14-20 May 2023 Living truth

John 14:15-21

**Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit**

15 “If you love me, keep my commands. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be[a] in you. 18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. 20 On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. 21 Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”

**Bible notes**

There are different kinds of truth in this passage. Some things are true because they correspond with external realities. So, it is true that Jesus will very soon leave his disciples, as he is arrested and then executed (John 14:1-6). He will no longer be with them as he has been during their travels between Galilee and Jerusalem. They will feel his absence acutely when they are under pressure from the outside world (John 20:19). But it is not true that his enforced absence means that he is about to abandon them. Any anxieties they may have about this are countered by a different kind of truth, with its own way of verification.

Jesus promises to pray for ‘another Advocate…the Spirit of truth’ (vv.16-17). His words suggest that he will be with them in another way. They will know the truth of his presence through a different kind of seeing (v.19), the insight born from faith that he and they are held in the give-and-take of sacrificial love. He is about to offer his life for them, and in return they are to offer their lives for each other (John 13:34-35). This will only be possible because Jesus promises to return to them beyond his execution, and make the heavenly realities of God’s loving words and works visible among them (John 14:3,12).

By attributing this exchange of self-giving love to the ‘Spirit of truth’, Jesus speaks of a ‘truth in practice’ that draws his followers into the Father-Son relationship and binds them to each other. Living this truth comes from trusting in unseen, heavenly realities that overcome any sense of abandonment. Yet its outworking is anything but invisible.

**Reflection**

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

Mother Julian of Norwich was a 14th-century hermit who was struck down with a disabling illness and nearly died. During this time, she was given several visions, or showings, which she pondered and set down in a book called Revelations of Divine Love. She affirmed: ‘He (God) said not: thou shalt not be tempested (storm tossed), thou shall not be travailed (suffer anguish), thou shalt not be dis-eased. But he said thou shalt not be overcome.’ False comfort is not the mark of the Spirit of truth. God is with us even in our suffering. Learning to listen to God in prayer and drawing on the wise experience of other Christians is how we grow in faith.

**Questions for reflection**

*You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues arising from this week’s Bible passage.*

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**Questions**

* What does it mean to ‘not just talk the talk, but walk the walk’?
* What truths does the Holy Spirit show us about the world around us?
* What might living in the Spirit of truth look like tomorrow, at work, school or home?

## Prayer

Adapt to your local context.

### ****A prayer of adoration****

With you, O God, we are surrounded by love,
by meaning and purpose, peace and completeness.
You are our all, our grounding and our reason for being.

You are our truth and in you we put our trust,
in you we believe, in you we find strength and purpose, joy and hope.
You are known to us in our imperfection,
we glimpse you and catch our breath at the wonder of the revelation.

We hear an echo and we strain our ears to hear it again.
We sense your presence and we tense our being wanting more.
You are within us and yet beyond us.

We adore you for what we know
and what is still to be revealed.
**Amen.**

## **A prayer to end the Bible study**

Lord Jesus Christ,
we thank you for your promise of the Spirit of truth to guide and lead us.

Send us out with hearts ready to welcome your gift,
eyes open to see and ears eager to hear,
that we may live and reveal your truth and love
in every moment, day by day.
**Amen.**

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