



June 15, 2025

Trinity Sunday

~ John 16:12-15 ~

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Grace to you and peace from God our Creator, our Redeemer, and our Sustainer.

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.” What a start to our gospel reading! Imagine, Jesus says this to his closest friends, to the disciples who have walked with him for the past few years. These are the people who have heard him preach and teach, and to whom he has explained his parables. They have seen him heal the sick and raise the dead. They have seen him turn water into wine, walk on water, and feed a large crowd with just a few loaves of bread and some fish.

If these disciples can’t bear what Jesus has to say, who can?

Do we, the followers of Jesus two thousand years later who have not seen him in person or shared a meal with him, do we have any chance to bear what Jesus might want to tell us?

And what might Jesus want to tell us anyway? What would our God, who is three yet one, want to say to us and to our small church?

As we know all too well, our church is in time of transition. Some call it liminal space, others call it desperation. Attendance in most congregations has been in decline for years. On Sunday mornings only a few make it to the pews. The group of volunteers who do everything that needs to get done is small, and getting smaller – and older. Our buildings are getting older as well. Our budgets are getting more and more limited.

I don’t need to tell you more – you have likely seen the trend in your congregation and discussed it at your annual meetings. Or, if your congregation is one of the few vibrant, growing ones, you would know this story from your friends or from synod gatherings.

For many congregations, the concern is urgent. How will we survive? Will we survive? Will we exist in five years? Or ten?

And realistically, for many, the answer is no.

What does God want to say to us, to our church now?

I wish I had a clear, concise answer to give you! I wish I could bring you a word directly from God, to tell you how all this is going to turn out, to give you the next three steps we must take to turn things around. But obviously I can't do that.

What we have is Jesus's words in John's gospel.

"When the Spirit of truth comes", Jesus says, "he will guide you into all the truth." The Spirit will guide you.

The promise Jesus makes to his disciples before his death, over and over again, is that they will not be left alone. The Spirit, the advocate, will be their companion on the way. The Spirit will guide them to all the truth, lead them along, and help them understand.

And we know that this is what happened, the promise of Jesus came true. Last week, on Pentecost Sunday, we heard the story of the arrival of the Holy Spirit, like wind and flames! We heard the story of how the followers of Jesus spoke various languages and told the story of God's love for the world to all who were present.

The Spirit was with the disciples when they gathered to tell their stories of faith and to break bread together, empowering them to be God's witnesses in the world.

And the Spirit of God continues to be present and active in our church as well. The voice of wisdom continues to call us to follow. God continues to lead God's people forward, even when we don't quite know where we should go. The Spirit continues to guide us into all the truth, nudging us along on the journey.

And we need those nudges. God's truth is bigger than the disciples could bear, and bigger than any of us can comprehend. We read the Scriptures, yes, and we hear the word preached. We pray and we study. And yet, there's always something new to learn, something new to discover.

So then, during these uncertain times, how do we know where God is nudging us?

Today is Trinity Sunday. Theologians have tried to explain the idea of trinity, three yet one, in various ways over time. But instead of trying to explain, or trying to understand how three can be one, maybe we can look at the way the three interact. There is a closeness in God, an intimate relationship where each one knows the mind of the others, where each is inseparable from the others. The Father, Jesus, and the Spirit are one.

This closeness, this relationship, is a model to us as a church. Jesus called his disciples to follow as a group, and sent them out two by two, not alone. The Spirit called more people to join, and so the church began. We were never meant to follow Jesus alone.

Whenever life of faith has been challenging, the people of God have gathered together to break bread, to pray, and to encourage one another – and to dream of better things.

So, we too, two thousand years later, continue to gather together, to share stories and meals, to pray and to ponder. We gather in our congregations, but also as synods and as the national church to pray and discern, to listen to the nudges of the Spirit, to find the way forward.

We continue to follow the path Jesus showed through his life and his ministry – the path of love, kindness, and compassion. As Paul writes in his letter to Romans, “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” It is love that guides us and lights up our way.

We keep on going, step by step, and sometimes that one step is all we have. We keep on going trusting that God does not abandon God’s church, but will find a way to bring us life and hope, whatever that may look like.

We have Jesus’s promise that we will never be alone. God remains faithful through the changing world, and the changing church. The Holy Spirit continues to guide us the truth – one step at a time.

Let us pray.

O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.