

The Holy Trinity

A FOND FAREWELL?

John 16:12-15

The Holy Trinity

Analysis by Bill White

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.”

Author's Note: In John's Gospel Jesus' public ministry ends at chapter 12. Chapters 13 through 17 have been referred to as the farewell materials. Jesus is preparing the disciples for his departure, i.e. Jesus is preparing them for his impending death and preparing them for life in the world after his leaving. Our text is near the end of that portion of the farewell discourses in which Jesus gives instructions and warnings (15:12-16:33). Specifically, this pericope contains Jesus' final sayings about the Holy Spirit.

DIAGNOSIS: WE CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT HIM

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Jesus Is Leaving*
Jesus has announced his departure. The disciples' reaction is like little children when their parents tell them they are going

away for a time. They are filled with questions grounded in anxiety, fear, confusion and resistance: "Where are you going?" "What about us; can't we go with you?" "Who will take care of us?" "When will you be back?" "But we don't want you to go!"

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Not Trusting Jesus' Promises*

Jesus goes to great lengths to tell his disciples that although he is leaving, he has made provision for them. Jesus has promised them a permanent abiding place with the Son in God's house. He has promised them the way to God. He has promised not to leave them orphaned, but upon his departure Jesus will ask God to replace him with the Holy Spirit. This Spirit of God will do many things for them, in them, and through them. The Holy Spirit will be Counselor, Helper, and Comforter to them. And finally, "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. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (vv. 13-14).

The question is, when the hour of trial comes, will the disciples trust these promises of Christ, or not? Their time of testing is very near, and Jesus knows they will fail the test. He knows they don't really trust his promises. "Jesus answered them, 'Do you now believe? The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each one to his home, and you will leave me alone'" (16:31-32a).

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Trusting the World Leads to Death*

Upon Jesus' arrest the disciples scatter. The disciples cannot "bear" (v. 12) the thought of trying to go on without the now departed Jesus. Shall they now return to their old lives of fearing, loving, and trusting the things of this world? They are

anxious and uncertain. They are afraid. Which way do they go with their lives now? Will they return to living lives apart from Christ, the way that leads to death? Or is there another way?

PROGNOSIS: WE CAN LIVE WITH HIM

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Trusting Jesus Leads to Life*

On the night of his last supper with his disciples Jesus indeed says farewell to them (John chapters 13-17). He then proceeds to embody that farewell, to keep the promises he has made. Jesus goes and gives his life on the cross for the sake of the world, dies, and is buried. On the first Easter Sunday he rises from the dead and fulfills the promise of the Holy Spirit (20:22). By his death and resurrection, Jesus has overcome the power of sin, evil, and death; he has conquered the world (16:33b). Those who believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, have life in his name (20:31).

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Empowered to Trust Jesus*

The good news grounded in the promises identified at Step 2 become true for these disciples! Even though they abandoned Jesus at his hour of trial, even though they went and hid behind locked doors, the resurrected Christ comes to the disciples with the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit reminds them of Jesus' words, "I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!" (16:33).

The Holy Spirit assures these and all future disciples they are forgiven for times they have abandoned Jesus, assures them they are forgiven for not trusting the promises of Jesus, assures them they are forgiven of these and all sins. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit gives them both the desire and the ability to trust

the promises of Christ!

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Jesus Returns*

Moreover, the coming of the Holy Spirit has tremendous significance for the proclamation of these and all future disciples of Christ, namely, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Jesus tells us that the Holy Spirit will not act or speak independently. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit will glorify Christ and will reveal only that which comes from Christ and from the Father (vv. 14-15). Those who receive the gift of the Holy Spirit receive God the Father and God the Son.