

Reflection for May 10, 2026 - *“The Bible Tells Me So”* Inspired by John 14: 15-21

Tuesday this past week your “Affirm Group” showed the movie “The Bible Tells Me So.” I thought it was excellent. Yet it was also disturbing. It was excellent, as it provided a very clear analysis of what scripture really says about homosexuality. It was disturbing in its revelation of just how much damage has been inflicted upon LGBTQ2S+ individuals through many years.

In the taking of scripture literally and relying on preachers who have been held up as infallible; kind, generous, talented, spirit filled people have been shunned, ostracised, ridiculed, beaten, and severely traumatized. Many of the stories are heartbreaking, especially those where parents have completely disowned children who have “come out” as gay. I just can’t fathom rejecting one of my own children for any reason. But that can be the power and influence of scripture when manipulated and taken out of context. It happens when evangelists spread fear among their trusted congregants.

The promise of the Holy Spirit John writes about in today’s Gospel reading is, I think, one of those scripture lessons that thankfully presents an “iron clad” image of Jesus in the world. There might be room to interpret how exactly he is present, but there is little doubt of his “spirit” presence. John’s message can’t be easily manipulated to say something it is not meant to say. That’s why I chose it for today.

When Jesus leaves his disciples physically, God will have another advocate in his place to be with them always. That advocate is the spirit of truth.

That spirit of truth will be known to those that follow in Jesus’ footsteps. It will abide in them, encourage them, transform their living, even when he is gone. This is John’s reference to Jesus’ death, resurrection and final ascension ¹⁸ ***“I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. ¹⁹ In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live.”***

The advocate, the truth-teller, the spirit of love, generosity and kindness will not digress from Jesus’ teachings. For those who believe in him, there exists a steadfast conviction; justice and equality must be upheld. Abuse of authority, rejection because of social standing, race, colour, ethnicity, opinion or anything else is not the way of Jesus.

The spirit of truth resides in the hearts of those who have a relationship with the Advocate. It’s not there otherwise. That is what John advises us in this morning’s Gospel. It is a simple message, a straightforward message. It is a very powerful and profound message.

How someone, even a seasoned pastor, could manipulate that would be difficult. What would you say if someone advised you, “You can only experience the ‘spirit of truth,’ if you deny someone’s rights to freedom.” Such a statement would be rather absurd. If you were told, “The advocate, Jesus present in our times, will only be seen if you believe as I do that a man is the head of the household.” Would you not find that equally outrageous. And if you were told “You have no chance of being one of Jesus’ modern-day disciples, if you think it is OK for one man to lay down with another,” would you find that equally outrageous and equally irrational? I hope you would.

That kind of thinking defies the nature of Jesus and all his teachings of kindness, generosity, justice, and forgiveness. And it defies the commandments he asked us to keep, John 14: ¹⁵ ***“If you love me, you will keep^[a] my commandments.***

Those Commandments: **“Love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself** (Matthew 22:36-40). He also taught the **Golden Rule**: “Do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12)

To the fear mongering and nonsensical biblical interpretations around John's message I might say, "Excuse me, I think I can see Jesus, and his advocate the truth teller very clearly." He's telling me to live a life based on his teachings of generosity. He's asking me to respect my neighbour even if we are very different. He's asked me to turn the other cheek when that motorcyclist blew past me the other day scaring me half to death. And he asks me to trust, trust that living in harmony and being an advocate myself, is being in right-relations with God.

It could be said that this is an old message. In fact it is. It is about 2100 years old give or take if scholars are correct that John wrote in the later decade of the first Century CE. Having said that, I can't imagine the interpretation has changed much with time. That might be an interesting segue, but I didn't go down that road.

While a lot of scripture can be stretched and interpreted in a myriad of ways, I would be surprised if this one could. It is a corner stone of our Christian Ministry. Christ left behind an advocate. The advocate of the spirit of truth. The advocate that asks us to uphold Jesus's commandments of his ministry on earth. There is little "wobble room" within those commandments. The question is how do we fulfill them today.

Yesterday I had another zoom meeting with an individual I have been calling my "young apprentice." We are having great discussions on confirmation. With Jesus' ministry in mind, I had several questions. I asked, "Do you see Jesus in the world today?" "Is he alive?" "Is he teaching?" "Is he healing?" "Where is he?" Difficult questions for an adolescent.

So, let me share with you some of my answers.

Do I see Jesus in the world today? Absolutely. He is working over at the Food Bank and beneath us at the Bargain Bin. He is pouring coffee at the wellness center and driving people into Kelowna for appointments. He is visiting shut-ins and friends in hospital. He is among gay, lesbian, trans and two-spirited people who need to be loved like anyone else.

Is He Alive? Yabetcha. He must be because he is sitting next to you (but don't freak out about that OK).

Is he teaching? I believe absolutely. He taught me something yesterday as I endeavored to wrap my head around John's gospel. He taught me last week to be patient with my 10-year-old granddaughter when she was clinging to me like glue and I was dog tired.

Is he healing? An affirmative reply again. Healing the broken soul through our kindness and generosity. Healing those needing a spiritual lift as we worship together.

Where is he? He is in the advocate, the spirit of truth, the love in community, the heart that beats within this Community of Faith.

How would you reply to these questions? The "Spirit of Truth," Jesus' truth, resides in all of us. You know because it abides in you and always will. This is fundamental to our Christian Ministry and not open to discussion. This truth cannot be manipulated, and we cannot be coerced into believing otherwise.

Thanks for listening this morning, Amen