



MINISTRIES

A Ministry of the Athens Universal Life Church
Dr. Rob White – Senior Minister
<https://aulc.us>

TITLE: Not a Google-God!

SERMON IN A SENTENCE: The Holy Spirit is a faithful guide and teacher, so it behooves us to be faithful followers and learners.

SCRIPTURE: John 16:12-15

Today's scripture lesson comes from the Gospel of John, chapter 16, verses 12 to 15.

Starting at verse 12:

"I still have many things to tell you, but you can't bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth. For He will not speak on His own, but He will speak whatever He hears. He will also declare to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, because He will take from what is Mine and declare it to you. Everything the Father has is Mine. This is why I told you that He takes from what is Mine and will declare it to you.

-- May the Lord add His Blessing to the reading of His Word!

-- I am Doctor Rob White with the A U L C Ministries with our message this week.

-- I am happy that you can take a few minutes out of your busy week to be with us today!

Have you parents ever tried to tell your kids what they need to know, only to find it going in one ear and out the other?

Or have you ever tried to explain to your co-workers how to carry on your work while you are on vacation—only to experience the sinking feeling that they understand only half of what you are telling them?

It is so frustrating not to be able to get through—not to have people understand.

Sometimes people just don't get it—often with a good reason! They don't get it because they haven't been there yet—haven't done it themselves—haven't experienced what we are trying to explain.

Words help us to learn. Pictures help even more. But nothing helps like getting our hands dirty.

Some years ago I wanted to tune up my car. A friend told me what to do, and that helped a little. Then I found a book with step-by-step pictures, and that helped more. But finally I found a friend who would go through the process with me—would help me to take out the sparkplugs—would show me how to gap them—would help me to take apart the distributor and install new points. Once I got my hands greasy, the words that had been so hard to understand began to make sense.

In our Gospel lesson today, Jesus was getting ready to leave his disciples. Soon he would die, and before long he would return to his home in heaven. He had spent a good deal of time teaching his disciples many things—most of which went completely over their heads. There was no way that they could understand that he was going to die. There was no way that they could understand the future that lay ahead for them. Only later, after the resurrection, would the light begin to dawn for them.

And so Jesus told his disciples, "I have yet many things to tell you, but you can't bear them now". Jesus knew that his disciples couldn't get it—couldn't understand—so he quit talking.

We parents might take a lesson from that. "I have yet many things to tell you, but you can't bear them now." We do, in fact, say something like that now and then to our children. We tell them that, once they have children of their own, they will understand. And they will! I think that it was Mark Twain who found himself surprised by how much his father had learned in the years since Twain was a teenager? After we have become a parent, we better understand parenting.

Jesus said, "I have yet many things to tell you, but you can't bear them now."

What would you say to your children if you were leaving them for a year? Be a good girl. Be a good boy. Take care of your mother. Do your homework. I love you. None of that seems quite adequate, does it—even "I love you."

Jesus said, "I have yet many things to tell you, but you can't bear them now."

And then Jesus made them this promise. He said, "However when he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all truth".

Going away is never as difficult if we are leaving our loved ones in good hands. Jesus was leaving his disciples in good hands. He was leaving them with the Spirit of truth, who would guide them into all truth.

Just imagine if you had to leave your children for a year. That would be tough—but it wouldn't be nearly as bad if you had someone trustworthy to take care of them—someone who would be there for them—someone with rock-solid judgment—someone who would give them the same kind of dependable guidance that you would give them. You would miss your children, and they would miss you—but your overwhelming concern would be "Will they be all right?" If you could leave them with a rock-solid person—that would make a difference, wouldn't it!

Jesus had just that kind of dependable helper in the Spirit of truth, who would guide the disciples into all truth. Jesus didn't have to worry about the Spirit of truth leading his disciples astray, because the Spirit of truth—the Holy Spirit—was God's Spirit coming to dwell with the disciples—to live *with* them and *in* them.

In fact, Jesus earlier reassured the disciples that it was to their advantage that he leave so that the Spirit could come to be with them (John 16:7). As a man, Jesus couldn't be everywhere at once. He couldn't be with all his disciples all the time. That would be the role of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit can be with each of us all the time—regardless of geography—regardless of circumstances:

- The Spirit can be with disciples in Berlin and Beijing—in New York and New Zealand—in Anchorage and Alabama—in Sydney and Seoul.
- The Spirit can be with kings on their thrones and peasants in their little cottages—with princes in their palaces and prisoners in their jails.
- The Spirit can go with us into a crowded subway—sit beside us at a business meeting—travel with us in our car—be there with us through our surgery—dwell with us in a jail cell—watch over us as we sleep.

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, who will always guide us into the truth. That's quite a statement! I don't know a counselor who always gives good counsel. I don't know a doctor who never makes a mistake. I don't know a lawyer who never loses a case. I don't know a preacher who never puts someone to sleep. But I do know a Holy Spirit who always—always—guides us into the truth.

But we must be careful lest we think of the Spirit as a convenient Ouija board—a spiritual question-answer resource available on-call to lead us to attractive marriage partners or profitable business deals—sort of a GOOGLE GOD.

- The Spirit, you see, is a faithful guide, but a great deal hinges on our willingness to follow.
- The Spirit is a faithful teacher, but a great deal hinges on our willingness to learn.
- The Spirit has much to give, but a great deal hinges on our willingness to receive it—not just when we are in crisis—although the Spirit can be helpful in a crisis—but in more normal times as well.

In another context, Jesus talked about a sower who sowed the seed of the Gospel on four kinds of soil—the hard-packed soil of a pathway—a thin layer of soil with rock underneath—thorn-infested soil—and good soil. The Gospel seed grew only in the good soil.

- And so the Spirit comes to some people only to find hard, unreceptive hearts.
- The Spirit comes to others only to find a burst of enthusiasm that passes quickly.
- The Spirit comes to others to find hearts so cluttered with other concerns that there is no space left for the Spirit.
- But the Spirit comes to others where he finds a glad reception and a fruitful home.

The question is whether we are the bad soil or the good soil. The question is whether we have hard hearts, fickle hearts, cluttered hearts, or receptive hearts.

It would be easy for us to bemoan the fact that we are not spiritually gifted. It would be easy for us to envy people who have the quiet confidence of deep faith. However, the Spirit can help us to become spiritually gifted. The Spirit can help us to develop quiet confidence and deep faith.

It helps when we practice the spiritual disciplines—when we come together to worship—when we read the scriptures—when we fellowship with other Christians—when we take time to pray—when we try to do what we know God wants us to do. All these things help us to grow spiritually in the same way that tilling and weeding and watering and fertilizing help a plant to grow.

The Spirit can help us to break up the hardness of our hearts. The Spirit can help us to get rid of the clutter in our lives. The Spirit can help us to become good soil—to have receptive hearts.

It's important that we receive the Holy Spirit gladly—that we allow the Holy Spirit to help us to grow spiritually fit—because you never know when everything will depend on how we have prepared.

In Germany, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the late Bishop Lilje was speaking at a conference about his experiences during the Second World War—and especially about the terrors of the Gestapo prison where he spent several years. He was talking about how wonderfully real God had become to him in that terrible place.

A young man stood up and said, "We appreciate all that you went through. But why should this concern us now? We have so many other problems—the rebuilding of Germany—the search for a vocation—solving our social problems."

Bishop Lilje thought for a moment, and then quietly replied,

"I understand your concerns.
But you should give some time to the question of God now,
because the day will come when He will be very important."

And so it will. The day will come when we will need God more than anything—when God will be all that we have. We need to get ready for that day.

Jesus provides us with a faithful guide—the Holy Spirit. Let us prepare our hearts to receive him—to accept his guidance—to learn from his teaching. If we will do that, God will bless us beyond measure.

"Holy, Holy, Holy" was written by Reginald Heber, an Anglican clergyman, nearly two centuries ago. He wrote hymns in an attempt to improve the singing in his little congregation at Hodnet, near Birmingham, England.

Most congregations in those days sang the Psalter— but most sang it badly. To inject a bit of spirit in the hymn-singing, Heber introduced his congregation to some of the modern church music of his day, to include John Newton's "Amazing Grace." He also wrote dozens of hymns, the best-known being "Holy, Holy, Holy." He wrote it for Trinity Sunday, as evidenced by the words, "God in three persons, blessed Trinity," in the first and last verses.

The hymn tune was written by John Dykes. He called it Nicaea after the church council that established the doctrine of the Trinity.

When Rev. Heber was 40 years old, he reluctantly left his beloved England to begin service as Bishop of Calcutta, India. The scope of the job combined with the hot climate and primitive conditions, proved too much for Bishop Heber. He died at the age of 43 after serving only three years in India.

His music was Rev. Heber's true legacy. After his death, a hymnal was published that included all of his hymns. Even today, most hymnals include two or three of his hymns.

But it is this hymn, "Holy, Holy, Holy," that has blessed people all over the world. Translated into many languages and sung in many tongues, it was Rev. Heber's most enduring gift to the church.

-- That's our Lord's message for this Lord's Day and I hope you got a blessing out of it!

-- Go out this week and be a blessing and be blessed! -- For the more you are a blessing, the more you will be blessed!

-- Thank you all for watching and listening and we will see you all next week!

Copyright © 2024 – Athens Universal Life Church – All Rights Reserved!