



good shepherd
presbyterian church

Helper

John 16:8-15

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“I promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth... so help me, me.” In one of the Hollywood movies that depicted God – I think it was one from the 70s with George Burns – the God character appeared in a courtroom and was asked to take the oath to tell the truth. And who else would God swear upon other than Himself. While that’s a little tongue-in-cheek, and irreverent, it’s accurate enough. It reminds me of when God made the covenant with Abraham. In ancient times covenants were sworn before God; in this case God pledged His own name and life for the everlasting covenant... a kind of “so help me, me.”

That’s also what I thought of when I read John 16. Jesus is continuing to comfort his disciples about his leaving and he talks some more (as in John 14-15) about the Holy Spirit. This is the Spirit of Truth, the one who only speaks God’s truth (v.13). And the Holy Spirit IS God... God saying, “Here’s the truth, so help me, me.” In the verses we are focused on today (John 15:8-15), Jesus is describing some of that truth-telling work of the Spirit. That truth-telling will be like a bright light, drawing some to God and revealing some of the untruths that people exchange for God’s truth.

In verse 8 Jesus begins: “And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment...”

I want to look at each of those things with you...

The Truth about Sin (v.9)

The Holy Spirit convicts the world concerning sin. Jesus says in verse 9 that this is because people do not believe in him. That's the lie of unbelief. We might phrase it a number of ways:

"Sure, Jesus was a great teacher, but I don't get into all that God-stuff."

"Church is a good thing - it teaches morals to my kids; but lay off that personal salvation stuff."

"It's all just a bunch of mumbo-jumbo; I believe in what I can see and touch and taste."

"It's all too much for me to accept - loving my neighbors is one thing, but miracles, demons, resurrection, God as a baby?? I just don't buy it."

There are a number of ways in which people might express unbelief. But there is a common thread running between them. If Jesus Christ is not who he said he was, and if he didn't do what the Bible says he did, then there is no solution to the problem of sin. That is, without belief in Jesus Christ, we find ourselves believing a lie about sin...

"There's nothing wrong."

The Holy Spirit of Truth comes into the world to illuminate the truth, to convict the world of sin, because of its unbelief. The Holy Spirit's truth – God's own truth – is that we are indeed fallen. There is a problem. We have been separated from God, and the consequence is death. Conviction of sin is the first step toward belief and faith. Convicting us of this truth is how the Spirit begins the movement in human souls towards faith and salvation.

The Truth about Righteousness (v.10)

The Holy Spirit convicts the world concerning righteousness. Jesus says in verse 10 that this is "because I go to the Father and you no longer see me." Without Jesus walking among us it might be tempting to believe a second lie:

"I can get what I need"

Early on in the Bible, people fall prey to this lie. When God commands his people to have no other gods, He addresses our sinful tendency towards idolatry - including our tendency to set ourselves up as the "god" of our own lives. If we try hard enough, if we are motivated enough, if we set our minds to it... there is nothing we cannot accomplish or overcome or achieve. And if there is nothing really wrong (Lie #1), then all the easier to believe Lie #2.

Jesus says that the Spirit will convict the world concerning righteousness - that's what we need! We need to be right before God and right in the world. The truth is that ***only Jesus Christ is sufficient to make things right!*** Only Jesus provides the righteousness (rightness) that we need.

It is because Jesus "went to the Father" – the risen Christ ascended in power to sit at God's side – that we have an advocate and mediator with God the Father. It is because of Christ's work and atonement that we are invited back into God's presence as adopted and beloved children.

Again, the Spirit testifies to the Truth that after acknowledging our own sin, we may be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ - we may be made right.

The Truth about Judgment (v.11)

The Holy spirit convicts the world concerning judgment. Jesus says in verse 11 that this is "because the ruler of this world has been judged." Though Jesus has ultimately defeated the "ruler of this world" we continue to live with false allegiance, trusting false rulers and powers. We demonstrate acceptance of this lie with words like these:

"You just don't know what I'm up against."

It may be the stress at work; it may be the desperate family we live with; it may be the poverty all around us; it may be the diseases that seem to have us beat; it may be war, famine, and disaster; it may be the unknown... but at the heart of this is a false allegiance - a spoken or unspoken admission that the things of this world or the ruler of this world have the last word in our lives.

Jesus says that the Holy Spirit convicts the world of judgment - that is the truth about judgment. This is "because the prince of this world now stands condemned." Through the work and person of Jesus Christ, *God has the final word* in this world and in our lives. And that word is a word of hope and life. No situation, disease, tragedy, person, power, or the Devil himself has ultimate claim on our lives. The Holy Spirit convicts the world of the truth - that Jesus Christ has defeated Satan, sin, and death itself. And that is good news!

He Will Guide You Into All the Truth (vv.13-15)

Jesus must have seen the look in the disciples' eyes at this point, because he said, "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear." (v.12) And so Jesus left it at this: "When the Holy Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth."

Jesus also made it clear that the work of the Holy Spirit would bring glory to Jesus' name by continuing to make Christ known to the world. This is evident as the Holy Spirit shines the light of truth in the world:

1. When we say "there's nothing wrong," the Holy Spirit points to the truth about sin and separation from God - that there is a problem.
2. When we say "I can get what I need," the Holy Spirit points to the truth that only Jesus Christ is sufficient to make things right between us and God.
3. When we say "But you don't know what I'm up against," the Holy Spirit points to the truth that because of Jesus Christ, sin, death, evil, and Satan himself do not have the last word in our lives.

The Holy Spirit has come and continues to speak the truth to the unbelieving world and in the hearts of believers. That truth is found throughout the Bible, on the lips of Jesus, and resonates in our hearts:

For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

Hear and believe the Truth! It comes from the heart of God! Amen.