

# Spirit of Truth

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Date: 04 July 2021

Preacher: Matt Coburn

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good morning, church. It's good to see you all on this Fourth of July. Glad you could join us for worship. We are continuing in our series in the book of John.

We'll be in chapter 16, if you want to start looking there. In two chapters after John 16, Jesus is on trial before Pontius Pilate, the Roman ruler.

And Jesus, in response to a question, says that everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.

And Pilate responds, what is truth?

I think this is a question, maybe, that many are asking today. I think there is a lot of confusion in our world about what truth is. There are some who would deny the reality of truth.

That you could say a statement that actually corresponds to reality. There are some that deny the possibility of knowing truth. There may be a truth, but we can't know it.

[ 1 : 09 ] Certainly not without any level of confidence. On a popular level. We live in a world today where we have competing narratives about what is real and true in the world.

We have to wade through accusations of fake news. And we wonder, who do we listen to? And commonly promoted, whether in the college dorm rooms or on Oprah, the idea that it is my truth that is most important.

And that I need to speak my truth to the world. Not absolute. This isn't, I'm not going to put this on you, but this is my truth. And this becomes the defining reality for me, but not for anyone else.

And for some of us who actually believe in truth, we still struggle with the reality. We see the dangers of absolutism and the way that it has created, Lord, the way it has created unhealthy patterns.

We've seen the need for humility. And in all of this, it makes us wonder, with Pilate, what is truth?

[ 2 : 26 ] And this question is a broad cultural one. It is also a specific one for churches to answer, is it not? Because the question of religious truth is particularly fraught.

In our culture today, religious truth is even more personalized, even more separated out from truth. We think that what religious truth is, is really just an opinion on how I choose to think about what God might or might not be for me.

Our passage this morning in John 16 speaks to these questions. And will help us gain confidence in our pursuit of truth this morning.

The disciples, giving this passage context, the disciples have been hearing from Jesus now for two chapters that he's going away. We know from the storyline, this is literally the night before he will be crucified.

He will die. So he is preparing them for what is coming. He's telling them what is happening. He's saying, I am going away. And the disciples are thinking, well, how are we going to know anymore?

[ 3 : 45 ] You've been leading us. You've been with us. You've been teaching us. How are we going to know? We have so many questions. How will we know the truth when you are gone?

John. And this is what leads us to our passage today. The Gospel of John, chapter 16, verses 12 through 15.

And I'm actually going to back up and start in verse 5 just to give it a little bit of context. But we're going to be looking and focusing on 12 through 15 today.

So let's read God's Word together. John, we'll start at the beginning of that section in the ESV. I did not say these things to you from the beginning because I was with you.

But now I'm going to him who sent me. And none of you ask me, where are you going? But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth.

[ 4 : 44 ] It is to your advantage that I go away. For if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world.

Concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. Concerning sin, because they do not believe in me. Concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you will see me no longer. Concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. I still have many things to say to you. But you cannot bear them now.

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. For he will not speak on his own authority. But whatever he hears, he will speak.

And he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me. For he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All the Father has is mine.

[ 5 : 41 ] Therefore, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. Let's pray as we look at God's Word together. Lord, we thank you for this Word this morning.

We thank you for the opportunity to gather in freedom to read and to worship. Lord, we pray this morning that what this passage says would be true.

That your Spirit would be at work among us. That your Spirit would lead us into truth. The truth of your Word and the truth about you. God, we pray this morning that you would give us receptive hearts.

Lord, to have discernment and wisdom. To grow in knowledge of you. Lord, I pray this morning that you would help me. The words that I speak, Lord, would be useful in the hands of your Spirit.

Lord, to proclaim the truth of your Word. So that we might together sit under it and grow because of that. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

[ 6 : 48 ] Amen. Friends, the big idea of our passage this morning is this. That God's Spirit leads us into the truth that we most need. Jesus, in verse 12, says, I have many more things to teach you.

I've only been with you for a little while. And honestly, you guys haven't been the best students. You've misunderstood over and over again what I've said and what I'm about. And I have many more things to say to you, but you can't bear them now.

Jesus knows their weakness. Jesus knows we can't drink from a fire hose and just download all the information at once. So He says, You cannot bear it.

And I know that. But I am not going to leave you alone. This is what He's been saying for a while, but He says it again. And then specifically about this idea of hearing and knowing Jesus' teaching and the truth about it.

He says, I am going to send you the Spirit and the Spirit of truth. When He comes, He will lead you into all truth. And this is the first big idea in this passage, is that God is going to send His Spirit to lead us into all truth.

[ 8 : 09 ] What He says is, The Spirit's going to come and continue what I've been doing. Jesus came to reveal God to the world, to proclaim Him and to embody Him so that we might know who God is.

And what Jesus is saying is, I am going away, but my presence and this teaching, revealing ministry that I have been doing will continue because the Holy Spirit will continue what I have started in making known God to the world.

He will speak truth. If you look at these verses 12 through 15, do you see how many times the words are say, speak, or declare over and over again?

This is the primary way that the Spirit teaches us, is by speaking through words. And He will speak truth about God first to His disciples.

His audience is particularly, primarily His disciples, the 12 who have been with Him for these three years. And what we know from the rest of Scripture is that what Jesus is promising is that these men will then be the primary witnesses who will tell others about Jesus.

[ 9 : 23 ] As they learn from the Spirit, they will tell others about Jesus. And that's not only in the historical reality of the proclamation in the first century, but it also becomes this.

The Spirit will inspire these first followers of Jesus to write down the truth about Jesus so that we now, 20 centuries later, can still benefit from the overflow.

So the primary audience of Jesus' statement here is the apostles, but the overflow audience is all of us. That the Spirit will teach the church.

And if the Spirit is teaching the apostles through the inspiration and the writing of the Scriptures, He's going to teach the church through the illumination of those writings, the illumination, the

making clear what the Scriptures mean for the church throughout all the ages.

So Jesus promises us that the Spirit is going to continue to teach us the truth that we most need. And the focal point of it is on the person and work of Jesus Christ.

[10:39] I say this partly. Look at the end of verse 13. Jesus says, He will guide you into all the truth, for He will not speak on His own, but whatever He speaks, He will declare to you the things that are to come.

Now, some people have thought that the Spirit is going to teach about the end times and all sorts of speculative things about what's to come. But I actually think we need to read this very carefully. Jesus is speaking the day before His crucifixion and three days before His resurrection. And those are the things to come that Jesus is referring to.

And He's saying, you will understand this when the Spirit comes. And in fact, John has said this in other places. The disciples did not understand this now. But when Jesus rose from the dead, when the Spirit came to illuminate and help them interpret and understand what it was about, then it made sense to them.

And then it was clear what the significance of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection really was. And this is the focus on His most important things.

[11:47] The Spirit will also focus on Jesus as you see at the beginning of verse 14. He will glorify me.

Now, if you've been here for a while, you've heard me say this over and over again. But for those of you who haven't been here, it's worth stopping to think, what does glorify really mean? It's a church word we throw around all the time.

What does it mean to glorify something? To glorify something means to make clear, to make manifest so that other people can see and appreciate the intrinsic quality, character, and beauty of something.

Okay? It actually can also be used, you could glorify evil if you wanted to, you could expose its negative, but usually it's glorifying something positive.

So glorifying is to make something known and clear so that other people can see it and respond by treasuring its value and goodness.

[12:53] And this is what Jesus says the Spirit is going to do. He will glorify me. Jesus is going to come and be like a spotlight, shining His light upon Jesus Christ.

I don't know if you've ever been to the Statue of Liberty, but it's really interesting to look at the floodlights that they have that make the Statue of Liberty visible at night.

I don't know if you remember, but during Hurricane Sandy, the lights went out and the power went out and the Statue of Liberty disappeared at night. But when you look at this, you realize these floodlights make clear the beauty of this statue.

And that's what Jesus is saying the Holy Spirit is going to do. And here's the thing, if you go and stare into the floodlight, what are you going to see?

Nothing. Because the purpose of a floodlight is not to be stared at. The purpose of a floodlight is to shine its light on something else. And Jesus is saying the Spirit is going to come to continue what the Father has begun and what I am doing to glorify the Son in His work of redemption to make this the most important truth for anyone to know throughout all of history.

[14:17] Jesus is saying you are not left grasping for the truth. God is making Himself known. The Father is revealing Himself through the Son and the Spirit is now shining His floodlight on the Son to lift Him up.

This is what we heard earlier. God in various times in the past spoke in various ways to the prophet but now He has spoken His final word, the complete word, the end of the word, Jesus.

This is what John himself tells us when we look at the very beginning of John in the prologue. the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have beheld His glory because this is how we know the Father through this one God who has come to earth.

And so this is the focal point of what the Spirit is doing is bringing us news and information and knowledge of Jesus Christ and His work so that we might see it and be in response to it be brought to faith in Jesus.

So the Spirit will bring us into truth in this focused way but I will say as well that I believe that as Jesus says as He says the Spirit will lead us into all truth.

[ 15 : 42 ] And I want to broaden our experience so if this is the focal point then this overflows into a richness of the truth of God for all of life. That God is going to give us a knowledge about the reality of the world we live in and wisdom on how to live in the world under God.

Let me explain what I mean by this, right? There's a phrase that says all truth is God's truth and this is a helpful phrase in as much as it is God-centered it is a wonderful thing to recognize that everything that is true that corresponds to reality that's defined by God is something that is coherent with and a part of God's truth.

The Bible doesn't tell us everything. It doesn't tell me how to build an engine for an airplane, right? It doesn't tell me how to code a computer. It doesn't even tell me how to cook chicken marsala, right? It doesn't tell me all sorts of really basic things of life and very specific things but what it does do is it gives us a framework. Gives us a framework to understand everything we do.

Part of what the Spirit is going to do is give us the keys to the library where we can go in to the Creator's home and we can pull out the blueprints to see how He's created the world.

[ 17 : 10 ] We can read His tomes of His work throughout history to see the way the world works in different ways. It's going to give us a knowledge about ontology, what truly is in the world and it's also going to give us this knowledge about wisdom of how to live.

Now look, I know there are some who have questioned this who have wondered is the Bible really trustworthy and they often throw out some really some red herrings. Well the Bible says that the sun rose and we're scientists and we know that the sun doesn't rise, we know that the earth spins.

So that can't be truth. Well listen friends, can we give God more credit than that? Can we give God more credit than He can write in literary genres and in context and can we re-understand that what He is communicating and the question we need to ask of each passage is what is this passage seeking to tell us about reality and about God?

And when it says the sun rose it's not trying to describe the specific scientific process of how the earth relates to the sun in a what's the right word?

Astronomical way. Right? That's not what it's trying to do. It's simply saying from the perspective of a human being the sun came up. Right?

[ 18 : 35 ] So let's not be thrown off by those red herrings. There are good questions to ask and there are good things for us to explore in terms of how we understand the coherence and truthfulness of the Bible.

But what John is telling us here today is that the Spirit will lead us into all truth and the Bible gives us a big picture of what is real and how to live in that world.

What does this mean? What might this look like? Friends, we could be here for the rest of creation. And not exhaust this because this is the glory of what we're doing is God is leading us to interact with Him in His creation for as long as we have life and breath under His truth and with His knowledge.

But I want to give you maybe just a taste of what it might look like. What might it look like for a biomedical engineer to think about what he does in light of God's truth?

Well, she might explore the complexity of the human body as something created by God. She might work humbly as a sub-creator recognizing she doesn't have ultimate control over the world but that God is in doubt with the ability to create something, biomedical technology, that might actually help someone.

[ 19 : 56 ] she might consider that God is the Lord of life and death but that she has been given gifts to be able to help people in the process.

she would see how the healing process or the restoring to what we would call healthy functioning is a foretaste of the ultimate redemption that God is going to bring to all of His creation when the powers of sin and death are defeated and eradicated finally.

And she might rejoice in the opportunity to serve others by building biotechnical I don't even know I'm so far out of my field I can't I don't even know what it might be but something that could actually help people live and thrive in this world.

Those are the kinds of questions that a biomedical engineer might ask in light of the truth that God is revealing in the world.

Here's another example. How about a filmmaker? What is a filmmaker going to do to think about what they do in light of the truth that God has revealed?

[ 21 : 17 ] Well, I think first of all they're going to consider the storyline all filmmakers are telling stories right? So they're going to consider the storyline of the Bible creation fall redemption glory right?

if this is the arc then the films that he makes might do all sorts of different things it might reveal the the created beauty of humanity and of creation the in his imageness of all human beings male and female from every tribe and tongue and to to bring to light the glory of the diversity of what God has created in humanity and in creation he might tell stories about darkness and despair how sin and evil have infiltrated the world how it corrupts our souls how it corrupts our society how it has brought death broadly into the world and how it might help us connect with that and help us understand the despair and brokenness that that brings he might tell stories of redemption of courage and of hope that remind us the incredible thing that God has done by bringing

Jesus our rescue and our savior to break into the darkness with light to bring hope where there is despair to bring life where there is death so we might tell stories of redemption and of love and of restoration he might tell stories that give us tastes of heaven of perfection of glory of righteousness and justice that will never be true on this earth but when we get a taste of it we are reminded of what God is doing in the world and where this creation is going I hope that you can see through these two little examples what it might look like to begin to embrace this overflowing truth that God is giving us by his spirit some of you are engaged in the university world and your world is the world of ideas and Jesus is telling you that the Holy Spirit wants to teach you how what you do in the academy is going to connect with what God is doing in all of creation and all of history and for you to find your place to serve God in all of these things some of you have nothing to do with the university you don't care about it at all and God is doing the same thing for you no matter what you are spending your time doing no matter what you are engaged in your life

God has given us a framework to navigate all kinds of different questions of life and work here are some things that the Bible speaks to that our society is wrestling with today the Bible speaks to gender identity and sexuality and how we understand that the Bible speaks to race and oppression and discrimination and glory in the diversity of our world the Bible speaks to economics and to justice the Bible speaks to the importance of work and of play and of rest the Bible speaks to the place of politics and society and how we live with one another and our neighbors and it applies in the everyday lives of relating to one another of being in a family of being a parent or being a child and so on and so forth and in all these things God is giving us through His Spirit a knowledge of the ontology of what is true about the world and then a knowledge of wisdom how we are to live under God's rule how are we to live wisdom might be described as living in harmony with or in concert with

God's creative purposes and God's plans for this world and this is what God is doing the Bible doesn't always give us easy answers it certainly doesn't always tell us what job we should take who we should marry or what we should eat for dinner but it does tell us all that we need in this big picture and the most important thing there is Jesus but there's this grand glorious picture of His kingdom and His world that He's invited us in to explore and to know and to exhaust our whole lives learning more and more about the glory of God in all of this how do we how do we do this how do we pursue this friends it actually isn't very difficult and it's also incredibly difficult here's the easy part do you see this book it's called a Bible if you have one you should read it if you don't have one you should get one and read it because it is how God has put down in writing

[ 26 : 43 ] His revelation to us so how do we pursue growing in our knowledge of truth of God well we read the Bible that may sound really simple it may sound simplistic but it's the most important thing to do and to do it asking God God help me understand it because Jesus is promising us that the Spirit will help us do that you don't have to be an expert you don't have to be an intellectual you don't have to be a theologian to understand God's Word because God's Spirit can help you secondly explore the world with the lens of the Bible take seriously the calling that God has put on you to figure out how in the things that I invest my life in what does God think about these things start with the Bible but recognize that you also have the church the church today and the church throughout history for you to talk to about this that means reading books we have a book stall downstairs many of you haven't seen it because we've been in a pandemic for 18 months but there's a book stall downstairs if you want a book on something go down there see if you have one we have a resource list on our webpage and if you don't find what you're looking for come talk to me or one of the elders we'd love to help you find books that can explore

God's world and how God's world view applies in different parts of life and finally live a life of humility acknowledging that you don't know everything but that you are related to a God who is truth and a God who by his spirit of truth is leading you into all truth that's the main point of our passage but there are two more verses here that we need to spend at least a minute on because when you look at verses 14 and 15 it is remarkable what Jesus says here we could have just preached the sermon I just finished and that would be nice but there's more here and we need to taste because the spirit doesn't only lead us into all truth but the spirit leads us in a way that helps us understand that truth comes from the triune God when you look at verses 13, 14, and 15 what is it that the spirit does?

The spirit speaks what he hears from Jesus and declares it to the disciples verse 14 what Jesus has that is the truth and the knowledge of who he is and his self-disclosure the spirit will declare that is what so from Jesus through the spirit to us and then verse 15 says oh and by the way what I have Jesus is speaking Jesus says what I have I get that from the father and so the father through the son by the spirit is brought to us in this incredibly personal way I said earlier that the spirit unlocks the library so we can walk in and read the blueprints and see the tomes of the library but it's actually better than that isn't it?

because what the spirit is is the promise that the creator himself the architect the librarian wants a relationship with us that we can walk into his library and not just read his books but we can sit in the armchair across the table have a cup of tea metaphorically with Jesus and ask him and learn from him the grand architect the author of all things we are taught by him directly and the spirit brings the fullness of truth to us and so truth is found ultimately and fully in relationship with God here's a quote I found online this is on a blog post on Ligonier.com but it's a quote from Herman Bavink who's a great theologian this is what he says about this God is the truth in its absolute fullness he therefore is the primary the original truth the source of all truth the truth in all truth he is the ground of truth of the true being of all things of their knowability and conceivability the ideal and archetype of all truth of all ethical being of all rules and laws in light of which the nature and manifestation of all things should be judged and on which they should be modeled

God is the source and origin of the knowledge of truth in all areas of life the Bible does not simply bring to us a coherent world view with a philosophical understanding that coheres but God the Bible brings us God himself who is the definer and the creator and the source he is the beginning and the end of all truth according to the Bible friends I don't know if you've thought about this but this is how the Bible really answers the question of religious knowledge some people would say well I need to come to religious knowledge through a scientific I need to look at evidences and facts and somehow come to a proof and faith would be denying that process and ignoring it but the Bible actually says that faith and truth go together faith isn't biblically blind trust faith is reasonable trust faith is seeing that there is something there and being willing to actually entrust yourself to it and the truth is that God is making himself known in so many various ways and by his spirit is drawing us into that truth so that faith in God is not an irrational act but it is a super rational act it is a spiritual act it is not in denial of a scientific method but it is above that the biblical worldview marries faith and truth together because here's the thing if you deny the possibility of the existence of God as a presupposition you will never know whether there is a God or not but what the bible says is if you are willing if you will humble yourself and acknowledge that maybe there is a

[ 33 : 38 ] God then God will reveal himself to you he will make himself known and he will lead you into all truth and so relating to God is where we find what is really true and real because the spirit of all truth is going to come and bring to us not just a system and knowledge but bring to us a revelation of God himself the person of God will be made known to us and as we respond to him in faith we are then able to understand the truth friends this is what Jesus has said from the very beginning Jesus in John 1 verse 14 is the word became flesh dwelt among us full of grace and truth and we have beheld his glory if you want to know what God is like you go to Jesus you look at him because the

Bible says this is where God has displayed his glory and when you see his glory you will experience what Jesus promised in John 8 if you abide in my word you are truly my disciples and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free when you see Jesus in his glory you will understand why Jesus said in John 14 6 I am the way and the truth and the life no one comes to the father except through me this is the great hope for the disciples as they're watching Jesus say he's going away and wondering how can we know you the spirit is going to come and we still have that same spirit

today that same spirit is still at work in the world and is in the church revealing this Jesus to us revealing God to us so that we might know him and know his truth we are not adrift my friends we don't have to create our own truth or to grasp in the dark as if we were lost but the Holy Spirit is seeking us to bring to us all truth and to guide us so that we might know him and know the truth that is in him the spirit is here friends let us rejoice and let us pray spirit we come to you Jesus father we come acknowledging that the mystery of the trinity is greater than we can understand fully and yet we thank you that in the richness of your three persons father son and holy spirit you have revealed yourself to us your gracious self disclosure means that we are not adrift but lord that we can know real truth and that the most important truth is about you once we know you lord that we can explore all truth in this world in ways that bring glory to you lord i pray this morning lord if there are those here this morning who don't yet know you who don't yet understand that you are God of truth to rescue us from our lostness lord i pray that your spirit would lead them into truth this morning and i pray for all of us lord that we would have confidence in a world that seems adrift that we would have confidence that in knowing you we can know what is right and good and true in this world holy spirit help us we pray we pray these things in Jesus name amen amen