

Jesus still has Many Things to Say

John 16:12-15

There is no one in this world that I would rather have a conversation with than Robin.

Much of what has made our relationship good over the years has been our ability to talk.

Don't get a false impression. Good communication does not always come easy. We have had those dates where we look across the table and struggle to know what to say.

But after 25 years of marriage, there still is no one that I would rather talk with than Robin.

Good relationships need communication.

No communication, no relationship.

Bad communication, bad relationship.

And communication is always two-way.

It is reciprocal. One party reveals something of his or her heart. The other party must in some way receive what was spoken and begin to process it – to internalize it. Then the second party demonstrates that they have indeed understood the first communication, by responding back with some statement that adds to the first and furthers the conversation.

For three years Jesus' disciples had true and meaningful conversations with him. They all, to one degree or another, knew and loved Jesus, their master and friend.

But would these conversations continue?

Would the disciples continue to learn from Jesus?

Would they still have personal interaction with him?

Or would this sort of relationship end with the return of Jesus to his Father's throne in heaven?

And how about us today? We have never sat down over coffee and had an audible conversation with the risen Christ. Does Jesus speak to us?

The truth of the matter is that if we believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, then we are in a personal relationship with him. And every relationship requires communication. And it must be two way/reciprocal.

Cultivating real, meaningful conversation is an absolute must if we are to grow in our knowledge and love of God, resulting in true godliness.

Read John 16:12-15.

¹² "I still have many things to say to you,

Several weeks ago Joel Beeke explained an experience where he had been kidnapped. He spoke of being afraid that he would die. At first he was worried for his family. But as he considered what sorts of things that he would tell them, he realized that he had already told them everything that he wanted to tell them. And from this he experienced great peace. It was a precious story.

But in this passage we see that when Jesus got to the end of his earthly life, he had still not told his disciples all that he wanted to tell them.

But it wasn't because he just ran out of time. He did not get behind in the syllabus.

Jesus purposely left "many things" unsaid.

But what is wonderful is that he was not going to leave them unsaid. Jesus would continue to say things to his people after he returned to heaven.

"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come."

What does Jesus mean by this amazing statement?

How does the Spirit speak and declare the things that Jesus has to say to his people?

Before I answer this question, I want to impress upon you that you must not minimize that Jesus does continue to speak to you.

For hundreds of years before the coming of Jesus Christ, God had largely remained silent. But this is not the case now. God has not returned into heaven with nothing to say to you. He still speaks to his people today. God is developing a personal relationship with each of his children. And without a doubt he communicates intimately and individually with every child he calls his own.

Very often we hear people say that Christianity is not a religion, but it is a relationship. I do not believe that it is correct to deny that Christianity is a religion. Every Christian carries out religious practices all the time. Christianity is a religion. But I do understand why people say this. Christianity is far more than religious ceremonies. Christianity is truly a personal relationship with the God of the Universe. And without a growing relationship with him, the religious aspects of our faith seem hollow and empty.

As Presbyterians, we do not believe that God continues to impart new revelation. What we have on the pages of the Bible is the final revelation of God. We are not looking to add more books to the 66 books of the Bible. We would even go so far as to say that the Word gifts of prophecy and tongues have ceased. This is in stark contrast from the Pentecostal and Charismatic denominations of the Christian Church.

While I would argue that these precious brothers and sisters are wrong, I would also argue that their hunger to have Jesus continue to speak to them is not wrong. We can learn from them. There is a warmth of relationship with God for which they yearn.

Listen to me. Hear me clear. Jesus continues to speak to his people. And you should desire personal communication with him. It is not just that Jesus

has spoken to us and we are called to study what he has taught in the past. Jesus continues to speak to his people through the working of the Holy Spirit.

Let me explain how this works.

Initially, when Jesus spoke these words to his disciples, I believe he did have new revelation in mind. The Holy Spirit would enable the apostles to speak, and later write, new revelation.

This is why we have a New Testament.

Without the Holy Spirit speaking to the apostles and those directly connected with them, we would not have the New Testament.

2 Timothy 3:16 ¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God

Ephesians 2:19-20 ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,

We have a solid foundation in Christ, because we have a solid foundation of the New Testament.

And the only reason we have a New Testament that is absolutely the Word of God with absolute authority in all things is that the Holy Spirit carried these Apostles along and spoke to them the revelation which belonged to Jesus Christ.

The first application of these verses is that the Apostles were given truth from Jesus and therefore they in turn declared that truth to the early church. As time went on they also wrote down this truth in what we now call the New Testament.

The New Testament is Jesus speaking to his Church, some of which he did not tell them until after he had returned to heaven.

So, the “you” in this passage is primarily referring to the Apostles. But this does not mean that it does not have any application to current followers of Christ.

I find it difficult to think that Jesus meant only that the disciples would be guided into all the truth, but the church that would follow them would be left to wander aimlessly.

The intended purpose of speaking to the Apostles was so that God’s people would be guided into all the truth.

But how exactly are we to hear Jesus speaking today?

Well, it cannot possibly be in the exact way that Jesus spoke to these first Apostles.

If it were, then we would have to acknowledge the possibility of new books of the Bible continuing to be written even to this day.

But although we do not have New Revelation from God, we most certainly have a Savior who continues to speak to his people through the Revelation already given.

Theologians have come up with a term to describe the reality that Jesus continues to speak to his people: Illumination. Jesus, by his Spirit, working in our souls illumines the Scriptures to our hearts personally, experientially.

Hebrews 4:12-13 ¹² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³ And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Let me give you an illustration from my own life how this works.

If you knew me in High School and you were to ask me what was my favorite verse, I would tell you I John 4:10. As you know today, I have lots of favorite verses. But in those years this verse was at the top of the list.

1 John 4:10 ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Why did this verse mean so much to me?

Early in my life, I had thought I was a good person.

I did not think of myself of evil or a slave to sin. I knew I was not perfect and that I did wrong things from time to time, but I thought that I loved God.

But when I was brought face to face with my own selfishness and with the reality that I loved myself more than God or anyone else, I began to despair.

I began to ask, "How could God ever love someone who was so corrupt in his innermost desires?"

There were days when I wanted God to hate me. I did not think of suicide, but I often thought that God would be perfectly just to condemn me to hell.

I felt like hell was the only way that I could be free from the shame that I felt. I would be getting what I deserved.

Don't get me wrong. I did not really want to go to hell. I just could not see another way to deal with the corruption of my own heart.

But with a friend of mine, Steve Perry, I began to go to Bible Studies and Church services, and I began to hear more of the cleansing power of Jesus Christ.

And somewhere along the line, I came across 1 John 4:10.

And this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us.

As I read these words, Jesus spoke to my soul. I don't know who John was writing to 2,000 years ago, but Jesus was speaking to me through those words.

I knew that I had not loved God.

And I heard Jesus saying to me, I love you.

What I had in that verse was not simply John telling me something about God. I had Jesus speaking directly to my soul.

Up until that time I believed Jesus loved me because of how good I was. From then on, I knew that any love that I might ever have for Jesus was the fruit of his first loving me when I had no love for him.

And I could not even tell you what “propitiation” or “atonement” as some versions say, actually meant. But I knew that Jesus was sent to deal with my sins.

Jesus spoke to me. And I have never looked back. O, there have been plenty of seasons of dryness where the voice of God seems very faint or my heart is cold to that voice. But I have never since that time looked at the Bible in the same way. Jesus continues to speak to his people through the Revelation of the Bible by the Holy Spirit impressing its truth deep into our souls.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 ¹³ And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

So, Jesus continues to speak to his people.

1. Through the Reading of God’s Word.
2. Through the Study of God’s Word.
3. Through the Preaching of God’s Word.
4. Through the Meditation upon God’s Word.

I also believe that God can and does speak to us.

1. Through the Sacraments.
2. Through providence.
3. Through other Christians.
4. Through the inner conviction of our conscience.

But all of these other means are utterly reliant upon the Word of God.

Without the Word, there is no true communication.

But always remember that it is the Spirit who must also work to illumine the Word to our souls.

Otherwise, the Word will not be personal communication.

I have such a desire that you would diligently study and meditate upon the truths of God's Word.

I believe that we must work to understand sound doctrine and good theology.

But the goal is always to have true communication with the God who is engaging you in personal relationship.

For years almost every time I opened the Bible, I was flooded with the personal presence of my Savior. I thought that this was the norm. Boy, was I wrong. I came to Morganton in 1992 and Robin and I had a delightful time living in Morganton, being newly married, and getting to know many of you who are still members of Faith Church. But something was going on internally that no one would have known. God had gone silent.

I would open my Bible and it would seem dry. God's voice was no longer apparent.

I did not have any known sin that I was harboring in my heart.

I was seeking to live for Christ. I was active in Church. But the Bible was just a book.

In this time I remember thinking, "I know that the Bible is where I meet with God. If He wants to be silent, then I am not going anywhere else. I am going to study the Word all the more diligently. I am going seek him every day. I do not deserve for him to flood me with his love and personal interaction. But I am going to commit to keep on searching the Scriptures to meet with the God who had loved my soul."

Do you know how long that season of dryness lasted?
10 months.

Almost one whole year. And then, slowly, almost imperceptibly, I began to be warmed again to the truths that I was reading and studying.

Since that time I have learned that God often tests his people. Every time I go to the Bible is not a spiritual high. But Jesus continues to speak to me, in the Word, in his time and in his way.

Jesus has many things to say to you. They are in the Bible. But he is not going to speak them to people who don't really yearn for his voice.

We can learn from the charismatics. I don't want us to go where they have gone. They often separate his speaking from the Word. This is dangerous. Keep your conversations with Jesus close to the Word. It is in the Word that the true gems are found.

Long way to say that Jesus continues to speak to his people.
Look again at the text.

What prevented Jesus from saying to his disciples all that he had to say?

but you cannot bear them now.

The disciples were not yet ready to receive some of the things that Jesus still had to say.

He says that they were not yet able to bear them.

What does this tell us about Jesus?

Jesus truly knows you.

Jesus is aware of the capacity of his students for learning.

He adjusted what he taught according to what they were able to bear.

This is not to say that Jesus dumbed down what he taught his disciples. We all know that he taught them many difficult things while he was with them.

It was not an issue of their being stupid or dull.

Jesus is not here making an accusation about the laziness of his disciples.

He simply knows that there were certain truths that they could not bear until later.

The problem was that in order for them to be able to have any capacity for learning certain truths, other truths had to be in place. Until those truths were in place, there was just no way that they could handle the first truths.

But what truths are we talking about.

We are on the other side of the cross and the resurrection and the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost. We ought to have some idea of what Jesus meant by these other truths.

What truths do we know now, that they were not able at that time to truly understand or bear?

What information did the disciples receive after Jesus' death and resurrection that they did not get before the cross?

This is not a complete list, but I think it will be helpful.

1. The place of the Gentiles in God's plan of Redemption.

Ephesians 2:11-13 ¹¹ Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands- ¹² remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Ephesians 3:1-6 For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles- ² assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³ how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. ⁴ When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles

and prophets by the Spirit. ⁶ This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Jews could conceive of Gentiles being saved, if they became full blown Jews and accepted all of the ceremonial laws of the OT. But to think of Gentiles becoming heirs of all the Abrahamic promises simply by faith in Jesus Christ. This was unthinkable.

2. That our lowly bodies would one day be transformed.

Philippians 3:20 - 21 ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

ESV **1 Corinthians 15:51** Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

It was not that the disciples had no understanding of the resurrection before Christ, but only after Christ's resurrection was it made clear that our hope lay completely in our being resurrected as well.

Jews had some hope of life after death. But they continued to hope that the Abrahamic promises would be fulfilled in this present fallen creation. When the reality is that they could never be fully accomplished except there be a resurrection and a New Heavens and New Earth.

3. That the Church, including OT saints, is the bride of Christ.

Ephesians 5:32 ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

The Jews had some conception of themselves being married to God, but it was again not developed. And to think that believing Gentiles could also be united to believing Jews and form one bride for Christ was unthinkable.

4. That godliness will be accomplished through our union with Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:27 ²⁷ To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Why could they not bear these things yet?

1. A Jew could hardly bear that the kingdom of God could be built without a nation of Israel, without the Levitical priesthood, without regular sacrifices, without the Temple, without the food laws.
2. A Jew could hardly conceive of the kingdom consisting of Jews and Gentiles being one with each other in their common allegiance to Jesus Christ.
3. A Jew could hardly conceive of the kingdom not really being a part of this world, but being a part of the New Heavens and New Earth and only after the Resurrection of the dead.
4. A Jew could hardly conceive that Jesus was truly God, but even moreso that the Spirit is fully God and dwells in the hearts of every believer.
5. A Jew could hardly conceive that godliness flowed out of our participation in the divine nature.
6. A Jew could hardly conceive that all of this is made possible through the Messiah dying a cursed death on the cross.
7. And a Jew could hardly conceive of the Church being made a worthy bride of the Messiah.

I do not know if this is all that Jesus had in mind. But it does help us to see that there were indeed many things that were not fully revealed until after the resurrection. They were in some way foreshadowed in the OT and in the ministry of Christ, but they were not truly revealed until after Jesus' resurrection.

13 When the Spirit of truth comes,
 he will guide you into all the truth,

What can we learn from the fact that Jesus calls the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth?

It is this: that the Spirit and Truth are never at odds with one another.

That may appear obvious, but how often to well-meaning believers want to pit them against one another. The thinking goes like this: If you are too committed to truth then you will quench the Spirit. Or, in order to really be spiritual, you must not get too bogged down with making any statements of absolute truth. We have all heard that infamous nickname for Seminary right? (Cemetery)

We have all been in the conversation that moves into disagreement and even argument. We know how it feels in the pit of our stomach. We don't like it and so many of us conclude that the truth is either unknowable or that it is not worth knowing. We begin to separate spiritual life from truth.

Another way that this occurs is in our times with the Lord. We don't really want our times with the Lord to be a diligent search of truth in the Scriptures. That does not seem to us to be very spiritual. So, we settle ourselves with a moving story or a single proverb. Nothing wrong with these, except when they come at the expense of a rigorous search for truth.

Cutting through every attempt to separate being spiritual from truth is Jesus' statement, "When the Spirit of truth comes."

The only path to true spirituality is through truth.
Truth is only true in so much as it is spiritual.

As any church begins down the path of caring less and less about truth, they will inevitably also lose their spirituality. It is not always immediate. The spiritual feelings hang on for a time longer. But in the end the absence of truth makes one spirituality empty.

On the other hand, there is a false sense of seeking truth, that many think is a concern for truth, that I believe falls short of (As Shaffer called it) “true truth”.

Here this very clearly: All truth is personal.
Jesus is truth.
God is truth.
The Spirit is truth.

Even when we consider the facts of the universe, we really do not understand these facts in all of their fullness unless we see in them the personal God of the universe.

If you begin to grasp this, you will begin to see that to say that someone says that they care for truth, but that truth is cold and impersonal and contrary to spirituality, that they have not really gone deep enough in their search for truth.

If someone looks at the sunset and all they see is the reflection of light rays on the particles in the atmosphere, they have not really gone deep enough and discovered “true truth”.

If someone waxes eloquently for thirty minutes on the various theories of the Trinity, but is never humbled before the Triune God and brought to adoration and worship, they have not really discovered truth.

Truth is always personal, because God is truth, and he is personal.

This means that if your pursuit of truth does not take you all the way to fuller worship of God, you have not really known the truth.

Another way to look at this has to do with our godliness. As a pastor, I often hear people claim that they know all the answers, but it is not making any difference in their lives. They may indeed have some intellectual understanding of certain doctrines, but I am hesitant to say that they truly

“know” these doctrines. Because Jesus very clearly says that when you know the truth, it/he will set you free.

One test of whether or not you are actually learning truth is whether that truth is producing in you the fruit of the Spirit.

Truth is personal.

It leads us to intimacy with God.

It leads us to greater devotion to God.

for he will not speak on his own authority,
but whatever he hears he will speak,
and he will declare to you the things that are to
come.

14 He will glorify me,
for he will take what is mine
and declare it to you.

15 All that the Father has is mine;
therefore I said that he will take what
is mine
and declare it to you.

I want to finish with one more important truth.

The truth that Jesus is talking about is declared.

You do not discover spiritual truth on your own.

It must be disclosed by Jesus.

He must do the declaring.

Jesus does not simply share truth. He declares it to be so.

I bring this up because we live in a world that does not accept the authoritative declaration of truth.

And there is no place where this is more apparent than in the pulpits of our churches.

It is true that our preaching must be founded in Scripture.
It is also true that it is always good for God's people to test what is preached to see if it aligns with the Scriptures.

But that being said, preaching is not the sharing of some ideas. If you think this is all there is to preaching, then you will never hear Jesus speak to you in preaching. Preaching that flows from the text of Scripture and sound exegesis with thoughtful application is indeed Jesus speaking to his people.

To reject or ignore the faithfully preached Word is to reject and ignore Jesus Christ speaking to you.

The message of the Gospel is that in Jesus Christ your sins have truly been dealt with.

Through faith in Jesus you are fully and perfectly declared righteous.
And through the working of the Holy Spirit you are given a new heart, one that is clean before a Holy God.

All of this is not simply theory.

The Gospel is for the purpose of bringing you into a living relationship with Jesus Christ.

Together, we are being prepared to be the Bride of Christ.

Do you yearn for Jesus to speak to you?

Do you plead with him to speak to you every Lord's Day?

Are you hungering and thirsting for intimacy with your Lord and Savior each day as you go to him in prayer and study of his Word?

Do not think that the development of a healthy relationship with God will cost you nothing.

It will cost you something. It will cost you your old sinful habits and it will cost you some of your affection with this world.

But O, is it worth it.

ESV **Psalm 84:10** For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

Amen.