

## SPIRIT OF TRUTH

(John 16: 12-15)

Intro: "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth."  
-John 16: 13.

### I. Truth Is A Rare Commodity In Our World.

#### A. Exhibit A.

1. Last summer.
  - a. I flew back to St. Louis.
    - To testify in the penalty phase.
    - #Of a capital murder trial.
  - b. Accused.
    - One of my former "parishioners."
    - #Whom I had gotten to know.
    - \*In the St. Louis County Jail.
    - #Whom I had baptized.
    - \*In one of my worship services at the jail.
    - Robert Bolden.
    - #Was his name.
2. I took the stand.
  - a. I was asked.
    - If I would tell the truth.
    - #Whole truth.
    - #Nothing but the truth.
  - b. I agreed.
3. One of his defense attorneys.
  - a. Began to ask me questions.
    - How long I had known Robert.
    - What my relationship was with him.
    - Whether or not I had seen any change in him.
    - #Over the course of our relationship.
  - b. In last week's Gospel lesson.
    - John 14: 8-17, 25-27.
    - Jesus promised his disciples another paracletos.
    - #Paraclete.
    - #Holy Spirit.
    - I told you that we didn't have a perfect translation for that term.
    - #Advocate.
    - #Counselor.
    - #Helper.

- One understanding of paracletos.
  - #Defense attorney.
    - \*Not to defend us.
      - +Against God's accusations.
    - \*But to help us to testify.
      - +To what we believe to be true:
        - =About God.
        - =About Jesus.
      - +Against the world's accusations.
- c. That's what Robert's defense attorney was helping me to do.
  - To tell the court.
    - #What I believed to be true.
      - \*About Robert Bolden.
- d. Until there came this question:
  - “Did Mr. Bolden ever express any remorse over what happened?”
  - Before I could open my mouth.
    - #Prosecutor.
      - \*Actually, one of a table full of prosecutors.
        - +Jumped to his feet.
        - +Hollered:
          - =“Objection!”
        - Without explaining the nature of his objection.
  - #Judge.
    - \*Called “time out.”
    - \*She gathered a little huddle on the other side of her bench.
      - +I couldn't hear the whispering.
  - #Court stenographer.
    - \*Typing a record of the conversation.
      - +Judge's computer screen.
        - =Turned so that I could see it.
        - =Transcript of this conversation.
          - Was appearing on her screen.
  - #They were arguing about whether or not:
    - \*I should be allowed to answer this question.
      - +Defense attorney had asked the question.
      - +Prosecutor didn't want the jury to hear my answer.
      - +Judge ruled in favor of the prosecutor.
  - #There may be nuances of the law.
    - \*I don't fully comprehend.
      - +But the truth.
        - =Whole truth.
        - =Nothing but the truth.
      - +Didn't seem to me to be the issue.

4. In 28 years of chaplaincy.
  - a. Perhaps I developed a cynical view.
    - Of the criminal justice system.
  - b. It's not about:
    - Truth.
    - Whole truth.
    - Nothing but the truth.
      - #That sounds good on TV.
  - c. It's an adversarial system.
    - Us against them.
    - Me against you.
    - State vs. \_\_\_\_\_.
  - d. An adversarial system.
    - By its very nature.
    - About:
      - #Winning.
      - #Losing.
    - Truth is often:
      - #Casualty.
      - #Not a product.
        - \*Of that system.
  - e. Truth can be a rare commodity to come by.

B. Exhibit B.

1. Phone line to the church went down on Tuesday.
  - a. I don't know what happened.
    - Line from the pole to Jordan Hall was down.
  - b. There were no tree limbs down.
  - c. It hadn't been that windy.
  - d. Had a truck clipped it?
    - I don't know.
2. As soon as I learned of the problem.
  - a. I called AT&T.
    - 800 number.
  - b. I got an automated voice system.
    - Don't you love those?
    - Voice system said:
      - #"Due to a high volume of calls,"
      - #"There may be a delay in answering your call."
    - Now what is the truth in that statement?
      - #So may customers are calling in?
        - \*Problems.
        - \*Complaints.

- #Or AT&T hasn't?
  - \*Hired enough people.
  - \*Assigned enough people.
  - +To answer the phones.
- c. When I finally got through to a person.
  - I explained our problem.
    - #Gave her the phone number.
    - #Gave her the address.
  - She said:
    - #"I'm sorry that your phone is temporarily out of service."
    - #"We'll have it fixed as soon as we can."
  - I asked:
    - #"When is that likely to be?"
  - She said:
    - #"No later than 7:00 P.M. tomorrow."
- 3. Mary came in on Wednesday morning.
  - a. Found the phones out of service.
  - b. Called the 800 number.
  - c. She also was told:
    - It would be repaired by 7:00 P.M. Wednesday evening.
      - #7:00 P.M. on Wednesday evening.
      - \*Came.
      - \*Went.
    - #Still no phone.
- 4. Thursday morning I called again.
  - a. I heard the same automated message:
    - "Due to a large volume of calls,"
    - "There may be a delay in answering your call."
  - b. When I finally got a person, Diane, to talk to.
    - I told her the nature of our problem.
    - She said:
      - #"Let me pull up your ticket."
    - I waited for her.
    - Finally she said:
      - #"This work order is for May 30<sup>th</sup>."
      - #"Let's see, that was yesterday."
      - #"It should have been fixed."
    - I said:
      - #"It should have been."
      - #"It wasn't."
      - #"What's the problem?"
    - She said:
      - #"Well, with all the rain, our crews have gotten behind."

-I said:  
 # "What rain?"  
 # "It hasn't rained here since Monday."  
 # "Where are you located?"

-She said:  
 # "Texas."

-I said:  
 # "Maybe it's raining in Texas."  
 # "But it's not raining here."  
 # "Is there someone in Tulsa I could talk to about this?"

-She said:  
 # "No, but I can check with them for you, if you like."  
 # "I can call you back."  
 # "Or would you like to hold."

-I didn't trust her to call me back.  
 # So I said:  
 \* "I'll hold."

-In a few minutes she came back and said:  
 # "They're really sorry they didn't get to you yesterday."  
 # "They're going to try to get to you today."

-I said:  
 # "I was told on Tuesday."  
 \* "That this would be taken care of on Wednesday."  
 # "Now it's Thursday."  
 # "You still can't tell me?"  
 \* "When we're going to have service restored."

-She said:  
 # "I hope it will be today."  
 # "Usually, if they don't get you the first day,"  
 \* "They get you the second day."  
 # "They're just running behind."

-I thought to myself.  
 # Where is the truth in that?  
 \* AT&T is swamped with requests for service?  
 \* Or they haven't hired enough people?  
 + Either to answer the phones.  
 + Or to repair the lines.  
 \* At the end of the year.  
 + Some CEO will get a multi-million dollar bonus.  
 = Because:  
 - Expenses are down.  
 - Profits are up.

c. Am I just being cynical?  
 -Where is the truth?

5. Truth is that the phone didn't get fixed on Thursday, either.
  - a. Friday morning I was out making calls.
    - Mary had to deal with AT&T.
  - b. When I came into the office a little before noon.
    - Mary told me:
      - #She had called AT&T.
      - #She had spoken with a very nice person.
      - #This person was going to jump our work order to the top of the list.
    - I thought:
      - #Hmmmph!
      - #At 8:00 we're at the top of the list.
      - #At noon we still have no phone service.
6. Friday afternoon I had started to write this sermon.
  - a. Door bell rang.
  - b. Finally, it was a repairman from AT&T.
    - He said:
      - #"I'm sorry we took so long to get to you."
      - #"We just don't have enough people."
    - I said:
      - #"That sounds like the truth to me."
  - c. He went right to work.
    - About 50 minutes later.
      - #Phones were working again.
      - #My computer was back online.
  - d. Truth can be a rare commodity indeed.

C. Exhibit C.

1. When my computer was back online.
  - a. I was able to check my e-mails.
  - b. I had a whole week's worth of e-mails.
    - Some that I didn't get in a timely manner.
2. One of the e-mails I received.
  - a. Allegedly from a woman in Kuwait.
  - b. Tale of bad news and good news.
    - Bad news.
      - #She had been married for 11 years.
      - #Her husband died in 2004.
      - #She was childless.
    - Good news.
      - #She and her husband were born-again Christians.
      - #Her husband had deposited \$2.5 million.
        - \*In a bank in the Ivory Coast.
        - +Before his death.

- Bad news.
  - #She has cancer.
    - \*Doctors don't think she'll live eight months.
  - #Now she has a "stroke sickness."
    - \*She won't be able to fulfill his wishes for the money.
- Good news.
  - #I can have the whole \$2.5 million.
    - \*For orphanages.
    - \*For widows.
    - \*For propagating the Word of God.
    - \*For maintaining the House of God.
  - #If I just send her my bank account number.
- c. She concludes:
  - “Whoever that Wants to serve the Lord must serve him in spirit and Truth.”
  - Remain blessed in the Lord
  - Take care,
  - In Christ's Holy Love
  - Yours Sister in christ.
- d. Should I send?
  - My person bank account number?
  - Or the church's number?
- 3. Like I said.
  - a. Truth can be a rare commodity.

## II. Where, Oh Where, Do We Find The Spirit Of Truth?

- A. Jesus Promised His Disciples The Gift Of The Holy Spirit.
  - 1. “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth.”
    - a. John 16:13.
  - 2. What truth?
    - a. Truth that the disciples could not bear to hear at that time.
    - b. Truth about things that were still to come.
  - 3. I think that the truth Jesus is talking about ultimately has little to do with:
    - a. Whether or not Robert Bolden expressed remorse.
    - b. Whether we got our phone service restored:
      - On Wednesday.
      - On Friday.
    - c. Whether there is \$2.5 million in a bank in the Ivory Coast.
      - Waiting just for me.

4. When Jesus spoke these words.
  - a. He had not yet been arrested.
  - b. He had not yet been to the cross.
    - That is what his disciples:
      - #Could not bear.
      - #Were not yet ready to hear.
5. But when the Spirit of truth came.
  - a. Those disciples would understand.
    - Crucifixion.
    - Resurrection.
  - b. Spirit would guide them into all truth.

B. All Truth Includes Both Bad News And Good.

1. Bad news.
  - a. We don't always tell the truth.
    - Sometimes we even use God's name to promote our deceit.
  - b. Our actions don't always coincide with what we say.
    - We stand under God's judgement.
  - c. That's not a pretty picture.
    - We had pictures taken a few weeks ago.
      - #For our congregational pictorial directory.
      - \*I hope you've gotten your pictures by now.
    - Pam and I had some good ones.
      - #We ordered some pictures.
    - We also had some not-so-good ones.
      - #I looked like One-eyed Jack in some of those.
      - \*I didn't like those.
      - \*They were ugly.
      - #But those pictures told the truth.
      - \*That's how I looked.
        - +At least to that camera.
        - +In that moment in time.
  - d. Sin does that to us.
    - We look ugly.
      - #As ugly as Jesus.
      - \*Hanging on the cross.
      - +On Good Friday.
    - It's the truth.
      - #But it's not the whole truth.

2. Good news.
  - a. Resurrection.
  - b. Forgiveness.
  - c. Washing away of sin.
  - d. We are justified by faith.
    - Romans 5: 1.
  - e. We have peace with God.
    - Even in matters of life and death.
    - Even when the phone company acts like its initials mean:
      - #Always.
      - #Terribly.
      - #Tardy.
    - Even when people invoke:
      - #Name of God.
      - #Spirit of truth.
    - \*To engage in schemes of untruth.
  - f. Spirit of truth guides us into all truth.

Concl: As noted in your bulletin.

- Tina Coates is going to be leaving us.
  - #As our organist.
- We trust that the Spirit of truth.
  - #Has been guiding her in making this decision.
  - #Will continue to guide her.
  - \*In the months and years to come.
- We trust that the Spirit of truth.
  - #Will guide and direct us.
  - \*As we seek to fill this position.
  - #In our Bible class last week.
    - \*We discussed the petition in the Lord's Prayer.
      - + "Give us this day our daily bread."
    - \*We noted.
      - +With Martin Luther.
      - +Daily bread.
        - =More than food and drink.
        - =But everything that we need for this body and life.
    - \*We trust that promise as individuals.
    - \*We trust that promise as a congregation.
      - +God will provide us with everything we need.
        - =To do the ministry God has called us to do.
      - +I may not know:
        - =Who.
        - =When.

We trust not:

- Jury in a court room.
- Phone company.
- E-mail from overseas.

We trust the Spirit of truth.