

**John 15:26-27**

**“When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me. <sup>27</sup> And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.**

Dear people in God's Kingdom

Many things in this world are open to interpretation. Look at these pictures and tell me what you see. Each of you might see different things, because in each of these pictures there are multiple pictures. Some might even see all the pictures. Some might see none.



Today on this day we celebrate as Pentecost we will see that the Holy Spirit comes to clear up all the different spiritual interpretations that people may see, such as: who is God and what is the Bible and how do we get to heaven, so this Pentecost let's have this theme guide us:

**Theme: The Holy Spirit Comes!**

1. **To bring us the truth**
2. **So we can share the truth**

Images like these are created so that they can be interpreted differently by different people. We live in a world where it seems like everything is open to interpretation. The world in which the great day of Pentecost took place was no different. The Jewish Rabbis had spent hundreds of years constructing an elaborate system of rules and regulations based on their interpretations of the Word of God. For example, they read the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment; **“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy”** and interpreted that to mean that, on the Sabbath, a person was only allowed a certain amount of footsteps for the day, that there was a limit to how high you could raise your hand when reaching for a book on a shelf, that food could be eaten only if it wasn’t cooked, etc..

Such ‘freedom of interpretation’ created a subtle mindset among the God-fearing Jews who had gathered in Jerusalem that everything including the Bible was open to interpretation. It should not surprise us then to read that when a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and what seemed to be tongues of fire rested on each of the disciples and those same disciples filled with the Holy Spirit began to speak in the languages of the **“Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome; Cretans and Arabs”** (Acts 2:9-11) That some people in the crowd interpreted the wonders of God which they spoke to be the words of men who had too much wine.

Peter had something to say about their interpretation of these events. **“Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.”** (Acts 2:14-17) The words the disciples were speaking were not open for interpretation, for they were the words of the Holy Spirit.

It is a crafty lie of Satan to convince people that the Bible is a matter of interpretation. Instead of attacking God head on, instead of undermining one teaching at a time, Satan willingly admits that the Bible is God’s Word, but then Satan also implies that God’s Word is vague, unclear, and in need of interpretation. And think about what Satan accomplishes when he convinces people that they can interpret the Bible. He accomplishes the same thing he accomplished in the Garden of Eden when he asked Eve, “Did God really say?” Do you remember how he convinced Eve to eat the forbidden fruit? He told her that her eyes would be open, she would know good and evil, she would be like God. The devil accomplishes the same thing today by convincing people the Bible is open to interpretation. Because you see, when people are interpreting the Bible they are pretending to be like God. No longer are they allowing God to guide their lives. Rather, their lives are guided by their own interpretations.

Today we are going to take a look at John 15:26-27. There we are reminded that God’s Word is not a matter of interpretation. We are going to see that through the Holy Spirit we have received the truth and we have the truth to share. In verse 26 John writes, **“When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.”** Jesus reminds us that the Bible is not a collection of “optical illusions” that are open to interpretation. Rather, the Bible is the truth. Sent by Jesus from the Father the Holy Spirit testifies truth to us. Later in

this Gospel, Jesus simply prays, **“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”** (John 17:17) In his letter to the Ephesians, Saint Paul calls the gospel the **“word of truth”** and in his letter to young pastor Timothy, he reminds him that he was handling **“the word of truth”**. It is clear that the Bible is the true Word of God.

So then why do people feel the need to interpret it? Why do they struggle to accept what it says as truth? To find the answers to those question all you have to do is look inside your own heart. There you will discover the reason people, like you and me, want to leave God’s Word open to interpretation is because the truth hurts. No one likes to be told they are wrong.

No one likes to have their faults exposed. No one likes to be held accountable for their actions. Through the Word of God, the Holy Spirit tells us that we are wrong – **“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”** (Romans 3:23), He exposes our faults – **“All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.”** (Psalm 14:3) and He holds us accountable for our actions – **“If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account.”** (Deuteronomy 18:19) Through the Word of God the Holy Spirit speaks the truth to us and the truth hurts.

It hurts so bad that we can be tempted to act like the Holy Spirit’s words are open to interpretation. I think the most common example, or at least the way I am the guiltiest of trying to subject the Bible to my interpretation, is revealed in the thought that the Bible is classified into essential commands and not so essential recommendations. Murder- bad, rape- bad, stealing- bad. But words spoken in anger - eh, lustful thoughts about a good looking person - eh, lying on a craigslist post - eh. You see there are some things that we want to interpret as “eh” not as bad as other things. Typically, they are the things we are the guiltiest of doing. But the truth is, there are no classifications of sins. A sin, any sin, all sin, even your “eh” sins are bad. In Romans 1:18 we are told, **“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.”**

The truth hurts, but the truth also heals. I am not sure we are always aware of what we are doing when we open the Bible up to our interpretation. But when we undermine the truth that hurts with our interpretations we also undermine the truth that heals. If we allow our falling short of the glory of God in Romans 3:23 to be open to interpretation than so must be Romans 3:24 that says **we “are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”** When we allow ourselves to interpret away the hurt, we interpret away the healing that comes from **“the Spirit of truth”**.

The Holy Spirit needs no interpretation. When He tells you in Psalm 103:3 that the Lord **“forgives all your sins”** He is telling you the truth. When He tells you in Isaiah 1:18 that your sins, **“shall be as white as snow”** He is telling you the truth. When He tells you in Matthew 24:13, **“he who stands firm to the end will be saved.”** He is telling you the truth. Don’t listen to the devil. The truth you receive from the Holy Spirit is not open to interpretation.

## 2. So we can share the truth

Neither is the truth you are to share open to interpretation. In verse 27 John writes, **“And you also**

**must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.”** Jesus reminds us that the truth we received from the Holy Spirit is the same truth we are to share with others. He says **“you also”**. The Holy Spirit speaks the Word of truth that sometimes hurts. You also must speak the Word of truth that sometimes hurts. The Holy Spirit speaks the Word of truth that also heals. You also must speak the Word of truth that also heals.

We know from our own personal experience how important it is not to subject the Holy Spirit’s truth to our interpretation. And yet when we think of how the truth hurts we can be tempted to allow other people to interpret the Words of the Holy Spirit however they want. We say, *“Who am I to judge what someone else believes? I’m not God.”* True enough you are not God. And you have no right to say that your opinions are any more valid or right than the opinions of others. But it might help to remember that the Holy Spirit has not asked you to share your opinions, He has commanded you to testify His truth. When you share God’s Word with other people, even when it hurts them, you are not judging them you are telling them the truth.

But we hear so many people say *“But they might be offended by what I say!”* It might be helpful to remember that, by their sins, they are offending God. God tells us that He hides His face from those who offend Him. We might say He turns His back on them, abandons them. When you allow someone to ignore the truth of Scripture because you are afraid of offending them, you are not doing them a favor, you are condemning them to damnation.

You should remember from personal experience, the truth hurts. But you should also remember from personal experience; the truth heals. The Holy Spirit’s Word of truth that you share with other people may hurt, but it is not meant to be hurtful. In his letter to the Ephesians Saint Paul reminds us to speak the **“truth in love”**. (**Ephesians 4:14**) When you look at the people you are sharing the Holy Spirit’s Word of truth with, see them as Jesus saw them. See them as a people walking in darkness in need of a great light. See them as harassed and helpless sheep in need of a shepherd. See them as God’s beloved children that Jesus longs to gather together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. See them with eyes of love. And then tell them the truth. Tell them, the truth is God wants all people to be saved. Tell them, the truth is God reconciled the world to himself. Tell them, the truth is Jesus is the atoning sacrifice not only for their sins but for the sins of the whole world. Tell them not to listen to the devil. The Holy Spirit’s Word of truth that both hurts and heals is not open to interpretation.

Images like we saw in the beginning of today’s sermon are created so that they can be interpreted differently by different people. We live in a world where it seems like everything is open to interpretation. But the Bible is not a collection of “optical illusions” to be subjected to our interpretations; it is the truth. Today, on this Pentecost celebration, we praise the Holy Spirit that we have received the truth. Today we pray to the Holy Spirit for the strength to share the truth. Amen