



Trinity Sunday Year C

There Is More

[RCL]: Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31; Psalm 8 or Canticle 13 (or Canticle 2); Romans 5:1-5; John 16:12-15

Jesus said something curious in today's gospel: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now."

Why do you suppose that Jesus said that? He was speaking to his disciples. Whatever did he mean?

Did he know that his disciples were full up – saturated – couldn't handle anymore? Was he concerned the disciples might not remember his words? Were they grieving the death that was coming, and so couldn't hear?

Or were they the bumbling, not always bright, frequently-missing-the-point band of merry men that Jesus had grown to love – and had tried to teach – and they'd had enough truth?

"I still have many things to say to you..."

Why do you suppose Jesus said that? And what else did he have to say that went unsaid? We can only speculate – and trust.

Trust that his promise to send the Holy Spirit to speak to us for God has been realized. Trust that what we need to know is expressed to us through the generations by the Spirit moving in human community. Trust that God will find a way to bring comfort, guidance, wisdom.

Whatever else Jesus might have wanted to say, we can only speculate and trust that the ongoing revelation of God's Spirit is fulfilled.

That is the essence of Trinity Sunday. A preacher could sit down now and be done.

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We may not know what Jesus left out, but we do have some record of what Jesus had already said.

There have always been questions about what Jesus *really* said. This consideration was taken up by the scholars of the Jesus Seminar in the 1990s. What distinguished the scholars of the Jesus Seminar was their method of approach with their questions: they used a system of grading, essentially voting scholarly opinions about what they thought Jesus did and did not *actually* say. Most of the gospel material, they concluded, came up as unlikely to be genuinely the words of Jesus.

While some people take offense at efforts to examine the Bible for historical evidence, still others use Scripture carelessly and to their own ends. We hear this in the evening news as people claim, “The Bible says...” to support their position on something. The truth may be that the Bible doesn’t say that at all, or that it *seems* to say that while also clearly saying just the opposite. The Bible is not a dead document fixed in time and space or a rule book given to stipulate correct behavior. It is a story of people and their relationship with God, of the struggle and challenge of living meaningful lives, of goodness manifest in Jesus and the love of God manifested in a new way.

And yet Scripture sometimes gets used carelessly.

For example, where does it say in the Bible, “God helps those who help themselves”? It’s a popular saying, and true, right?

“Oh – *moan* – I can’t find work, can’t finish school, I’m low on money,” you fill in the blank. And some well-meaning soul replies, “Well, you know what the Good Book says: ‘God helps those who help themselves.’”

Does anyone know where that is in the Bible? It’s not there.

It is a popular quote with several variations. Sophocles, Aeschylus, George Herbert, Ben Franklin in his *Poor Richard’s Almanac*, each expressed this sentiment in one way or another. But it isn’t in the Bible.

Another way some folks run loose with the Bible is to quote or cite only part of a saying, like the Apostle Paul’s admonition, “Wives, be subject to your husbands,” forgetting that there is an equal charge to the men: “Husbands, love your wives.”

Even worse are the zingers that attempt to gain advantage in a discussion by completely misreading or misrepresenting something. Think of some of the things our politicians say to cheering crowds – even though they’re not true. Think of the clarion calls of some religious leaders who proclaim, “The Bible says...,” when it does not. As people of faith, we have a sacred responsibility to tell the truth, to represent the truth, indeed, to recognize the truth in our midst.

Some instances might be funny if it weren’t possible to imagine disastrous consequences.

Years ago, on a radio call-in show in the Washington, D.C. area, a woman cited the biblical passage which in the King James rendition has Jesus telling the disciples to “Suffer little children... to come unto me.” “Suffer,” in this context, tells the disciples not to prevent the children from coming to Jesus. It’s an old usage of the term. But the woman was taking this passage from the Bible and using it to defend her argument that children should suffer through corporal punishment simply because Jesus said so!

Do you see what happens when we don’t listen carefully for the truth?

It is hard stuff, God’s wisdom.

Jesus tempered it. The Holy Spirit inspired it. And it is still hard to live the revealed truth of God.

“Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor.”

“Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear.”

“Do not resist an evildoer.”

“Love your enemies.”

“Do not worry about tomorrow.”

“Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone.”

“Be perfect.”

Even the very image of Jesus that has become our understanding as “meek and mild” is portrayed heavily in our 19th-century hymnody, but this is more in keeping with Victorian romance than the truth of our Lord as portrayed in Scripture. It just doesn’t wash!

As Christians, we are people of the Book, the story of earlier generations carried within the Bible and the traditions of our community.

Many of them are great stories. Some are puzzling, troubling, comforting – even funny, if we can get past our own piety to God’s truth.

We won’t know what those stories are, won’t be knowledgeable and articulate in our Christian heritage, unless we read the Bible with understanding. It is an understanding that calls for study, yes – but first calls for prayer. Prayer has the power to soften our hearts to receive God’s truth and to open our ears to hear God’s word.

In seeking knowledge of the Bible, first *pray*. Then *read*. Seek a historical understanding. Search for connections. Listen for poetry. Look for the Bible in unusual places. ~~at sporting events where John 3:16 is proclaimed on posters and athletes write Scripture passages on their bodies; on the cups and wrappers used by In-N-Out Hamburgers and on the shopping bags of the popular teen clothing store Forever 21; in country and pop and rap music and on your favorite television shows.~~

Finally, work for the building up of the kingdom in the way God leads. God will lead you into truth, and now more than ever, the world needs truth!

Trinity Sunday celebrates the mystery, the majesty, of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. All three persons are tied together in today’s gospel words of Jesus. So, what more did Jesus have to say that could not be said? We don’t know. We do know that there *was* more, there *is* more. In the abundant life of Jesus, there *will always be* more.

Today, consider another trinity that can guide our response to the gift of God’s presence in three persons and that can aid us in our search for God’s truth: Say your prayers. Read your Bible. And last, but certainly not least: Work for the building up of the Kingdom. Amen.

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