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SERMON TITLE: “God in Three Persons, Blessed Trinity”

SCRIPTURE: John 1:29-423

DATE: January 28, 2018

Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

READ JOHN 1:29-42 and ISAIAH 11:2-3

Who is going to watch the Super Bowl next Sunday? Perhaps you go to a favorite sports game or watch it on TV. But isn't it most fun to play that sport in the backyard with your kids, your cousins, or the grandkids? Childhood memories of my family playing volleyball—parents and kids together at my grandparents, all twenty-eight of us—is a wonderful memory.

Watching the game and experiencing the game are two different things. Both good!

Who frequents art museums? The choir is taking a trip to New York. I bet some of them go to the famous Metropolitan Museum of Art. If you go with a docent, you learn things about the art that you don't know. Then there's the art you see every day—pictures of your child in fourth grade, or great-grandfather hanging on the wall, or that picture you bought at Joanne's because it matches the sofa. I bought a picture of a gray cat from the women's Christmas auction because it reminded me of my favorite cat. Doesn't the art right around you make you happy?

Do you occasionally go to concerts so you can hear “real” music, maybe a favorite band or a symphony. Perhaps you learned to appreciate classical music because your husband puts on WRR while shaving or because you were a ballet dancer when you were young, or you play a musical instrument. What about that song grandma sings to you, and your playlist and the songs you sing along with on the way to work? Isn't that fabulous music?

Listening to Brooklyn Tabernacle made me want to join the choir years ago. The time singing in the choir taught me to appreciate vocal harmony. That appreciation made me want to hear Handel's *Messiah*. Hearing the Scriptures in *Messiah* unlocked something inside that was spurred on by my own personal experience of the music.

It is *gained knowledge* plus the personal experience that ignites the passion into something valuable for every day.

John the Baptist had personal experience with Jesus. Put simply, John knew Jesus. Jesus was his Cousin Mary's son. Yet twice John said about Jesus, “I did not know him.” What??? What did he mean by that? Of course he knew Jesus! Jesus was his cousin once removed. You read the story.

Two times John said, “I didn't really know him.” Experientially, he knew him. But John did not know him as the Messiah. It took *gained knowledge*. That knowledge would come through revelation from God. John said,

“I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that *the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’* I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.”

People can have all kinds of knowledge about Jesus but not know him personally. Or, they can know him but really not know what it means that he is Son of God.

Let's look at the things John tells us about Jesus in Chapter 1:

1. Jesus is the light which brings life, deliverance, justice, and Joy. The darkness cannot overcome it.
2. Jesus is full of grace and truth. It is a package deal through which Jesus deals with us.
3. Jesus was despised and rejected by his people, but those who believe in him are given the power and the right to become children of God.
4. The Holy Spirit came on him, remains on him, and Jesus baptizes us with the Holy Spirit.

This is the knowledge John gained through studying the Torah and also through knowing and being with Jesus and the Holy Spirit over the course of his lifetime. Remember, John was an old man when he wrote his gospel.

So we learn about Jesus and the Holy Spirit through studying the Word as well as through personal experience, because Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit to live in us.

A 19th century theologian from England named Samuel Chadwick said this about the Holy Spirit:

“The soul's safety is in its heat. Truth without enthusiasm, morality without emotion, ritual without soul, make for a Church without power. Destitute of the Fire of God, nothing else counts; possessing Fire, nothing else matters.”

Chadwick also said this: “The Christian religion is hopeless without the Holy Ghost.” What he means is without the passionate enthusiasm brought by experiencing the Holy Spirit, your own spirit is left underdeveloped.

The agent sent to you to develop your spirit is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gets inside your body and into your heart. The Old Testament law was impossible to keep because it was unable to penetrate the heart and change us. But it's different with the Holy Spirit. Jesus said:

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you . . . 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” (Jn 14:16-17).

But how do you experience the Holy Spirit? How do you move beyond just studying about Him to gain knowledge so that you know the Holy Spirit personally?

1. **Be open to his voice.** The Holy Spirit knows what is going on in your life. So when you pray, speak to Him. He will speak back.
2. **Believe it is possible for him to change you.** He does not nag or whine; he is not uneasy or nervous. He will tell you the truth, with grace. Remember, the Spirit pushed back the darkness at creation and the Holy Spirit is going to push back the darkness in you, always pointing you to Jesus Christ.
3. **Be prepared to be drawn into goodness, morality, service, and love.** If you ask him to push back the darkness in your life, you will be drawn into God's ways, into following the Scriptures. There is no shortcut. The Holy Spirit is in your heart as a surgeon, cutting away the stone, cutting away selfishness, redirecting you to Jesus to give you a new heart.

How do we see and passionately rely on the Holy Spirit? It's not about a lot of words or a sermon with instructions that say, “do this and don't do that and perhaps He will come to you.” Jesus explains it:

“I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water *and the Spirit*. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. . . . The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its

sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (John 3:5-6, 8).

We will close with the story of Roma Black of how he met the Holy Spirit. He was far, far away from God and into evil and destructive things. But the Holy Spirit was with him through it all. The day came when the Holy Spirit's voice was unmistakable, and Roma took Him at His word. His life has been utterly saved. Look up the story online. Perhaps his story will stir a desire in you to connect with the Holy Spirit. Without Him, there is no power of God, for The Holy Spirit is the One who changes your heart.

Story of Roma Black:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rn1zFeRCVEc>¹

“I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that *the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'* I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.”

~ John the Baptist

Receive the Holy Spirit.

AMEN

¹ You can find the video link on our website by going to www.fpcd.org, click on “Latest Worship Service” or “Sermon Archives.”