***“He Will Declare It To You”*** by S. Finlan, at The First Church, May 23, 2021

**Romans 8:22–26**

22We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; 23and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. 24For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? 25But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.

**John 15:26–27; 16:7, 13–15**

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. 27You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning. . .

7 “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. . . 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. 14He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 15All that the Father has is mine.”

This is Pentecost Sunday, the birthday of the Christian church, the day the Spirit was poured out. Today at The First Church we welcome two children into the universal church family, the family of Jesus, and we will call the Holy Spirit to come upon each child.

Today we have a couple of Spirit-related Bible passages on which to reflect. I like the Gospel of John’s version of events, and his calling the Spirit the Spirit of Truth, who will guide us into all truth, speaking what he hears from Jesus. “He will take what is mine and declare it to you” (15:14). Jesus *lived* the truth, and now the Spirit of Truth pours truth-guidance into our hearts. So our hearts and minds can be filled with the Spirit. What an inheritance we have received, as children of God, from Jesus who shares the Spirit of Truth with us! There is a personal and warm feeling to this Spirit. He fights for us, like a defense lawyer would, so Jesus calls him the Advocate.

Paul speaks of the Spirit helping us in our weakness, interceding for us when we don’t know how to pray. I can imagine the Spirit helping us put our feelings into words, and helping our minds to discern our connection with God. This Spirit is ever present and ready whenever we ask for help.

Let’s look at the strange saying at the beginning of the excerpt from Paul’s letter to the Romans. He says “the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now” (8:22). Certainly we cannot take this literally, but the phrase definitely captures our attention. What does he mean? He gives us a clue in the next sentence. According to Paul, we, too, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. He speaks of all of creation waiting forlornly for salvation, like a mother awaiting her time of birthing. Of course, it’s human beings that Paul imagines longing for the time that they will get their spiritual bodies, which will be in the next life, when their stamina will not be hindered by aging physical bodies.

But Paul draws the whole world into this state of anticipation, and this adds emotional power to his expression of the idea of painfully awaiting the redemption or replacement of physical bodies with spiritual ones. In the meantime, we have the first fruits of the Spirit, a foretaste of the life to come. We live on hope and on the Spirit.

Paul’s saying is fascinating and odd. It seems to be based on the idea that our physicality is a barrier, and that any distance between us and God is painful. The Spirit helps, to some degree, with that distance. The Spirit of Truth helps us to pray, to recognize the moments of Truth essential in our lives, drawing us closer to the heart and mind of Jesus.

In Jesus’ instruction, the Spirit does a lot for us here and now, and the physical body does not seem to be a barrier. We need not groan or wait for our redemption. *Already*, the Spirit leads us into all truth. I don’t know if that means he introduces truth to us, or heightens truth that we already have encountered, perhaps *affirms* the truth in our mind, helps something to *ring* true for us. It’s like a spiritual *A-ha*! I think the Spirit does work like that. He knows what you’ve heard and what you’re thinking about, and he endeavors to highlight the truthful parts, to help you secure the connection.

I think the Spirit also helps you to love Jesus, or to recognize Jesus’ love. The Spirit helps to raise up Jesus to our minds, and also to clarify who Jesus is. Jesus said, “He will glorify me.” The Spirit also helps us foresee some of what is coming, in assistance to God’s will.

When we are willing to work with God, the Spirit creates new beauty and new experiences. The Spirit is an active part of our lives, *leading* us, if we let him. If we develop a taste for truth, or an instinct for it, then we can feel the influence of truth in our daily lives more intensely.

The Spirit enters into our growth process. Day by day, we learn more about God and about truth. We aspire to be better students of truth as time goes on. Eventually, we can measure time by our spiritual growth. We can measure our lives by our closeness to God, and that is fostered at every step by the Spirit. Love truth, love God. Of course, you also love your children, and draw them forward with your love. How wonderful when parental love and divine love work hand in hand!

Seek to be lead by the Spirit. Seek to be one of the friends of God. Then you, too, will be a partaker of the Divine nature.