

A *student* pastor was about to take the final exam on the New Testament Greek. Because he had been so busy with the ministries, such as youth ministries and the Bible study, he did not have the time to prepare for the test. He did not sleep a wink the night before, because he was trying to cram everything.

He read through the questions, and it was all Greek to him. It was obvious that he was going to fail the course. He wondered, if failing a course as the price of service to the church would glorify God. Glory or not, he did not want to fail. So he prayed.

He prayed that the Holy Spirit would come and help him in this hour of great need. He was certain that he was not making a sleazy excuse, because it was true that he had been working hard for the youth and the young adults. He felt that he had a legitimate reason for calling for the help. As the student pastor walked out of the classroom, he muttered: "Even the Holy Spirit could not handle the Greek!"

So what is the truth? That the New Testament Greek is too difficult even for the Holy Spirit? Or, that he just glorified God by failing a course? Or, that he was just a bad student?

Being religious means that one is also being spiritual. And being spiritual means that one sees things as they are, and describe things as they are. It is difficult to remain religious or spiritual, if one tends to see things in the selfish way that is beneficial only to one's self. In short, being religious means: knowing the difference between the truth that benefits everyone and the truth that benefits only one's self.

In the seminarian's case, the truth is that he just did not study for the exam, whatever the reason. It is neither religious nor authentic to call for God's help, asking the Holy Spirit to tell him the correct answers. It is this kind of behavior that hurts those who do an honest work. Why should God be part of this injustice?

When the Spirit of truth comes, will the Spirit let me know the truth that will benefit only me and those for whom I care for? If the Spirit of Truth is indeed partial to only certain people, then, we can kiss good bye any hope of peace on earth. The presence of the Spirit of Truth will, then, further alienate others who are not privy to the Spirit. There will surely be religious conflicts surrounding the distribution of the limited goods and services, and privileges. I doubt that God would fail to see this.

Therefore, I see the Spirit of Truth as the Spirit that reveals the truth that benefits the whole human kind. Either this truth accuses the whole human race, or affirms the whole human race. This truth is not applicable to just a few people or races, but this truth affects each and every one of each and every race.

Not just Christians, not just United Methodists, not just Americans, not just males, not just the business interests, not

just the rich, not just the masters, not just one race, not just heterosexuals, not just the smart ones, nor just the clean ones, but the Holy Spirit includes everyone else who has been excluded. That is the truth the Spirit of the Truth will tell the believers.

That is why some of the truth the Holy Spirit will reveal today may not be agreeable to some, including the faithful. The faithful may not be able to stomach the truth today. That is why Jesus warned the disciples: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now."

If you stopped anyone in the street and asked, whether he or she prefers to be told the truth or the lie, every single one would choose the former. Everyone may prefer the truth over the lie, but that does not necessarily mean that everyone can keep and bear the truth.

The truth is that we tend to keep and bear only the truth that we like. We sometimes prefer the

half-truth to the whole truth. Everyone has experienced that the truth *can* sting—especially when it has to do with one's own past or interest. Everyone knows that some truths are better left unspoken.

I do not believe that the Holy Spirit will reveal the truth that will apply only to an individual—such as revealing the answers to only one of the many who take the final exam. It is not in the character of the Holy Spirit.

The truth the Holy Spirit reveals is of the kind that benefits the human kind. If a whole nation of people had been kept in slavery and poverty, then it would be the kind of truth the Holy Spirit would reveal to the believers. If a group of people had been subjected to war, famine, and disease, and the true cause was hidden by the propaganda, then it is the kind of truth the Holy Spirit would tell. If a group of children and women had been abused and impoverished, the Holy Spirit would reveal to the believers what the truth is. The

truth will call the believers who hear the truth to shout it out to the world.

The truth is welcome to those who suffer from abuse, ignorance, and poverty. But such truth is not welcome, if you happened to profit from this suffering and pain in others. Such revelation of the truth will be bad for the business, bad for the image, and bad for the reputation. It is best to keep this kind of truth in the dark. The Spirit of Truth reveals this kind of truth—the truth that sets people free, free from bondage, ignorance, poverty, and abuse.

Paul speaks of the peace in his letter to the Romans. He testifies to the believers that, since they are justified by faith, they have peace with God through their Lord Jesus Christ.

This knowledge of peace that they have with God, Paul says, gives them the strength to overcome the sufferings. These are not the meaningless sufferings, because these

sufferings now produce endurance, character, and hope. The believers now endure the sufferings, because they have this hope. Their sufferings now are worthy of the future. Their lives now have meaning.

Paul testifies to the believers that it was the Holy Spirit that enabled them to have this hope. They now have the assurance of God's love through the Holy Spirit.

The absence of war is not peace. Even when the market is bullish, even in a great economic boom, peace can be missing from those who live in the shadow of the society. The peace Jesus talks about is the peace inseparable from justice.

In the economic world, given the choice of the health of the flock of 99 sheep and the recovery of one lost sheep, a business will never risk the capital for one lost sheep. The business will cut the loss and move on. It is considered as an acceptable casualty.

Jesus told the Parable of the Lost Sheep, because that one lost sheep is what God would commit the shepherd, in order to claim it back to safety. To the 99 sheep, peace would mean cutting the loss and moving on. To the lost sheep, peace means knowing that the shepherd will never abandon him. Jesus was speaking to the lost sheep, not to the 99. This peace that we have with God is the knowledge that God would never abandon the lost sheep, that God will never accept the collateral damage, or tolerate the acceptable casualties.

Today we observe Peace with Justice Sunday. It is not for those who get plenty of peace and plenty of justice. Peace with Justice is for the *victim* of injustice, poverty, abuse, and neglect. And that is only one of all the truths to which the Holy Spirit will guide us.