

## Sermon- Father, Son, Holy Spirit, A Revelation in Progress

John 16: 12-15

Sunday, September 29, 2019

Ok let's see how much you remember. What is the section in John that we are in, called?

That's right! We are in a section called the Farewell Discourse. This is a section specifically focused on the teachings of Jesus to help his disciples prepare for the transition they are about to experience. And one of the main themes of this section of the farewell discourse has been the Holy Spirit that Jesus was about to send, also called the Paraclete. Now the Paraclete can be translated to mean many things, the Comforter, the Encourager or the Advocate. Then towards the end of chapter 15 he was described as the Spirit of Truth. Last Sunday we focused on what that means. We looked at three pillars of the new world view that the Holy Spirit gives us, firstly, the conviction of the sin of not recognizing the true identity of Christ, secondly, the capacity to recognize the righteousness of God and thirdly, to recognize that history itself is flowing inexorably towards the coming judgment.

So after Jesus finishes describing the worldview forming work of the Holy Spirit, he switches to an ultra-wide angle view of the work of the Holy Spirit. And the focus now is on the Holy Spirit's work of revealing God to us. Let me just read the passage in NLT.

***"There is so much more I want to tell you, but you can't bear it now. <sup>13</sup> When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future. <sup>14</sup> He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me. <sup>15</sup> All that belongs to the Father is mine; this is why I said, 'The Spirit will tell you whatever he receives from me.'"***

So Jesus is laying on in these few verses something really fascinating. He is saying, that He being God Himself wants to reveal so more to his disciples. But they have a limited

capacity to receive it. But Jesus has a plan. After he leaves, he will send the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit will continue revealing to them more truths about God and His plan for you as you navigate life. Think of it something like a slow release pill ☺

And then Jesus outlines some principles that will cover all of the future revelations that will be made by the Holy Spirit. But to appreciate these principles better I want to turn back the clock to examine with our ultra-wide angle lens how God has always revealed Himself.

Just a quick note on the ultra-wide angle lens. Have you ever been to Pike's Peak which is the tallest mountain in the US and seen the view from there? The saying is that you can actually see 5 states from that point. Now because you are so far up, there will be many things on the ground that you will not be able to see. On the other hand you will be able to take in features of the landscape like entire mountain ranges and rivers and other features of the landscape as a whole that you will have no clue about if you were on ground level, right? That is the benefit of the ultra wide angle high level perspective. Ok lets point our lens at the beginning of God's revelation of himself to us in Genesis.

When we look at Genesis, to the section where the world you are looking at is like our world, in chapter 10 you get the story of Abraham and it begins with God's encounter and revelation to Abraham. This must be important to God because the story of Abraham and his descendants take up 80% of the book of Genesis. And what do we see here? We see that before this God encounter, Abraham was just going about his own business watching his cattle as did his father Terah and their extended family who were idol worshippers. But in that context God reaches out to Abraham, calls him to follow him and makes a covenant with him saying that God would make him the "Father to many nations". This covenant was repeated across three generations. Now the interesting thing about that is that when Abraham and his descendants thought about this God, the key thing they knew about this God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was the

covenant promise made to them. And this covenant promise had to do with making the patriarchs the father to many nations and using that fatherhood to bless the whole earth. Now because Sarah, Abraham's wife is a key part of the story, then she also becomes a mother to many nations as well. So if this is the first thing you know about God, you might begin to associate God with Fatherhood right? And because you know that God is a spirit being, He does not actually have a real biological gender. So when the Bible links a gender to God, it is using the term Father to convey both the parenthood and authority of God. In Isaiah 63:16 the prophet speaks to God saying,

***“Surely you are still our Father!***

***Even if Abraham and Jacob<sup>[b]</sup> would disown us,  
Lord, you would still be our Father.***

***You are our Redeemer from ages past.”.***

So God first revealed Himself to his people as “Father” who not only created them but Father who would take care of them and someone who could always be trusted in all circumstances.

Later on, when his people were in Egypt and being oppressed and when they cried out to Him, he revealed Himself as the Father who rescues them from their oppression.

When he gave them the 10 commandments, he revealed Himself as one who has standards of behavior and expectations for them.

But all that was just the tip of the ice burgh of God's revelation, right? Because there was more revelation coming. Now God the Father said, I want to reveal more of who I am to my people and my intentions for them. So he sent his Son, God in human flesh into the world he created. Now, and we would have never known this about God, but because of Jesus, we know that the God who is the all powerful father for whom the word “awesome” should have been exclusively reserved, is also a gentle and humble servant, willing to suffer for us to bring us salvation. In fact because of Jesus Christ and

only because of Him, we now know that God is also “a Son” who is willing to submit to the Father, who is intent on bringing honor to the Father and who is willing to sacrifice everything for our sake to bless us with eternal life in spite of our wretchedness and sin. Now, when you step back you see an amazing pattern emerge with this new level of revelation of who God is. What we see is that within the one “being” of God there is another person who is lower than the Father. But when this lower person within the Godhead is revealed, that is when we learn so much more about who God is. It is when the lower person is revealed that we learn even more about who God is. Hold on to this thought. Because it is going to get even more interesting.

Because guess what? When the lower person, the Son of God is revealed, He does the same thing His Father does and reveals another lower person within the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. And when Jesus reveals the Holy Spirit, the pattern of revelation once again repeats itself and this is what you are seeing in verse 12 to 15 of our passage.

Let’s look at this pattern. The first thing to note is that the Holy Spirit being revealed to us gives us another intensification of the revelation of who God is. So now we know that God is not just a Father like authority figure and Son who dies for our salvation, but God is also our Advocate and Helper, and Encourager and Comforter who functions inside of us to help us navigate our day to day challenges in a manner that is pleasing to the Father and Son. So we know a lot more about the nature of God when the second person of the Trinity revealed the third person of the Trinity to us.

We also see another pattern repeating with the Holy Spirit. You see we know that the Son honors the Father and does only what the Father tells the Son to do. In the same way, Jesus is saying here, the Holy Spirit honors the Son and does and says only what the Son tells Him to do. John 16 verse <sup>13</sup> ***When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future.*** <sup>14</sup> ***He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he***

*receives from me.* So the Holy Spirit is in complete submission to the Son. And the Holy Spirit's goal is to bring glory to the Son, just as the Son brought glory to the Father. And you know the Holy Spirit faithfully executes the task He has been given. That is what we are assured of when we read, ***'The Spirit will tell you whatever he receives from me.'***

So when you look at this pattern of the revelation of who God is, you can call it a progressive revelation. Because each subsequent person of the Trinity builds on what the previous person within the Godhead has revealed to the world about God. And the rate of this revelation is kept to what we are able to "bear".

This tight relationship between the Holy Spirit and Jesus is very important for us to note. Because here is where things start getting really tricky in our passage. Verse 12 says, "there is much more I want to tell you". And verse 13 says, "He will tell you about the future". In other words the Holy Spirit has the capacity to continue the revelation of who God is to us. And the Holy Spirit has the capacity to reveal the future to us. I just want to comment on both these verses.

First, when verse 12 says, the Holy Spirit will continue the revelation of who God is to us, we have to understand it carefully because this verse can be greatly misused. So when we are getting a new revelation of who God is from the Holy Spirit, it does not mean that we get a revelation that can be in any way be different or contradict what is already revealed in Scripture. You see Scripture already tells us everything the world knows about the Father and the Son. So because Jesus Christ has explained this extremely tight coupling within the Trinity, and focus on glorification of the other, if we get any revelation from the Holy Spirit, to test that it is actually from the Holy Spirit, it should pass the Son test. This is what 1 John 4:1 is talking about. It says, ***"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God. For many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2By this you will know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God"***. That means what you

get from the Holy Spirit will be in line with what the Son has already said. So if that is the case, you might ask, what more is there to be revealed, right? You might say we already have Scripture to reveal everything important to us. Well, that is true! Actually what the Holy Spirit allows us to do is actually unlock the meaning of Scripture, which we saw last Sunday. But it also enables us to deepen our understanding of it. Let me give you an example. Many years ago, when I read Romans 8:28 “God works all things out for good for those who love him and have been called according to His purposes” I used to think of this verse in a very clinical way. I understood it like the chess game in which every move that happened in the game whether by the “good” guys or the bad guys always ending up helping God to win in the end. That understanding was true but it was far from complete. Since then the Holy Spirit has revealed much more about the meaning of this verse. Today, Rom 8:28 is a source of deep assurance to me. It has become the assurance that lets me sleep peacefully at night and wake up joyfully the next morning no matter what challenges I face! That is what it means when Jesus says, there is so much I want to tell you but you cannot bear it now. But when the Holy Spirit comes he will guide you into all truth.

Ok but what about Jesus saying, the Holy Spirit will tell you about the future? If that were the case every believer would be able to play the lottery with 100% success, right? 😊 Well, what it means is that the Holy Spirit will help us make sense of what is going on around us in a way that reassures us about the uncertainties of the future. For example, if God was calling our ex youth pastor Abraham to Florida and he thought of all the uncertainties of his future life, he would never make it there. But the fact is that the Holy Spirit has a way of assuring them about the future in a way that enabled them to step out into what looks like a zone of uncertainty. So the Holy Spirit enables us to see the providential hand of God working out his promises in the future, even when we don't really see the future.

So here is the pattern we are seeing here. Each person of the God head builds on the revelation of the previous one. So the question is, does it stop with the Holy Spirit?

I believe not. Because after the Holy Spirit has done His work, that is when you and I come into the picture. One day, you will become a continuation of the pattern of revelation so that you will now be able to say, I don't do anything of my own will but only what the Holy Spirit tells me to do. I do everything that the Holy Spirit tells me to do. My life's goal in all that I do is to bring glory to the Holy Spirit and Jesus and our Heavenly Father. Then other people will be able to look at you and see another phase in God's revelation to them. You may never be aware of this revelation of God through you in this life, but one day at the sheep and goat judgment, it will become clear and that day will be a day of great joy.

May all of us experience the joy of being called the sheep who heard the voice of God and continued the witness of God through His Spirit. Let us pray.