

Trinity Sunday

FOX IN THE HENHOUSE!

John 16:12-15

Trinity Sunday, Year C

Analysis by Eric W. Evers

12 [Jesus said,] “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.”

DIAGNOSIS: Absconding Abstractions Annul Our Agendas

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) – Annoyed

Does Trinity Sunday seem irrelevant to our congregations? Is this the Sunday for “God of the new math,” wherein $1+1+1=1$? Does this annoy us? Perhaps it does, not because it is “hard,” but because it is a truth that does not fit us. The Holy Spirit guides us into truth, Jesus claims. This Sunday, we especially proclaim the truth of the Trinity. But such a God, such truth, is beyond us. We cannot wrap our minds around him. And so, annoyed by such a limit, we start to construct a God small enough to fit into our mental boxes. We take refuge in gods not revealed in the proclaimed Word, tame abstractions that fit us, with which we can be comfortable.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) – *More Than We Can Bear*

But such a god will not only fit into our cognitive capacities, it will also fit nicely into our self-serving agendas. After all, a God who, as Spirit, reveals truth that comes from beyond us is “more than we can bear.” We desire truth that comes from within us, truth that conforms to us. We do not want a Spirit who takes what is Christ’s and declares it to us, but rather a spirit who takes what is ours, by our own nature or effort, and declares it to the world as truth. Truth that is not ours, but God’s, is more than we can bear, indeed! It is intolerable. We cannot stand it.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) – *Abandoned*

But the little gods in whom we take refuge, the putative truths that belong to us (rather than the divine truth which claims us), cannot shelter us. God, apart from his Word, sought in rational abstractions rather than in the Triune mystery, is always a terror, as Luther saw. Our little gods abandon us when we most need them, for they guide us only into ourselves. Thus we are left, forsaken, our self-serving agendas collapsed, our souls empty, terrified.

PROGNOSIS: Spirit Spills the Beans and Sends Us Scrambling

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal solution) – *What the Spirit Hears*

But the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jesus and his resurrection, does not merely speak what we want. He speaks what belongs to Jesus, which is what he hears from the Father. And what he hears is mercy and grace. The Spirit hears forgiveness spoken, for Jesus’ sake, and now, through means, speaks this to the otherwise God-forsaken world. This is not a truth that conforms to us; it is not one that comes from our nature. But it is the

truth which God speaks with final authority.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) – *Made Known to Us*

And this truth will cause us to conform to it. The declaration that the Spirit makes isn't just empty talk, but he speaks a living Word that is the power of God. We cannot bear the truths of the Spirit, but the Spirit bears us. And as we are put to death and raised up to new life, the new creation thus wrought bears the image of Christ. Rather than making truth in our own image, the living True One makes us into his image.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) – *Given Words to Say*

And that image is, of course, the image of truth-tellers. But we are made into tellers of a particular, perhaps even a peculiar, truth: that which we hear from the Spirit. In other words, we are made anew into mercy-speakers, grace-tellers, Gospel-talkers. "Truth," for the Christian, is no longer a matter of speculation or philosophy or abstract, logical, reasoning that makes us sound intelligent. For us, truth is mercy and grace that gives the neighbor hope. Truth is resurrection from death, for Christ's sake. Truth is new creation. And that Truth, Jesus Christ, is now the truth we can speak to others, by the Holy Spirit's power, to the glory of God the Father Almighty.