

Holy Spirit, Holy Trinity, Holy Life

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- [0 : 0 0] Now, Father, we ask that you will send the Holy Spirit, who gave the Scriptures, to open them to our hearts and to open our hearts to their teaching, so that we might hear and receive the things that belong to our peace.
- Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Please have your Bibles open at the passage from John 16 that was read to us a moment ago.
- It's page 105 of the New Testament section in our Pew Bibles. I am going to concentrate in this message on verses 14 and 15, the end of the passage.
- I'll read those verses now. Says the Lord Jesus, He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.
- All that the Father has is mine. Therefore, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.
- [1 : 2 6] No one, I'm sure, has forgotten that this is Father's Day, that great secular feast which unites the whole of North America.
- But it's just possible that some of us may have forgotten that two weeks ago was Trinity Sunday and the week before that was Pentecost Sunday.
- We don't make a big deal of Pentecost and Trinity as really I think we should. And this message of mine this morning zeroes in on that which theologians describe as the very truth of Christianity, that which is fundamental to everything else and which many Christians dismiss as a cobwebby formula fit only to be stored in the lumber room of the mind where you put things that you know will be useful someday but are not of any use on a day to day basis.
- What am I talking about? I am talking about the truth of the Trinity. The truth that the one God is three persons and the three persons are the one God.
- Yes, it's mystery and I don't claim to dispel the mystery. You confess mysteries of this kind.
- [3 : 1 3] You can't explain them. But it's very important to hold them first. And in this instance I want to press the question, why is it that so many Christians do in fact dismiss the truth of the Trinity as being of no importance?
- I think I know. I think I know. It's because we are so used to bad illustrations which really trivialize the truth and make it sound unimportant when we state the illustrations as we do.
- You may have heard these illustrations in Sunday school. They are often heard there and they are often passed from one adult to another as well.
- You know what I am thinking of? The Trinity is like water which has three forms. A liquid form, a form of steam, which is the form it takes when it boils, and ice, which is the form that it takes when it freezes.
- That is offered as an illustration of the Trinity. So, ho-hum, you say, what follows from that? Or again, here is a cube.

[4 : 42] Look at it. One object, but it has more than one side. Six sides, to be precise. The truth of the Trinity is that the one God is three in one.

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are distinct, like three of the sides of the cube. Again, the heart says, oh, well, so what?

The problem is, you see, that these illustrations, they are depersonalizing the Trinity in effect. And so they are making the doctrine sound trivial and unimportant.

Whereas in the New Testament, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit appear as the divine team uniting in the working out of a great plan for the saving of our souls.

What can be more important than that? This is why the theologians say that the truth of the Trinity is so important. Because if God were not three in one, then that plan of salvation couldn't operate.

[6 : 07] Well, that in fact is the way in which the New Testament presents the Trinity. And once you see that, well, you have straight away the answer to the people, the skeptical people who say, oh, well, I don't find the doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament at all.

Don't you? Don't you find again and again statements which link together the work of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit for our salvation?

When you read the New Testament looking for such statements, you will find any number of them. Let me give you just a couple of examples taken at random.

Here I am first in Paul's letter to the Galatians, chapter 4. And this is what Paul writes, when the time had fully come, God, that's God the Father, sent forth his Son to redeem those who were under the law so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Sons by adoption in the family where the eternal Son, whom we know as Jesus Christ, is precisely that.

[7 : 32] He has been Son forever and will be Son forever. But through his coming and his death, we become God's sons, God's children, God's heirs by adoption.

And so Paul continues, because you are sons, God, God the Father again, has sent the Spirit of his Son, Spirit with a capital S, this is the third person now, God has sent the Spirit into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

That is, prompting us to behave like children of God, and to treat God as our Father, and to love and trust him as such.

It's a new life. It's a new life because of what the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have done together.

And if you take the opening greeting of Peter's first letter, it goes like this. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ to the exiles to whom he's writing, chosen and destined by God the Father, and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood.

[8 : 59] There again, you see, you've got the whole plan of salvation in a nutshell. God destined us for salvation. We are sanctified by the Spirit, and we are sprinkled with the blood of Christ, and we come to a new life in which, rejoicing in our pardon and our peace with God, we obey him, as long as life shall last.

Well, I could go on like this for quite some time. I'm doing it only, in fact, to introduce these verses from John 16, where again, you've got the three persons together, and together in company with a great number of human beings, a number which I trust includes you and me.

Let me read the words again. He, now that's the Holy Spirit of whom Jesus has been speaking really since the beginning of this farewell discourse to his disciples.

He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. Now, there I want to underline what is said about three distinct focus, focal persons, let me put it that way, three distinct persons about whom the Lord is speaking.

First, let me underline what he's saying about the person and work of the Spirit. Then let me underline what he's saying about his own person and place in the plan of God.

[11 : 05] And then let me underline what he's saying about the person and privilege of the Christian believer, and indeed of all believers together. Take it in order.

The person and work of the Holy Spirit. Here, what I ask you to note straight away, is that Jesus says, he.

He. And that's how it is in the Greek. It's a personal pronoun, masculine gender, he. Although the word for spirit in Greek is an it word, a neuter word.

But for all that, Jesus refers to the Spirit as he, and you and I must learn to do the same. Every now and then I meet Christians who speak of the Spirit as it, and I wince.

For the Spirit of God is a person, and here in this passage there's abundant witness to the fact that he is a person fulfilling a personal ministry.

[12 : 16] For look at the things that he said to do. He will convince. He will glorify the Lord Jesus.

He will guide Christ's disciples into truth. He will speak what he hears. It's only persons who hear and then speak.

And he will declare. The word means announce. He will announce things which all God's children need to know.

Well, you can see. It's personal ministry if ever there was such a thing. And note now what Jesus says about the work of the Holy Spirit.

He doesn't call attention to himself. No, the Spirit of God never does that. But from Pentecost onward, he has been fulfilling the promised ministry to which these words refer.

[13 : 21] He has been glorifying the Lord Jesus by taking what is his, that is taking the truth and reality of Jesus, and declaring it to people.

Think of a floodlight. Think of a floodlight. The floodlight is placed in a niche in the wall. You are not intended to look at the floodlight. It would dazzle you if you did.

But the floodlight is trained on the building, which it's there to illuminate. And you stand in front of the building at night, and the floodlight shines on it, and you see more of the beauty of the building than ever you saw in daylight.

Well, that's what floodlighting is for. And the Holy Spirit fulfills a floodlight ministry in relation to the Lord Jesus.

The Spirit shows people the glory of the Lord Jesus, and that's why Jesus uses the words, He will glorify me.

[14 : 32] And this work of the Spirit, let's be clear, is double-barreled, if I may put it like that.

For the Spirit has to do two things, and actually does two things. In the first place, He sets before people the truth and the reality of the Lord Jesus as Jesus truly is.

And He did that to the apostles by further revelation, beyond anything that Jesus had taught them. You've got all that recorded in the epistles of the New Testament.

And for us, it's the whole of the New Testament, Gospels, Acts, Epistles, the lot, that are the Spirit's means of showing us all that's true about Jesus the Savior.

The Spirit gave the Scriptures for that purpose. By giving them, He glorified Jesus. That was one way in which He did it.

[15 : 45] But now, He has to do something more. This is the second barrel, so to speak, of His work of declaring and making known the glory of the Savior.

He has to open blind eyes and unstop deaf ears. Think again of the floodlight. However clear the lighting is, however beautiful the building is on which the floodlight is trained, the blind person will see nothing.

The blind person only sees the glory of the floodlight building if that person's eyes are opened, if sight is restored, if he's able to see what he's facing, what, as we would say, he's looking at.

And the Holy Spirit does that also. Through the Word, the Spirit opens hard hearts, opens blind eyes, unstops deaf ears, and enables us to discern what's there.

And I trust that I'm speaking to folk who know something of this ministry. Folk who once maybe had heard it all, and it flowed over you like water off a duck's back, didn't make any difference to you, didn't mean anything to you.

[17 : 25] And then your eyes were opened and your ears were unstopped, and you began to realize, why, this is God's message for me.

And the Lord Jesus, who is its subject, is for real, and he stands before me, and he calls me to come to him and trust him and enter the new life in which he is Saviour and Lord.

Well, that's the ministry of the Holy Spirit's second barrel, if I may put it that way, as he fulfills the promised work that he's come to do, namely to glorify the Lord Jesus before our eyes and our minds.

So when you think about the ministry of the Holy Spirit, think of that first, because that's the heart of it. Glorifying Jesus Christ by taking what is his, and actually declaring it, showing it, and bringing it home to us, as the reality by which we must learn to live.

Then secondly, notice what's said here about the person and the place of Jesus Christ himself. About his person, well, there's no problem or uncertainty.

[19 : 04] He is the Son of God. All the way through John's Gospel, John is underlining it, highlighting it, making it the central truth so that nobody can miss it.

The Word became flesh, dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, and it was glory as of the only Son of the Father. And Jesus is the Son of God throughout all that the Gospel tells us about him.

And that means that he's on a par with the Father. Says Jesus, all that the Father has is mine. There's nothing in the Father's nature, nothing in the Father's power, that isn't in my nature and my power also.

He who has seen me has seen the Father, said the Lord Jesus earlier in this very discourse. So that's who he is.

But there's more to the glory of Jesus that the Spirit shows us. He will glorify me, says the Savior, for he will show you the work that I've done for men's salvation, as well as showing you the identity that is mine as the doer of that work.

[20 : 33] Yes, the eternal Son became man in order to die for our sins. And having done so, he rose and he ascends, and he's now at the Father's right hand, as the Creed says.

That is, he's sharing the Father's dominion. That too is part of the glory of Jesus, part of his exaltation, part of that for which we should be praising him.

That word glory in Scripture, from which the verb glorify comes, always refers to something magnificent, something awesome and marvelous.

It's a word that regularly refers to God, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. The Hebrew word actually carries with it the thought of weight, which is one dimension of greatness, and the glory of the Lord Jesus is his greatness, his praiseworthiness, we may say.

We realize, when the Holy Spirit opens our eyes, that he is a person to be worshipped. And so, to use again the Bible phrase, we give him glory, for the glory which is his, and which has been shown to us.

[22 : 09] We discern the praiseworthiness of the Lord Jesus, and we praise him for it. And that's the very heart of Christian worship and Christian life.

He says, He says, He will take what's mine and declare it to you.

All that the Father has is mine. And I had that thought in mind, when I told you that he would take what is mine, and declare it to you, and prompt you to worship me, as the one who has loved you, the one who has saved you, the one who now fills your horizon, the one who is, for you, the supremely important person, the supremely important friend, the supremely important guide, the supremely important focus of your life.

Yes, the Father sent him to be just that. And when the Holy Spirit is ministering, we realize that, yes, he is and must be just that, to you and me.

And so, quickly, to the third thing I wanted to underline, the person and the privilege of the Christian believer. What does the Lord say about that? I've said it, really, already.

[23 : 44] The person of the Christian believer began as a sinner. And a sinner whose eyes were closed to divine things, and whose ears were deaf to the Word of God.

But the Holy Spirit has given sight to those blind eyes, and has unstopped those deaf ears. And so, the Christian believer has seen, discerned, and come to appreciate the glory of the Lord Jesus, and to trust the Lord Jesus as Savior and Master.

The Christian appreciates the love of the Lord Jesus, as he or she appreciates the love of the Father who gave the Lord Jesus.

We shall hear it in a moment in the comfortable words. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

And so, the Christian believer is the person whose whole horizon is filled with the glory of the Lord Jesus.

[25 : 06] That Christian believer is the sinner who now sees. Like the two disciples on the Emmaus Road, who walked with Jesus, you remember, something like seven miles home, and they didn't realize who it was, who was with them.

But then, suddenly, as they were at the meal table together, they recognized Him as their Lord whom they thought they'd lost. And lo, here He is, risen, alive and well on planet Earth.

Their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him, says Luke. And a little later on, in the Book of the Acts, Luke tells us how the Holy Spirit opened Paul's eyes on the Damascus Road so that Paul realized that the Lord Jesus, in all His reality, was standing before Paul and addressing Him, calling Him to repent of having tried to get rid of Jesus' disciples, and instead to become a disciple-maker in the Savior's name throughout the Mediterranean world.

And one goes on a little further in Acts, and one hears of Paul in Philippi, first place in Europe where they preach the Gospel.

And Lydia hears what Paul is saying, and says Luke, the Lord opened her eyes so that she attended to what Paul was saying.

[26 : 54] It didn't roll off her like water off a duck's back at all. She took it to heart and became a believer. That's how it always is, when the Holy Spirit moves in our hearts to show us the Savior's glory, and bring us into the reality of faith and new life in Him.

Now that's what the doctrine of the Trinity is all about. Never, friends, I beg, treat it any more as if it were trivy.

In the year of Greece, 1904, just a hundred years ago, there was a movement of the Holy Spirit in Wales, a remarkable movement, at the heart of which was a preacher, a leader of meetings, whose watchword, constantly repeated, was, honor the Holy Spirit.

And as I pull the threads together, I urge, brothers and sisters, that we must learn to do this.

What does it mean for us to honor the Holy Spirit? Why, it means that when we come to church, when we hear the Bible read, when we read it on our own, when we sing hymns about the Savior, in our hearts we constantly pray that the Holy Spirit will show us more of the glory of Jesus, each time, each day.

[28 : 42] And with that, you and I must learn properly to honor the Lord Himself, the glorious Lord, whose glory the Spirit shows us.

Day by day, we should be found praising Him, in our hearts, from our hearts. Praising my Savior all the day long, as the hymn puts it.

And yes, day by day, we should be honoring the Father, who sent His Son, and who now has sent the Spirit, so that the reality of this new life might be ours.

Father's Day, in terms of the North American calendar, comes but once a year. But let every day, for the Christian, be a Father's Day, when our Heavenly Father is praised, for all that He gave and set in motion, for your salvation and mine.

And so may the word of Jesus, about the Spirit, be fulfilled in our lives. So may Christ be honored, so may we be blessed, and so may it be on a daily basis, until we get to glory.

[30 : 08] Amen.