternal, righteousness, true freedom and everything that flows from these is now ours, and that is the glorification of Christ our brother. Fortunately for us, our mistrust of Jesus does not prevent him from fulfilling his mission on our behalf. The first people Jesus reportedly appeared to after his resurrection were all the doubters in his midst, and he brought his Father’s peace with him to give to them. This Truth has set us free by becoming the kind of Truth we can handle (and we do in Holy Communion).

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *The Truth Breathes Trust in Us*

“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” (v. 13). And what he hears comes from the Father, who is now an open book to us (v. 15). The things we cannot bear (v. 12) have been borne by Christ for us, so there is nothing threatening about the truth any longer. In fact, the Truth about us is now great news: when the Spirit declares to us the Truth from the Father, we really receive it. It’s as if we’re the customs agent and the Spirit is traveling through our port of call on the Father’s behalf. Anything to declare, we ask? Yes, everything, the Spirit answers. Salvation, eternity, righteousness are all submitted for our inspection—and our immersion. For what the Spirit has to declare is the Father himself, and the Spirit’s destination is our own heart. His passport is the Cross, and he comes to make his home in us. The Spirit is his breath of peace that transforms our sinful hearts into hearts justified by faith.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *The Truth Bears Us Out into the World*

What good is glory if we keep it to ourselves? Every Sunday morning the pastor says, "... I declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins. ..." The declaration is meant to continue through us to others. Just like the first apostles, we too are sent by the Spirit—not with our own message, but with the Spirit's declaration straight from the Father. We are sent out into a world filled with gurus who cravenly offer a seat at their table, for a price: For every Carlton Sheets or Miss Cleo who are producing infomercials for us to snicker at, there's a politician or an activist with pretty much the same kind of message, and folks more easily buy into it; everybody's got some secret they promise to share with people if they want it badly enough. We Jesus-trusters, on the other hand, have the ultimate in open secrets to share with people free of charge: It's not about predicting romance and happiness in their future. It's not about winning the lottery. It's about true Honest-to-God salvation that frees people now and in the final judgment to face the Almighty as precious children rather than suspicious sinners. It's about making the Truth something we can all face with joy. This is the secret we are privileged to share with the entire world until it is secret no more.