

Theme: The Role of the Holy Spirit (15/6/25)

Text: Romans 5:1-5; John 16:12-15

As we go through what the Presbytery called – ‘Life and Witness Consultation,’ we are asked to weigh up our strengths, resources (both people and money) and vision to the future as my term of service comes to an end soon. Times of change and transition can be a tough challenge in family, work and school context. Often, children and grandchildren struggle to cope with their loss of parents, as well as their fear of the unknown future. How would they cope without their dad or mum? Similarly, how would a Church congregation manage without their pastor?

Few Sundays ago, we looked at the beginning of Jesus’ farewell discourse (speech) in John 13 at their last supper. Today’s reading in John 16:12-15 is a part of the discourse which Jesus talks about leaving his disciples and a replacement to come. Jesus instructed His disciples about what He can no longer do, and what His replacement can do for them on His behalf. This is Trinity Sunday, and we contemplate in this passage on the interconnectedness of the Father, Son and Spirit within the Godhead.

1. Jesus and the Spirit’s work [12-13]

In the beginning of John’s gospel, we learned that Jesus was the “Bearer” of the Spirit as John testifies: ‘I saw the Spirit came down from heaven as a dove and **remain on him**’ (1:32). And in this chapter 16, Jesus is the “Sender” of the Spirit: ‘unless I go away, the Counsellor (Spirit) will not come to you; but if I go, **I will send him** to you’ (16:7). Both appearances, made clear that the Spirit works from the background as Jesus is on the spotlight, the focus attention. This relationship would be seen through this passage. However, we also noted in the beginning of the section of the Spirit’s role as Jesus said, “now I am going to him (Father) who **sent me**” (v 5).

As the disciples come to know of Jesus’ departure, then He comforted them by saying, it is for their good that He will be going away, then He will send the Counsellor (Holy Spirit) to be with them. Apparently, the essential mission of the disciples is to proclaim the good news of Jesus to all the world. The task too tough for the disciples to do alone, and that is why the Holy Spirit will be sent. For He himself is the real preacher. He is not only pointing but guiding us to the truth of all that Jesus had said and did.

However, listen to what Jesus says to His disciples, ¹²*I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear.* Jesus acknowledges that He cannot reveal everything to His disciples at once. Why? Because they do not have the capacity and were unable to get hold and understand what He would say. While Jesus has so much more to tell them, they are not ready to understand it yet. More like a father who withholds the detail instructions of driving a car from his four-year old boy, until he grows up more.

Obviously, there are many deeper spiritual truths that we, as His disciples today are not yet capable of understanding them fully. Even in His conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus said to him, ‘you are Israel’s teacher’ yet you still do not understand what I am saying to you – about being born again from above (3:5ff). Friends, these words of Jesus humble us to realise how incapable we are to understand His words without His help. So often we pretend to understand and probing our own way through His Word. But at the moment we accept our limitations, and it keeps us humble which may lead us to welcome the help we need from the Holy Spirit through prayers. It often came up in our recent study of Luke’s gospel with some difficult chapters and thoughts on the coming of the kingdom of God which led us to pray more.

¹³*When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.* The Spirit’s role is not only to teach but to guide us – not as a distant guide to walk far ahead or behind, but someone to help and walk alongside. This is truly the kind of person the disciples needed when Jesus returns to the Father. That is also the kind of person you and I need at this time of ministry transition. Though we do not know what the future holds for the Church’s life and ministry at Kingsgrove, but we are thankful that we have a Counsellor and Helper, a Companion to walk alongside us in good and bad times.

He will not speak on his own; he will speak only of what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. The Spirit comes to do nothing on His own – nothing on His own will, nothing for His own benefit and nothing for His own glory, but for the glory of Jesus. Friends, this is a very important lesson for us to learn. We need to remind ourselves more often, that we do not exist and live entirely for ourselves. We do not live only for our own benefits and glory, but for the benefit of others for the glory of Jesus. That’s what we really are as the Body of Christ. Our 12:15 notes, reminds us every week – ‘Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.’

The Holy Spirit also comes to reveal to us the truth of the gospel message, which is centred on the life and work of Jesus – His death and resurrection. We are thankful for faithful teachers and preachers of the Word, but their word can be empty and ineffective without the enlightenment and power of the Holy Spirit, the original author of the holy Scripture. This is why it's so important not to study God's word without prayer, or pray without knowing who we are praying to. We need to start and/or continue to develop a healthy routine of constant renewal of our minds and hearts daily in the transforming and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, the Spirit will not only reveal Jesus' teaching, but also *what is yet to come*. Isn't it an encouraging factor of the role of the Spirit. Why fear and worry about the future then? He is already there, so stay faithful and be consistent in our prayer as we walk with the Lord, trust and obey.

2. The Spirit's glory [14-15]

¹⁴*He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.* The work of the Holy Spirit is ultimately to bring glory not to Himself but to Jesus, even though He is the one revealing the truth. What a wonderful image we see of the ultimate submission of the Spirit to the Son, and the relationships within the Godhead.

¹⁵*All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.* Again, this emphasises the unity within the Godhead and the Spirit is revealing God's plan for salvation of the world. What a privilege and honour to receive God's gift of His Son in its fullness and also honoured to share in His glory. So, friends, we hope and pray that the identity of Jesus would be extended in our life and service, in and through His Church.

The message to take home from this hard and complex passage is simple: trust in the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Though the days may be like the weather – constantly unpredictable, or bouncing back and forth like yoyo, but the Holy Spirit will continue to lead us into a deeper understanding of God's truth in the finished work of Jesus and in His Word. Let Him give us understanding of His purpose for His Church today and beyond. Do not give up in developing a healthy prayer life daily to enhance our relationships with God and His people.

Prayer: *Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit. We pray that we may have ears that are spiritually attuned to hear His voice, eyes that are willing to see spiritual truths, a heart that is submitted to His guidance and correction, and a teachable spirit so that in His grace we may be guided into all truth. This we ask in Jesus' name, Amen.*