

First Presbyterian Church
John 16:12-15, “Ready for more?”
by Pastor Matt Johnson, 6/15/2025

[Loudly] Who in the world do you think you are?

Oh, I’m sorry...that sounded a little confrontational.

I mean to say, “Who...in the world...do you think you are?”

If you had to answer that question for me, what would you say?

[Pause]

My bet is that your answer could be boiled down to something like:

“I’m the daughter of my parents.”

“I’m the parent of my children.”

“I’m the brother of my siblings.”

“I’m an encourager.”

“I’m someone who tends to plants, walks the neighborhood,
protests injustice, works on projects, or cooks delicious meals.”

“I’m a child of God.”

And each one of these identity statements involves
someone else or something else beyond you.

My point is that everything you can say about you,
and everything I can say about me relies on our relationship to others.

As theologian Diana Butler Bass has said,

“Each one of us is defined by our relationships.”

Without others, I am nothing. There is more to me than just me.

There is more to you than just you.

You probably know the South African concept of ubuntu.

The idea of ubuntu can be translated as, “I am because we are.”

Without others, I cannot exist.

Now, you might say, “Oh, but you don’t know about me!

My answer was, ‘I’m a hermit.’ One who lives alone.”

Ah, but even then you are distinguished by your unique choice
to live in exclusion of the presence of others.

So if there were no others, you couldn’t be a hermit!

You cannot exist on your own, there needs to be more.

This principle extends outward:

a household, a neighborhood, a city, a country

cannot exist on its own – only in relationship to others.

But what about God.

Who in the world does God think God is?

God’s the one who *created* the world, of course. That’s who God is.

But what about before that?

Who was God 15 billion years ago, before the big bang?

How do you describe God...if there’s no creation?

Even for God to be God, there needs to be more.

Like all of creation (including human beings)

God’s very nature is expressed in relationship.

God is more than an energy force.

God is more than the blind watch maker of deism.

God is even more than an ephemeral love which is manifested
in various people, times, and places.

In his teaching to the disciples, Jesus explains how much more there is to God
than they have understood.

We might hear familiar words and phrases in this passage from John 16,

but we would all do well to open ourselves to the truth

that there is much more to God than any of us have understood.

In fact, Jesus tells them,

“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear.

But when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth.”

What is the “more” that the disciples weren’t ready to bear?
... Are you ready for more?

We certainly see some of this “more” in the letter writing ministry
of Paul, Peter, and John,
the historical theology of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,
the extremely long sermon we call “Hebrews,”
and John’s Revelation.

The Spirit of God choreographed the community of the church
which cultivated and compiled these deeper teachings over several decades
which eventually became what we know as the New Testament.

Would you agree with me that the detailed theology
of the cross and resurrection and the life of the church
that we find in these writings would have been far too much to bear
for the disciples as they sat there in Jesus’ presence?
They probably weren’t even ready
for the Gospel of John!

In that moment the disciples are still learning about Jesus, whom they love,
whom they have given up everything to follow, whom they are about to lose.
But later, they will receive even more –
the Spirit of truth whom Jesus
will send to them from the Father (according to 15:26).

The Spirit is our Advocate, our Comforter,
and the one who leads us into truth about Jesus.
Because of the Spirit, we are never alone.

In verse 13 Jesus tells us that the Spirit is a kind of mediating presence
for the one who speaks to the disciples.
Through the Spirit we have access to even more
– the voice of our Father in heaven,
through the voice of Jesus.

Listen to Jesus in vs. 15:

“All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.”

In other words, the information and power and insight that Jesus will give to the disciples through the Spirit doesn't even originate with Jesus. It originates with the Father and passes through Jesus to the Spirit and finally to the disciples.

If Jesus is explaining to us what God is like (in an oversimplified way, of course), then it doesn't sound like God was ever alone, either.

A divine communion in one being, listening, speaking, acting in harmony with each other.

God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit are like a musical chord of three notes that makes one sound in perfect relationship to itself. One and three.

If we dig deeper, we find more:

For one thing, the Spirit of truth is not merely God acting in a certain mode, nor is the Spirit of truth an impersonal “force” like we find in Star Wars.

Instead, we hear of a personal presence who receives and communicates (in comforting ways) information distinctly from either the personal presence of Jesus or God the Father.

So what category is there for a Spirit who comes from God, reveals the truth of God and advocates and comforts on behalf of God? Later Christians call this the Third Person of the Trinity.

We are also led into a more complex understanding of Jesus.

Jesus says of the Spirit that, **“He will glorify me.”**

But if Jesus is only a man (or any being other than the Most High God), that would be blasphemy.

In Isaiah 42:8 we hear **“I am YHWH, that is my name:
and I will not yield my glory to another.”**

How could Jesus (if not divine) literally be glorified by the Spirit of God,
without yielding the glory of Yahweh to another?

This is one of many moments in the New Testament
where we don't have an outright statement like,
“Jesus is fully God and fully human,
an eternal partner in the godhead Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
who are co-equal and co-eternal,”
and yet, at the same time, *that's exactly what the implication is.*

If Jesus was not the second person of the Trinity,
but was really *just a guy* who was super in touch with God,
then we'd be left with an inspiring example nobody can match up to,
and absolutely no way to be transformed ourselves.

There must be more to Jesus than being a good teacher
if he is going to be our Savior.

On the other hand, if Jesus in the flesh was filled with
and dependent upon the Holy Spirit in his earthly life,
and if he was not only human but also divine
and shared in eternal communion with God
before the creation of all things, it's quite different.

By the life, death, and resurrection of God-with-us
we have a gateway into a new kind of life.
We would have access *to more.*

If we want more, we can tune in to the Triune harmony of God.
But we have to change the frequency in our hearts.
We have to stop vibrating with the energy of the world's anxiety,
and entrust ourselves to the mystery of the divine community,
which is Three in One, and One in Three.

Who do I think I am? Am I supposed to be it all and do it all on my own?

As a father on Father's day, I'm so grateful that I'm not on my own.

I don't have to be a dad by myself.

I have a community of wise, caring, experienced men
who have listened to the voice of the Spirit,
who practice being fathers with me.

I share life with men who seek to repent from patriarchal stereotypes,
who can admit weakness, notice beauty, write poetry, and also ...
build stuff with power tools.

Who do you think you are?

Do you think you are independently forging your destiny in the universe?

Our world is crying out for more.

Assassinations, bombings, wars, parades of tanks, addictions, compulsions,
escapism of all forms.

These all come from a belief that I am on my own,
that we are on our own,
and we have to take care of ourselves.

Thank God that there's more.

More to me. More to you.

There's more to us.

And there's even more to God.