

Easter Spirit: Spirit of Truth

Rev. Cameron D St.Michael – May 10 2026

6th Sunday of Easter

Readings: Acts 17:22-31; 1 Peter 3:13-22; John 14:15-21 NRSVue

Reflection: Psalm 43

Call to Worship: Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth. Give me an undivided heart to revere your name. I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart. I will glorify your name forever. For great is your steadfast love toward me. (Psalm 86)

Prayer: Everlasting God, through Jesus Christ you overcame death and opened to us the door of eternal life. You have felt our pain and our sorrow and seen fit to give us hope. Renew and refresh us in your Holy Spirit as we seek to the truth that you have shown us in Christ. Let us celebrate the joy that we find in your steadfast love and faithfulness. Let the light of our Lord's resurrection lift our hearts on this day. Guide us and lead us in worship together so that we may praise your name. Lift up our hearts that we may sing of your miraculous salvation. May your love bless us this day so that we may love one another more deeply. Help us to celebrate the empty tomb as a sign of your great love for us. May we be freed from slavery to sin and death and arise into a life of righteousness through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer for Mother's Day: Lord, today we give thanks to you for the mothers in our lives. We give thanks for the moms, the grandmas, the aunts, the in-laws, and all those that have nurtured us and had a mother's care. We thank you for putting these people into our lives to help us, to guide us, to lead us, and to care for us. We give thanks for the love they have shown. We lift up our prayers for healing as we remember those who are no longer with us in this life. We lift up our prayers in thanks for those who are. We lift up prayers of hope for those just becoming mothers, that you may help them to grow in love. And may we always give thanks and lend our love so that we may help each other to grow in your love. And it is in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 43

¹ Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people; from those who are deceitful and unjust, deliver me! ² For you are the God in whom I take refuge; why have you cast me off? Why must I walk about mournfully because of the oppression of the enemy? ³ O send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling. ⁴ Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy, and I will praise you with the harp, O God, my God. ⁵ Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise him, my help and my God. (Psalm 43 NRSVUE)*

We read the words of Psalm 43 and hear of praising God. That the Lord is our helper. That we should turn to the truth of God to guide us to safety. That we find salvation with the God of justice and light. That we need to let the Lord lift us up and heal our spirits. How can we rely on

the truth of God in our daily lives? How can you share the blessings of the Lord with those around you? Who can you be lifting up in your joyful prayers in the week ahead? What can you do to help out a neighbor in need? How can we prepare our hearts and our lives to be ready for all things with Christ?

Prayer: O God, our sovereign, our banquet, our crown: In the resurrection of your Son you have brought us into your palace. Train us to be heirs to your throne, that we may shield the needy. We thank you for all you have already done and the great love that has been shown to us. We lift up our joys and our concerns, bringing all things before you. We share with you the worries that we have spoken aloud. We share the celebrations that we have lifted up together. Help us to also share the silent pleadings from within. May we experience your grace in our laughter and our tears as you guide us through the unknown. May you strengthen us in sorrow and in rejoicing, knowing you are with us. Help us to remember the promise we share as we seek your steadfast truth on this day. And may you guide us in love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Alleluia.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture readings for today come from the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition Bible. Our first reading is from Acts chapter 17, verses 22 through 31.

²² Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, "Athenians, I see how extremely spiritual you are in every way. ²³ For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, ²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. ²⁶ From one ancestor he made all peoples to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, ²⁷ so that they would search for God and perhaps fumble about for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. ²⁸ For 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we, too, are his offspring.' ²⁹ "Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. ³⁰ While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." (Acts 17:22-31 NRSVue)*

Our second reading is from 1 Peter chapter 3, verses 13 through 22.

¹³ Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, ¹⁵ but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your

defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you, ¹⁶ yet do it with gentleness and respect. Maintain a good conscience so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷ For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. ¹⁸ For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹ in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight lives, were saved through water. ²¹ And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him. (1 Peter 3:13-22 NRSVue)*

Our final reading is from John chapter 14 verses 15 through 21.

¹⁵ "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. ¹⁷ This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him because he abides with you, and he will be in you. 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. ²⁰ On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹ They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me, and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them." (John 14:15-21 NRSVue)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

This week in our Easter spirit series, we look at having a Spirit of Truth. To do this, we address why the truth matters. And I think that part of that is that we have to talk about the kind of truth that we have. Because I think that it means that we must look at our own lives and to be honest about our own thoughts, our own feelings, and to recognize the truth that is around us. Because being truthful is a part of following Christ. Whether we are telling the truth about things that we can observe in this world, or we are telling the truth about how things make us feel, the truth matters.

To get an idea of this spirit of truth, we turn to our gospel reading first. Because it is there that we hear Jesus use this term, spirit of truth. It's talking about the way that we receive the Holy Spirit. The spirit that shows us the truth of this world, of ourselves, of everything. That Jesus talks about not leaving us orphaned. Because the spirit of truth will reside in us. Last week, we talked about knowing the Father through the Son. And this week, Jesus is expanding on that, saying that we will definitely know the truth of that when we accept the Holy Spirit into our lives. Because through the Spirit we will be shown the truth. I think it's important for us to remember this when we talk about the truth and we talk about the way things are. Because it's important for us to recognize the truth when we see it. That the Holy Spirit will always guide us

to the truth. But we have to be willing to both see it and to say it. It also means that we have to be willing to accept the truth in our lives. And that can be hard. It can be hard because we don't always want to accept that truth. It can be hard because we don't always want to find the common ground we need to explore the truth together.

I think that's what we hear in our reading from Acts. Here we have Paul finding common ground with people that he is around. He is trying to find a truth that speaks to everyone. One of the things that we see is that Paul notices that there is an inscription on an altar to an unknown God. Paul takes that as an opportunity to share his truth. Because he points out to them, they have an unknown god and Paul wants to make his God known to them. Paul is sharing this so that people can understand how he sees God and how he can share God with these people that do not know him. Paul is moved by the Holy Spirit to share this message, to find common ground, to be able to bring people together. And for that he relies on the truth because he knows that sharing the truth is one of the fastest ways to get people to understand something. Paul shares the truth of Christ with them because he shares how all of us live and move and have our being in God and that we are God's children. And if we are God's children then we need not think of God as silver or stone, not as an idol, but as a God of love there to help us and support us. He speaks this truth so that people can understand God better and have this greater concept of why they matter to Paul. He shares this truth with them so that everyone grows in their understanding and everyone grows in the love of Christ.

We hear of this type of growth again in 1 Peter, but this time it is also about having the truth so that we can make a defense of our faith. And sometimes this is hard to understand because we don't grasp what having a defense means. We think if we are being attacked that we can still have a point. Instead, a defense is being able to explain your faith. He's talking about this in the midst of doing what is good even when others disagree. That faith brings an eagerness to do good even if you suffer for what is right. But when he talks about making a defense it is because he knows that people are going to have questions, especially if we have hope. Because people are often confused by hope. If we have hope and people cannot understand where that hope comes from, they're going to question it. They're going to have doubts. Especially when they think we should not have any hope at all. They're going to have worries. But if we are willing to do what is right even in the face of harm, in the face of discouragement, in the face of people who would rather us not to do good, it is better that we suffer doing good than to suffer for doing evil. It is better to suffer making a difference than to do nothing at all and still suffer. And when we talk about having that defense it's an explanation. It isn't so much being on the defensive as it means having an understanding of your faith so you can explain it. That's what we see Peter doing in this reading. He is explaining his hope in Christ. That Christ suffered for sins once for all so that we know that we are saved. And because of this we have hope. His hope is based on the fact that he knows salvation in Christ. It doesn't matter if people want to see him suffer for doing good because he knows doing good is always worth it. And I think that's a big part of what we see in our various readings today is this idea of we need to know why we have the faith that we do. We need to understand why our faith is in Christ because a good defense of our hope means that we are able to explain it.

Because if we cannot explain our hope to another, how could they ever share in that hope? If we cannot share the truth of Christ with another, how can we expect someone else to know the truth? If we are not brave enough to speak the truth of our own situation, how can we ever expect others to share in the truth with us? If we cannot be honest about why we believe what we believe how can we expect others to ever understand? And for me that's a big part of this idea of the Spirit of Truth. The Holy Spirit guides us so that we can share our truth with others. But to do that we must recognize the truth in all that we are and in all that we do. Which means that even if things are not exactly how we'd like them to be that we are willing to recognize them. That we can identify them as they are. That if we are struggling with something that we acknowledge the struggle. If we have a hard time understanding something we acknowledge our difficulty. Because we speak the truth even if it is against us. I'll be honest, there are things I do not understand in the Bible. I could pretend I do understand or I could embrace that spirit of truth and I can be honest about it. Because there is something that honesty gives me and that is hope that someday I will understand. But I also know that if people are looking to me and they are expecting me to know everything in this Bible and I can tell them sometimes I don't understand it either, that can give us comfort. Because when I'm talking to the people that I look to for guidance and they tell me that there are things they don't know I feel better about still being on this journey. I remember that I am still growing by faith and by wisdom. That I am growing in understanding. It means that I may not know everything today but I trust that the Holy Spirit will help me to know what I need to know. And that I will always find new answers. So I embrace the spirit of truth. I embrace using the truth to find common ground with other people. I embrace speaking the truth of my faith so that others may know why I believe.

And I do think that we all need to be able to tell our own story. Because being able to share our faith story is an important part of what we do. It is part of that Easter Spirit that we carry with us. Because to live in Christ, to die in Christ, and to be raised in Christ requires that we speak the truth of Christ. But it also means that we understand what each of those things means to us. That we can give a defense of our faith so that we can explain it to others so that they may share in that truth. Because that is part of what Easter means to me. It means sharing in those things that guide us and lead us and bring us together in Christ. It means sharing the good news that Christ has died, Christ is risen, and Christ will come again. It means sharing the good news that God loves us as his children and that we are reconciled and forgiven because of that empty tomb. That is the Easter spirit that I hope we can all carry with us. That spirit of truth that allows us to share our journey with others and allows us to share Christ with those in need. So that the truth of Christ can become their truth. And that we may share in that joy together. May we always strive to share the truth in all that we are and in all that we do. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Current Series – Easter Spirit

Our series is all about how we let the resurrection transform our lives. We will have a focus this year on the Spirit. Each week will look at another aspect of the Spirit and how it transforms how we live. This series will take us through Pentecost and Trinity Sunday. How can we let the resurrection of Jesus continue to transform our lives all the year round? We celebrate the resurrection of Christ as we rejoice in the Spirit.

5/3: Spirit and Glory 5/10: Spirit of Truth 5/17: Spirit Approaches
5/24: Spirit is Here 5/31: Spirit of Goodness

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752 Walnut
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Worship 10:30am

Toledo UMC

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Worship 8:15am

Etna UMC

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