**Sermon on John 16:7-15**

Trinity Sunday, is, statistically, the day most preferred by preachers for a Sunday off. In my 20 years of ministry, I have only preached 3 times on the Trinity!

So here I am giving my first sermon in over a year and I get The Trinity as the subject! To compound this gross injustice, the gospel reading is from St John perhaps the deepest and most complex gospel that was written!

Now I guess that all of us struggle with the concept of the Trinity particularly the Holy Spirit. We can generally get the idea of God the Father and we’re comfortable with God the Son because we know from our bible and teaching what Jesus was like. So this morning I’m going to focus on the Holy Spirit because God the Holy spirit is a little bit scary, certainly for people of my age because we were brought up with God the Holy Ghost in the King James bible. So as a child I had this image of a spooky individual who was there to frighten me, particularly at bed time because that is what ghosts do!. And I guess in the back of our minds we’re still carrying that baggage with us.

But we’re in good company. It wasn’t until 325AD that the Council of Nicea finally developed the concept of the Trinity, hence the Nicene Creed. Over the next half century, St. Athanasius defended and refined the Nicene formula, and, by the end of the 4th century, under the leadership of St. Basil of Caesarea, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and St. Gregory of Nazianzus (the Cappadocian Fathers), the doctrine of the Trinity took the form it has maintained ever since.

The Greek word for the Holy Spirit is Paraclete, and it means one who’s called alongside of another person to offer assistance and comfort. For instance, a paramedic is someone who comes alongside a person to offer medical assistance.

So, the Holy Spirit is here to help us and be alongside us in our journey of faith. It is the Holy Spirit who brings us to the place where we can experience and have a relationship with God the Son.

In today’s gospel, Jesus has told the Disciples that he is going to be killed. He has informed them that they will have to undergo severe persecution. And, he has stated that there will be more trials, tribulations and troubles coming their way. Not quite what the disciples were wanting to hear!

Now he tries to wrap up his earthly teachings to those he has loved and taught for over three years. He struggles to bring all the lessons to a conclusion. He uses these words:

*‘I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of Truth comes, you will be guided into all truth. For the Holy Spirit will not speak in isolation, but will speak what is given from me, and declare it to you. All that the Creator God has is mine. For this reason, I have said that the Holy Spirit will take what is mine and declare it unto you’.*

When it came to building his team, we know that Jesus did not choose the best educated, or the most literate people to accompany him. He chose ordinary people who were often slow to learn, catch the vision or to understand what Jesus was revealing. In other words, the Disciples were pretty slow to catch on to the true meaning of Jesus words. So, when Jesus, in his summary, begins by saying, *"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot hear them now."* The first thing that jumped to their minds had to be "What do you mean?" Not only was this an incredible statement, but seemed a bit demeaning.

"What do you mean?" would have been an appropriate response for those who had been so close to the Teacher. They had left homes, families and jobs to walk those dusty roads, to live off the hospitality of others and had been held in contempt by the Temple Leaders. Now, Jesus tells them that what he has been trying to teach, they simply do not understand. This must have been a low point for the disciples.

Jesus said it because he understood that in many matters concerning our spiritual journey, "ignorance is bliss." If we really knew what would be required of us at the next bend in the road, most likely, we would stand sill, mark time and look for other directions to take. No one wants to encounter danger, pain or heartache on their journey. We want to believe that everything is going to be fine and dandy, every day and all the time. But this was not the way of Jesus. It was not the way of the Disciples. And it is not the way of God's people today.

There are many things we cannot bear to know about tomorrow. The Disciples didn't have a clue about the realm that Jesus came to usher in. They didn't want to hear or to comprehend that following Jesus would lead to suffering, sorrow and difficulties and through this suffering develop their best potential for the task ahead.

So, to reassure them Jesus begins to offer them the comfort of the Trinity. Jesus informs them that God, in love, owns all things, has all things under control and has given unto him all power and authority to help us through the difficulties of our life. Jesus promises them the companionship of the Holy Spirit who will come to lead all of us, step by step along the journey. As he nears the end of his earthly mission, Jesus begins to focus the Disciples' minds on who is to come.

In John 16:7-8, Jesus says this. *But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.*

And in John 16:13 *"When the Holy Spirit comes, you will be guided into all truth."*

So, what do we know about the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit comes to lead us in the right direction. With the power of the Holy Spirit, living inside of us, we have a powerful resource to help guide us as we travel our journey of faith. Everything that heaven holds belongs to us. And, as life demands from us, the Holy Spirit will give us exactly what we need, at the right time.

The light bulb moment for the Disciples came at Pentecost, when the Spirit came down and anointed them with fire. From this moment they became the great pioneers of the Christian church as we know it today. From then on, they grew in awareness and understood their future role much better. The disciples couldn't fully comprehend the task ahead of them as they were given the power of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost but they kept traveling forward in faith.

So, what does this mean to us in our day to day life as Christians. As the Holy Spirit guides us in the truth of the gospel, it shapes our relationships with other people and our role in our faith communities. It enables us to experience the reality of grace and Christ-like love for others.

Through our relationships with each other, the words we speak to and about each other, and a culture of grace in our churches, the Holy Spirit guides people into the truth of God’s grace by giving them the experience of grace.

There are many times in our journey of faith that we question just what is life about. Why God do we have problems and issues that seem insurmountable? Why do we live in such a violent world? What will happen to my family in the future? How will I cope with my illness or that of a loved one? How will I cope with growing old? Can I trust God to handle this present situation I’m facing?

It’s only human to try to find solutions, to try to figure it all out. There are however, many things in life that we don’t or can’t understand. However, prayer can be a great healer and a comfort – the very things that is the domain of the Holy Spirit.

In our Communion service we say *‘great is the mystery of faith’* acknowledging that there are many things we don’t understand. However, we do know the benefit of prayer, whether to the Father, Son or Holy Spirit, and the active element and recipient of our prayers is the Holy Spirit. God promised us the resources and these are through the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit doesn’t necessarily answer prayer with tongues of flame or any other spectacular manifestation. Rather the Holy Spirit appears as a still small voice inside us. Are we listening for the still small voice, the healing guidance of the Holy Spirit?

This particular passage of Scripture guarantees us that we are never left on our own! We have been promised every resource that we need.

And, I thank God that all of us have the blessed assurance that regardless to what's going on in our life right now, "We will understand it better through the Father, Son and Holy Spirit"

That's good enough for me!

Amen