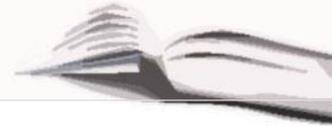


Holy Textures

Meeting Jesus in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
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John 15:26-27 and 16:4b-15

Whatever else we may want to say on this day of Pentecost about the Spirit, it is important to notice that Jesus always refers to the Spirit as the Spirit of truth. And in John truth is always the way, the life, the light, the joy, the friendship.



Year B

Pentecost Sunday

May 27, 2012

Read the passage at the bottom of this post: [John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15, The Message](#) or [John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15, The New Revised Standard Version \(NRSV\)](#).

Click [here](#), for an easy to print or email Adobe PDF version of this note.

Sermon by the [Rev. Dr. George Hermanson](#), "."

Sigh. The "job" of testifying / proclaiming / preaching would be a lot easier if only John were a little more linear and a lot less associative in his testimony about Jesus.

Chapters 13 to 17 have emotional intensity and forcefulness because of the direct, personal, immediate language. No where else does Jesus speak so directly of himself as "I." No where else does Jesus speak so directly to his followers as "you." And we the readers - even at this distance in time and place - hear that "you" as "me / us."

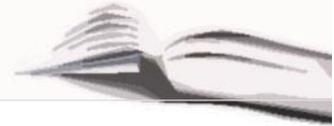
And just as there is an intensity to the bonding between Jesus and his followers (i.e., you and I), there is also an intensifying of the distance / separation between "us" and "them." "Them" being "the world," i.e., everyone else who isn't "us," and sometimes, more specifically, "them" being "the Jews," i.e., the Jewish authorities and possibly even family and friends who are now persecuting "us" because of our loyalty to and bonding with Jesus.

Whereas Chapter 15 began with a beautiful description of Jesus' relationship with his followers - "I am the vine, you are the branches," and "I do not call you servants any longer ... I have called you friends;" - and of their relationship to one another - "love one another as I have loved you," - this text shifts to describe how it will be for his followers to be "in the world" without Jesus.

First, is the assurance that when Jesus leaves, his followers will not be left without a "pipeline" to God. However, this "pipeline" will no longer be through the priests and Temple. Rather the Spirit will come directly to Jesus' followers. The Spirit will testify on Jesus' behalf to his followers, and we in turn will testify to the world.

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Just as the new commandment in Chapter 15 may have been a key in what set the early followers of Jesus apart as a radically transforming community:

"I call you friends" + "love one another as I have loved you" = "love one another as friends" --> a new community where social boundaries of class, blood kinship, master-slave, male-female, insider-outsider were transformed into a community of friends who looked out for each others' good.

So too, the Advocate's proving the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment (Verse 8) may have been a key in what set the early followers of Jesus apart as a radically transforming faith:

- The world is wrong about sin.
Sin is not genetic; it is not inherited; it does not alienate us from God - does not create a chasm between us and God.
- The world is wrong about righteousness.
Righteousness (being in right relationship with God) is not about paying debts owed to God; it is not about fulfilling obligations to God.
- The world is wrong about judgment.
Judgment is not about being condemned eternally; it is not about being forever cut off from God.

Frankly, in my not so humble opinion, the world - and the Christian church - is still pretty much wrong about sin, righteousness, and judgment.

In John, the frame for understanding sin, righteousness and judgment is shifted from seeing God as King and ourselves as subjects, to loving one another as friends.

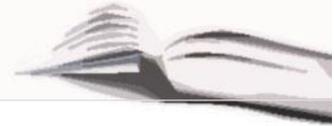
How do friends understand sin, righteousness, and judgment?

Well, for the followers of Jesus, friendship is not inherited: it is not tied to blood kinships; no one is "born into" the church. Nor is it tied to social class; nor gender; nor "pride of place," - being the oldest, the first, etc., etc.

- Friendship is personal, direct, and immediate.
- It is chosen. It is voluntary.
- It is mutual and egalitarian.
- It is a bond of trust and loyalty.
- It is based in truth that gives life.
- It is open. It lives in the light.

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- It must be professed and testified to and lived. (Since it is inwardly voluntary, it doesn't exist in the world unless / until it is expressed outwardly through profession and testimony and actions.)
- It is committed to seek the good of the friend - whether the friend is a neighbour, or a stranger, or an enemy.

So if we shift our frame from thinking of God as a Ruler / King to God as a friend, what is the truth about sin, righteousness, and judgment?

- The truth about sin is that God is unshakeably, constantly, eternally our friend. Nothing, not even our sin breaks Gods bond and loyalty to us.
- The truth about being in right relationship with God (i.e., "righteousness) is that while nothing ever breaks God's bond with us sometimes even the best of friends have to apologize and make up.
- The truth about judgment is that living in the light means bringing faults and failures out into the open where they can be healed. Judgment is not about condemnation; it is about telling the truth, healing and reconciliation.

Whatever else we may want to say on this day of Pentecost about the Spirit, it is important to notice that Jesus **always** refers to the Spirit as the **Spirit of truth**. And in John truth is always the way, the life, the light, the joy, the friendship.

David Ewart,
www.holytextures.com

Historical background information in this post is drawn primarily from Social-Science Commentary on the Gospel of John, see link below, pages 237-242.

* [Link to Amazon.com Bibliography for Bruce Malina, Richard Rohrbaugh, et. al.](#), Social Science Commentary on ... The Synoptic Gospels; The Gospel of John; The Book of Acts; The Letters of Paul; The Book of Revelation; and others.

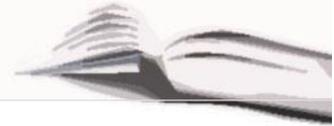
John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15 (NRSV)

²⁶ "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. ²⁷ You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.

^{4b} "I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. ⁵ But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' ⁶ But because I have said these things to you,

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sorrow has filled your hearts. ⁷ Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ about sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰ about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

¹² "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

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John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15 (The Message)

²⁶ "When the Friend I plan to send you from the Father comes—the Spirit of Truth issuing from the Father—he will confirm everything about me. ²⁷ You, too, from your side must give your confirming evidence, since you are in this with me from the start.

^{4b} "I didn't tell you this earlier because I was with you every day. ⁵ But now I am on my way to the One who sent me. Not one of you has asked, 'Where are you going?' ⁶ Instead, the longer I've talked, the sadder you've become. ⁷ So let me say it again, this truth: It's better for you that I leave. If I don't leave, the Friend won't come. But if I go, I'll send him to you.

⁸ "When he comes, he'll expose the error of the godless world's view of sin, righteousness, and judgment: ⁹ He'll show them that their refusal to believe in me is their basic sin; ¹⁰ that righteousness comes from above, where I am with the Father, out of their sight and control; ¹¹ that judgment takes place as the ruler of this godless world is brought to trial and convicted.

¹² "I still have many things to tell you, but you can't handle them now. ¹³ But when the Friend comes, the Spirit of the Truth, he will take you by the hand and guide you into all the truth there is. He won't draw attention to himself, but will make sense out of what is about to happen and, indeed, out of all that I have done and said. ¹⁴ He will honor me; he will take from me and deliver it to you. ¹⁵ Everything the Father has is also mine. That is why I've said, 'He takes from me and delivers to you.'

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