### “The Father Is in Me” Steve Finlan for The First Church, June 5, 2022

**Acts 2:1–5, 14–18, 36**

1When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

5 Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem.. . .

14Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: 16 “This is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 17‘In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. 18 Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. . .’ 36Let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

**John 14:8–11, 16–18**

8Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” 9Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? 10Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. 11Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. . .

16 “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. 17This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

18 “I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you.”

Welcome on Pentecost Sunday, rightly regarded as the birthday of the church. Not the birthday of Jesus’ ministry, but the birthday of the wider believing community, and the day that Jesus sent his spirit, the Spirit of Truth.

I have said before that I believe there was a spirit already available to people. We read about the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament; one psalm, which we regularly sing, asks “take not thy Holy Spirit from me” (“Create in Me a Clean Heart,” that line coming from Ps 51:11). Isaiah speaks of the Israelites having “grieved his holy spirit” (Isa 63:10), and says that, in Moses’ time, God “put within them his holy spirit” (63:11). A character in Job says “It is the spirit in a mortal, the breath of the Almighty, that makes for understanding” (Job 32:8). What did the Holy Spirit do for them? According to Isaiah, it led them, it gave them rest (63:14). According to Job, it gave people spiritual understanding and wisdom. According to the psalmist, it put a new energy and sustaining joy within the believer (Ps 51:10, 12).

So what Jesus sent was not the first time a spirit was bestowed upon humanity. It was, rather, “*another* Advocate,” as Jesus said (John 14:16). We needed additional spiritual help. We needed, precisely, *Jesus’* help. His revelation went further than the Old Testament revelation was able to go. The Spirit Jesus sends is particularly linked with his own person, ministry, and words. The Spirit that Jesus sends “will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you” (16:14). He reinforces the truth that Jesus taught. Another thing he did is to help the apostles to remember Jesus’ words (14:26). This spirit is an internal aid. “He will be in you” (14:17). The word for Spirit is neuter, but Advocate, or *paraklētos* in Greek, is a masculine noun.

Only in the Gospel of John and the First Epistle of John is this spirit called the Spirit of Truth. In other books it is called the Holy Spirit, as in Acts, or simply the Spirit, frequently in Paul’s letters. I think it’s good to call it the Spirit of Truth since that is a unique name that refers only to the spirit poured out on Pentecost, while “Holy Spirit” can be applied to a spirit that people had in Old Testament times as well.

And remember what Paul wrote, “When we cry, ‘Abba! Father! It is that very Spirit bearing witness with *our* spirit that we are children of God” (Rom 8:15–16).

The Spirit that came on Pentecost is really Jesus’ spirit, and it continues his revelatory mission. Let’s look at the story of Philip’s question. Revelation shows up in there, too. Philip ignorantly asks, “Show us the father” (John 14:8). Jesus remonstrates with him, saying, in effect, “don’t you realize that he who has seen me has seen the Father (14:9), that my whole life is a revelation of the Father’s nature? The Father is in me, and the things I say come from the Father’s will and the Father’s nature. My whole mission in life is to reveal the Father to humanity.” Apparently Philip did *not* know that, it had to be explained to him. This ongoing revelation of the Father will continue after Jesus’ ascension, because the Father will send another Advocate, the Spirit of Truth. This Spirit will highlight Jesus’ words and teachings, and really be a continuation of Jesus’ own revelation of the Father’s nature. The truth that the Spirit reveals is the same truth that Jesus taught and embodied, the truth of Father’s love and goodness, which Jesus reflected in everything he did. The Spirit reveals the Son, who reveals the Father. There is a never-ending unfolding of God’s nature, revealed in the life and the person of the Son, and then in the poured-out Spirit to which we can have access. The Spirit reveals what the Son taught; the Son revealed what the Father is like.

Dorothy Sayers, the author of the Lord Peter Wimsey mysteries, also wrote some theology books. In her *The Mind of the Maker* (London: Metheun, 1941), she said there is an earthly trinity to match the heavenly one. It starts with the Idea, then with the Energy or Activity, and then with the Creative Power (page 23). The Idea is the Father’s; then comes the creative activity of the Son, in time and matter; this is the Word. “Third, there is the Creative Power, the meaning of the work and its response in the lively soul: and this is the image of the indwelling Spirit.” This triad will not be identical with the Trinity, but it is an earthly and human echo of the Trinity, she says. Sayers is mostly talking about the process of creative writing. She identifies the Idea as something mostly unconscious. The Idea actually underlies the book idea; the author’s reflection on the book idea and plot are part of the Creative Energy or Activity phase, as is the actual writing. The power comes in the finished product and the effect it has on the readers. In all our creativity, there is an underlying inspiration, an energetic constructing, and then an expression and the emotional power that the expression evokes. The idea stimulates creative energy, and there is power in the creative result.

Remember that when the Spirit came, it gave the apostles courage that they had lacked before. It gave them power they did not have before. They went out and preached, despite the implied threat from the Sanhedrin. The Word spoke through them, and they were empowered. Ephesians speaks of being “strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit” (3:16). The creative life of the Son speaks through the creative power of the Spirit that is within us. And it is a circulation of love, too. Later in John 14, Jesus says “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them” (14:23). The Father is in the Son, and the Son is in the Spirit. We will feel community with God and Jesus, while charged with the Spirit’s inspiration. If you are spiritually curious and interested, you will get to observe and study this never-ending unfolding of God’s nature. The Spirit ministers to your inner life: “He will be in you” (14:17), Jesus said.