

“Truth Revealed”

With today being the Sunday after Pentecost – the Birthday of the Christian Church when we annually celebrate how the disciples received the Gift of the Holy Spirit and with this being **Personal Dedication Sunday**, we are focusing on the Gifts we have received through God’s Holy Spirit and how we are called to use them. As an example, our Scripture Reading shares how the Spirit reveals the Truth – especially the Truth, which Jesus explained about his sharing all things with God, including his embodying how God Is Still Working.

In addition to the obvious, the Reading demonstrates the importance of Jesus’ disciples to him. This is because – even though Jesus knew it was his last night as a mortal man and he was painfully aware he would be betrayed, deserted, and put to death, he, nevertheless, put **his focus on the well-being of his disciples and on how they and we are enabled to remain in our special relationship with him.** Along with the Gift of the Holy Spirit and our Spirit Given Gifts, this Personal Dedication Sunday emphasizes how in the midst of Jesus’ sharing all of what belongs to God – he was carrying out the Divine Parent’s Work – fulfilling the Still Working God’s Purposes! Specifically, pointing to the revelation we receive from the Holy Spirit, **Jesus said in verses 13-14 of our Scripture, “When, however, the Spirit comes, Who reveals the Truth about God, He will lead you into all the Truth. He will not speak on His own authority, but he will speak what he hears and will tell you of things to come. He will give me glory, because He will take what I say and tell it to you.”**

Jesus did not wait for the giving of the Gift of the Holy Spirit for some of the Truth to be revealed to his disciples, including us! **He went on to reveal in verse 15a, “All that my Father has is mine”.** Among the implications of that revelation, one is tied to the **Theme for this year’s Personal Dedication Program, “God Still Works!”** I say that because earlier in the Gospel of John, when the Jewish legalists attacked Jesus for healing – working on the Sabbath, **Jesus’ response in John 5:17 was “My Father is always working, and I too must work.”** So, all the Divine Parent has is also Jesus’ – including the ongoing Work of the Still Working God!

Since there is such unity between God and the Son of God Jesus was and is the ultimate manifestation of the Almighty’s Agape Love for all people. Indeed, earlier during Jesus’ last night with his disciples – prior to today’s Gospel Lectionary Reading, **Jesus called all of his disciples in John 13:34-35 to join in the work of following God’s and his agape love, when he told them, “And now I give you a new commandment: agape love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples.”**

The Greek term used in the Gospel of John for this love is *“agape”*. It is a **self-giving and sacrificial love**. The disciples came to understand Jesus affirmed their appropriate agape loving response toward him was to obey his commandments. When one accepts and obeys Jesus’ commandments – agape loves, then Jesus reveals himself to us. It is as we perceive this agape nature of Jesus, that we are made aware of the Divine Parent’s Agape Love for us.

Over and against the legalism of the religious authorities, Jesus did not exclude persons — even when someone pointed out their sins. Addressing this, **Jesus said in John 6:37b, “I will never turn away anyone who comes to me”.** It might be helpful to understand Jesus was reclaiming and

redefining the word, “Commandments” in stark contrast to the enormous multitude of commandments of which the Religious Authorities demanded adherence. The Truth the Spirit Reveals is God’s Agape Love for us – God’s Work of Forgiving, Healing, Welcoming, and Reconciling us with the Divine Parent, Jesus, and one another is for all people!

Indeed, the Spirit gifts us all with abilities to love and serve one another! **On this Personal Dedication Sunday, it is crucial for us to recognize we show we are united in the Spirit and in God’s Work of Agape Love, when we use our Gifts of the Spirit to carry out our Divine Parent’s Work.** The Truth is we are to use our Gifts of the Spirit to carry out the Still Working God’s Agape Love. Amen.

PERSONAL DEDICATION PROCESS

As we come to the high point of our Personal Dedication Program, you are invited to complete your **Personal Dedication Booklet** and then bring it forward to the Altar for Dedication and Consecration. If you don’t have a Personal Dedication Booklet, please hold up your hand and someone will get a copy to you. By completing our Personal Dedication Booklets and presenting them for Dedication, you and I make our New Lives in Christ and our commitment to utilizing our Gifts of the Spirit in the continuing Work of God a significant part of our obeying Jesus’ commandment to agape love one another! We commit to how we will use God’s Spirit given Gifts in each of us as a manifestation of our deep Love for and Faith Relationship with God’s Only Son, Jesus the Christ and with our Divine Parent – Our Still Working God.

Please look at your Personal Dedication Booklet. There are brief explanations beneath some of the items listed in the booklets, especially with reference to serving in elected positions. Clarifying those tasks, hopefully eliminates the fear of the unknown, which otherwise, might lead us to raise barriers against serving in those ways. All of the ministries of Round Grove United Church need the commitment of time, skills, and energy. Please take each of those ministry opportunities seriously and place a check or X in the blank to the left of each opportunity for which you are willing to **follow Jesus’ example of self-giving and sacrificial service and love – manifesting God’s Work.**

Critical needs, for which you may allow the Spirit’s Gifts in you to be demonstrated are being one of those preparing and then showing the PowerPoint Presentations for our Worship Celebrations, and/or being a Lay Liturgical Leader, who from time to time helps lead our Worship Celebrations, and/or being a Teacher of our Children or Youth in Sunday School. Jesus Christ calls you and me to respond to his sacrificial love and example, as a matter of obedience and agape love. **As Jesus worked, even on the Sabbath because our Divine Parent is Always Working, so let us manifest God’s Work in the ways we utilize our Spirit Given Gifts.** Living this way, we join in the Work of our Risen Lord and our Divine Parent! Being so transformed – let us earnestly seek to manifest God’s Work in and through us in the committed ways we utilize our Spirit Given Gifts!

As Emily shares some of her Time, Talent, and Energy for God’s Purposes and our Worship Celebration, please complete your Personal Dedication Booklet and then, after I invite the ingathering, bring it forward to the Altar for Dedication and Consecration. Be an agent of God’s Work through agape love and your Gifts of the Spirit! Let Our Still Working God Work through our Gifts of the Spirit. Amen.