

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31; John 16:12-15
Preached at Stone Church of Willow Glen by Rev. Fred Harrell
Sunday, June 15, 2025

Spiritual GPS: Recalculating ...

"That was when mom was married to her first husband." My sister said those words when I was 34 years old. I looked at her dumbfounded. "Say what? Mom was married before she met dad??" My wife of 10 years (at the time) said, "Oh yeah, I knew that!" I said "Time OUT!" Turns out almost everyone in my rural hometown knew this EXCEPT ME, and assumed that I knew it. News to me.

I'm the last of four, and for some reason it was decided that telling me anything could just be too much for me to bear. Best to keep Freddie uninformed ... ignorance is bliss. When I was in 8th grade I noticed that our family pet, a dog named Lulu, was missing. I asked my parents and they said "yes, last week we had to put her down."

Wut!?

So, when I read that Jesus says, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now," I am a bit triggered. But also, intrigued when I take off the lens of my family system, something all Bible readers need to do.

I had a mentor early in my ministry who said to me, "Just because you CAN say something, doesn't mean you SHOULD say something." I've been grateful for that little nugget of wisdom. Most of my major mistakes relationally, whether in my marriage, my child rearing, my friendships ... might be traced to forgetting this: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now."

Point One: A God Who Waits with Love

This is not a rebuke. It's an act of tenderness. Of protection. And of trust.

Think about how you would share hard news with a child. Or a complicated truth with a grieving friend. We time our truth-telling not just around what we know, but around what they can receive.

So it is with Jesus. He does not unleash the fullness of God's mystery on the disciples all at once. He gives them what they need for the journey. And he promises something more:

"When the Spirit of truth comes, she will guide you into all the truth."

Think of the wisdom character in Proverbs 8 read earlier. Proverbs 8 presents wisdom as a divine, feminine voice calling out to all people offering guidance, justice, and truth. She is not hidden but stands at the crossroads, urging humanity to choose insight over ignorance. More than just good advice, Wisdom is portrayed as a co-creator with God, present from the beginning of time, delighting in the world and in humanity. To follow her is to walk in the way of life; to ignore her is to court ruin.

This is a God who waits not out of frustration but out of love. A God who is patient enough to let us grow into deeper understanding. A God who knows that spiritual formation doesn't happen overnight. That grief, confusion, and even joy all take time to ripen into wisdom.

The people who have made the most impact in your life, I'd wager, are people who didn't tell you what they were thinking, because they were willing to wait until you were ready to hear it.

The Spirit doesn't bulldoze us into growth. She invites. She whispers. She encourages. And slowly, we begin to hear.

That whisper might come during a sleepless night when your soul stirs with questions. Or through a song lyric that lands differently because of what you're going through. Or maybe in the quiet presence of a friend who says, "You don't have to have it all figured out."

If you feel like you just don't "get it" sometimes, God knows this about us, and works patiently with us. Like every good school teacher we ever had, patiently working with us until we 'get it'.

Point Two: The Spirit Still Speaks Truth in Motion

Jesus says the Spirit will guide us *into* the truth. That means it's a process. A journey. Truth unfolds. It deepens. And God trusts us to grow into it.

Truth in Scripture is not a static list of doctrines. Truth is embodied in a person. Jesus says, "I am the truth." Not a book! So, to be guided into all truth is to be guided deeper into Christ, and deeper into love.

The Spirit continues to speak through Black mothers and queer teenagers and undocumented immigrants and exhausted pastors. Through scientists and poets and children. Through art, through creation, through the tears we cry when we see the world's suffering.

Ongoing, dynamic, and loving. Will we listen? What voices are we tempted to dismiss because they challenge our comfort?

And still, the Spirit speaks, pressing us lovingly toward what we've been afraid to face.

We didn't bear the truth about slavery until it tore us apart. We didn't bear the truth about women until they forced the doors open. We didn't bear the truth about LGBTQ+ people until they claimed their sacredness.

God waited. The Spirit kept speaking. And eventually, we bore it.

And when we do bear it — when we come to that moment of realization, repentance, and renewal — we realize that the Spirit was never absent. She was always present, always leading us, even when we couldn't recognize her voice. Truth, in this light, isn't just what we say. It's how we live.

If truth is still being spoken, then the church must always be listening. That means we need humility. It means we don't confuse tradition with completion. It means we make room in our theology for the unexpected voice.

As Howard Thurman said, the gospel is always good news for the disinherited. If your version of the gospel is only good news for the comfortable, it's not the gospel of Jesus.

Point Three: The Trinity as Love That Includes and Sends

What makes all of this — the waiting, the guiding, the growing — possible? The Trinity.

Not as a dusty dogma, but as the divine relationship at the heart of everything. In John's Gospel, Jesus tells us that the Spirit will not speak apart from him, and he does not speak apart from the Father. Each gives glory to the other. Each loves and defers and delights in the other.

This is not hierarchy. It is communion. Theologian Catherine LaCugna says the doctrine of the Trinity isn't merely about explaining God's interior life — it's about understanding how God relates to us. God is, by nature, a relationship of love.

And that love spills over.

Theologians call this dynamic movement of love *perichoresis* — the divine dance. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not three isolated figures. They are three-in-one divine harmony, eternally giving, receiving, and rejoicing in one another.

In *The Divine Dance*, Richard Rohr captures the heart of the Trinity — not as a puzzle to solve, but as a movement to join. He writes:

“Whatever is going on in God is a flow, a radical relatedness, a perfect communion between Three — a circle dance of love. God is not just a dancer; God is the dance itself.”

This image of *perichoresis* — the mutual indwelling of the Trinity — isn’t static or hierarchical. It’s rhythmic. Communal. Joyful. And if God is the dance, then we are not spectators — we’re invited into it. That means church isn’t meant to be a performance or a power structure, but a participation in divine love.

What if we measured our churches not by size or certainty, but by how well we move with one another — how we listen, defer, include, rejoice? What if becoming Trinitarian people simply meant learning to live like God: in flow, in love, in mutuality?

This is why a doctrine as abstract-sounding as the Trinity actually matters so deeply. Because at its core, it’s not about theological arithmetic. It’s about love. Relational, mutual, co-creating love. And when the church forgets that — when we turn inward, when we dominate, when we exclude — we betray the very God we claim to worship.

Friends, the Trinity is not a puzzle to solve. It’s a love to enter.

And Jesus is still saying to the church today: “I have more to say to you.”

More to say about race. About gender. About justice. About our shared humanity. And the Spirit is ready to guide us. But will we let her?

We are not finished. Not individually, not communally. God has more to show us, more to teach us, more to entrust to us.

Can we be a people shaped by the waiting love of Christ, the guiding truth of the Spirit, and the relational, justice-seeking, ever-expanding love of the Triune God?

Can we listen when the Spirit speaks through the young and the old, the insider and the outsider, the activist and the artist? Can we repent where we've resisted and rejoice where we've been set free?

Can we trust that God knows what we're ready for — and that our readiness will grow when we are open, humble, and courageous?

Because if we follow the God who is community, then we must become a community that mirrors God: slow to speak, quick to listen, eager to love.

So if today you're carrying a truth you're not sure anyone can bear — know that Jesus sees you. If you're afraid of what the Spirit might ask of you — know that you are not alone. And if you're weary from a world slow to change — may you feel the companionship of the Trinity who waits, speaks, and walks with you.

Thanks be to God. Amen.