

6pm Evensong 31 May 2026 – Trinity Sunday

Isaiah 6:1-8 and John 16:5-15 – *Father, Son and Holy Spirit work together to guide us to God and to glorify him.*

*Holy God, Enlarge our minds with the knowledge of your truth,
And draw us more deeply into the mystery of your love. Amen.*

The idea of somebody being more than one thing at once is not one that is difficult to grasp. I remember at theological college doing an exercise involving thinking of all the things I was, and coming up with plenty.... In no particular order they included woman, wife, feminist, mother, sister, daughter, Christian, ex-lawyer, quilter....

We even understand the idea of the multiverse, ideas we've seen explored in films like the one with Spiderman in the multiverse, and Sliding Doors, and Everything Everywhere All At Once.

I don't think that the idea of non-linear time, or of different dimensions, is beyond what we are capable of imagining.

I wonder whether one of the issues is that we find it hard to see what the Holy Spirit is doing? Let's look more closely at our Gospel reading to see how what Jesus said to his disciples, on the night that he was arrested, to see how that will help us to understand our Trinitarian God.

Jesus' first point is that the disciples are not asking the right questions. He points out that ***none of you asks me "where are you going?"***. The disciples are stuck, stuck in their feelings – ***sorrow has filled your hearts*** – focussing on what they are experiencing in their hearts, without using their heads and engaging with Jesus.

I wonder whether we can find ourselves doing the same thing?

In fact, as Jesus points out to the disciples, ***it is to [their] advantage that [Jesus] go away, because if [he] did not go away, the Advocate (the Holy Spirit) [would] not come to you.*** But if Jesus goes, he will send the Spirit.

Here, it might be helpful to ask why the Holy Spirit would not come until Jesus has gone away. And the answer is surely not so much that the Holy Spirit is waiting to be told by Jesus, on his return to heaven, what to do next, as that the world, and the Holy Spirit, must wait for Jesus to be crucified, resurrected and ascended into heaven, before the Holy Spirit will come.

Because the task of the Holy Spirit, when he comes, is to prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgement. One of the most significant roles of the Holy Spirit is to be an evangelist, ensuring the spread of the good news about the salvation offered by Jesus throughout the world, and through the ages.

It might come as a massive relief to you to hear that it is the task of the Holy Spirit to convict people of the need to repent of their sin, enable them to realise that it is only in and through Jesus that they are made righteous – put in the right place - with God, and to testify to the defeat of Satan. When we speak to people about what Jesus means to us, when we are sharing our faith with **anyone who demands from you an account of the hope that is in us**, we know that we are able to **do [this] with gentleness and reverence** because it is the Holy Spirit who will take charge.

If you've ever had a driving licence in a driving instructor's car, one with dual controls, you will remember what an enormous relief it was to know that if at any point you were going to mess things up, the driving instructor could take over. I like to think, when sharing my faith with somebody, giving an account of **the hope that is in [me]** if I ever start to get it wrong, if I am ever at risk of drifting into the other lane, the Holy Spirit will know how to get the conversation back on track with the appropriate comment, or with a helpful question.

It has to be the Holy Spirit who will convict people of their sin, because, as Jesus says, people **do not believe in me**. It is because people did not (and do not even now) respond to Jesus when he came to the world, by accepting the truth of what he came to say and by turning to him, that it became, and is even now necessary for the Holy Spirit to breathe life into our consciences. If it were not for the Holy Spirit we would continue to measure ourselves by our own or other people's standards rather than by those of God; we would fail to see that our own, and our world's, problems are related to human sinfulness.

Jesus consistently preached that true righteousness was not about religion, and said **do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment**. And it was all the wrong ideas about righteousness and the world's wrong judgment that put Jesus on the cross. And so in v10, when Jesus tells the disciples **I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer** and we hear Jesus' language switching from "they" to "you", that we can understand that it will be through the Holy Spirit empowering the disciples to be Jesus' followers that the world will be convicted of its empty righteousness. Through the Holy Spirit, the world will be convicted of its false judgment and will see that **the ruler of this world has been condemned**, recognising the devil was defeated when Jesus, on the cross, **said "It is finished"** and Christ returned to heaven in triumph to sit at the right of hand of God.

It is clear from v14 and v15 that in all that the Holy Spirit will declare to the disciples, the focus will be on Jesus. That's one reason to view with a deep suspicion any claim that there is something "more" than Jesus, something "beyond" Jesus which is only available to those who are "in the know". Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, dismisses any such claims. Those cults that contend this are profoundly heretical. Jesus says the Holy Spirit **will glorify me** and that the Holy Spirit **will take what is mine and declare it to you**.

And Jesus says that the Holy Spirit **will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears**. Neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit ever act on their own initiative, but always in the way that ensures the unity of God.