

The Spirit of Truth

John 16: 13-15

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A large crowd gathered. They were all amazed, because all of them heard the believers speaking in their own language.

Whenever we think about Pentecost our minds shift, I am sure, to the Acts story of Peter and the other disciples speaking to the crowds in their own languages and being accused of drunkenness.

This is the story of the moment at which the Holy Spirit, the creative power of God, enters the life of the early Jesus movement, the moment in which the Church, the community of Jesus followers, becomes a real and tangible entity.

But, it is in John's Gospel that we hear how Jesus views the Holy Spirit.

Remember John's Gospel was the last to be written down and many of the stories John tells us have been influenced by the events that have taken place amongst the first Christians.

It is John looking back to the time of Jesus and trying to explain to his listeners how he understands Jesus' attitude to the Holy Spirit and its place in the life of the individual Christian and the church.

One phrase stands out for me in John's story. He tells us that Jesus describes the Holy Spirit as 'the Spirit of Truth.'

At the time when John's gospel was being composed there were many 'truths' available for Christians to choose from, and the dilemma for the Church was to know which, if any, was the real truth.

There was a truth about Jesus coming from the Jewish Christians centred in Jerusalem led by James the brother of Jesus.

There was the truth being put forward by the ex-Jew and persecutor of Christians, Saul, who now called himself Paul, who was trying to create a Christian community out of non-Jews throughout the Roman world.



There were Gnostic Christians, who have become famous because of the Da Vinci code, who were writing strange and mysterious gospels which attracted people who liked to be 'in the know'.

There were Coptic Christians, Jewish Christians, Christian Jews, Gentile Christians, the Church at Corinth with its truth, the Church in Antioch with its truth, the Church in Alexandria with its truth, the Church in Corinth, in Ephesus, in Athens, the Church in Rome, all with their own idea of the truth.



Which brings us to the question, the question John is directing us toward, as he describes Jesus telling us of the Spirit of Truth.

Whose is the real truth?

Is it James' and the Christian Jews in Jerusalem – after all he was Jesus brother? Is it Paul's as he hustles around the Roman Empire converting people to his brand of Christianity?

Where can we be sure to find the real truth?

This was one of the most important questions the early Church had to deal with. And today, for individual Christians, and the Church, it is still one of the most important questions.

And how on earth can we answer it?

Today truth is more than ever able to be changed, to be influenced, to be adjusted.

Seeing is believing! – Or is it?

There is no such thing as absolute truth!

And the terrible result of some people thinking there is absolute truth is the fanatical terrorism which leads to the ramming of aeroplanes into skyscrapers and the strapping of bombs to young men and women to take the lives of other men and women.

And so we must recognise the need to always be able to see the world in a number of differing ways – to see that there are many truths to consider whatever we might believe.

So be open to the thoughts of others as whatever we might consider true, just might not be!!

