

Breaking the Communication Barrier

John 16:12-15

I had the opportunity to go with the missions team to Mexico this past March to work with Gary Sandmann and help with construction on the new sanctuary and bathrooms. It was a wonderful trip, beautiful weather, beautiful scenery, fun people to be around. But there was one thing that was a barrier the whole time we were there that made it really hard to connect with some of the people at the ministry site, and that was the language barrier.

There were four Mexican guys working with us that basically only knew Spanish and my two years of Espanol in high school weren't really cutting it. I was in the dark when it came to trying to communicate with them. I could understand a few very basic things, but that was about it. They were talking and laughing, but I had no idea what they were saying.

Communication barriers can be frustrating, and they can show up in many ways, and this morning I want to talk about the communication barrier that humans have with God. I think most of us can see there's a major communication barrier between humans and God. He knows and understands everything about us, but in our human nature we are extremely limited in our ability to understand him.

Part of that has to do with the difference between the finite and infinite. He is so much higher than us that he exists in a realm of his own that we don't naturally understand. But beyond that, our inability is intensified because of the influence of sin and Satan. In Romans 1 Paul says that because of sin we are darkened in our understanding, and in 1 Corinthians 4 he says that the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers.

So we have a huge communication barrier and inability to understand God and the things of God. Not only do we not speak his language, but we don't even have the ability to comprehend it in our natural selves. We are in the dark. This is a huge problem on many levels. Humans don't naturally understand our separation from God and our desperate need for salvation. We don't understand what God has done to save us or what we need to do to receive salvation. We don't understand God's purpose and will for our lives or

how to live in a way that's pleasing to him. We're in the dark about all these things.

But as most of you know, God has not left us in the dark. He has provided the solution to breaking through the communication barrier so that we are able to understand him and all these things. We started to look at that solution last week in John 16. Jesus' disciples were deeply troubled because he would be leaving them, but he told them it would actually be to their advantage that he went away because by going to the Father he would be able to send the Helper to them – the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would begin to break the communication barrier between God and man. The first thing he would do, that we saw last week, would be to convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. Instead of being in the dark, humans would know their guilt before God and need for salvation and repentance.

But the Holy Spirit would do much more than that and this week we will look at what Jesus said to his disciples next about what the Helper would do in their lives. We can experience the same thing today, and I want us to see how that's possible and what we need to do.

Read John 16:12-15.

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

We have to remember the situation the disciples were in. They were very overwhelmed at that time. Things with Jesus weren't going the way they thought they would. It was becoming very apparent that night in the Upper Room that he was going to die and leave them and he was also telling them that one of them would betray him while the rest abandoned him. They were very troubled and confused and their lives were turning upside down.

So as Jesus was teaching them, we see in verse 12 that there were many more things he needed to say to them, but he wasn't going to because it was just

too much for them at that time and they couldn't bear it. They were overwhelmed, and they hadn't received what they needed yet to really understand the deep things of God. They needed something beyond their own ability and understanding in order to receive further revelation of truth. So even though they were right there with him, there was still a communication barrier.

Jesus wasn't going to cram information down their throats even though he knew his time with them was short. He didn't have to because he knew they would have another teacher, a Helper that he would send to them after he left and went to the Father. That Helper was the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of Truth. He had already spoken of this in John 14:26: *“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”*

The Holy Spirit would break the communication barrier so the disciples would be able to receive greater understanding of spiritual truth. Jesus describes that in verses 13-15. The Holy Spirit would not speak on his own authority, rather, he would take truth that Jesus had received from the Father and declare it to the disciples. Kind of like an interpreter between God and them.

It reminds me of what it was like with my kids when they were just beginning to talk. To other people, their language sounded like a bunch of gibberish, but because I was around them everyday I had learned what their gibberish meant. They each had a different dialect and when people were trying to talk with them, I could understand and interpret.

The Holy Spirit would take the deep things of God and declare them to the disciples. I found another passage that describes this really well, written by the Apostle Paul. Paul wasn't one of the original 12 Disciples, but he was specifically chosen and called by Jesus to be an Apostle, just like they were, and because of that, he experienced the ministry and teaching of the Holy Spirit like Jesus just described to his disciples in John 16. He wrote about it in 1 Corinthians 2:7-13: *“But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the*

heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”—¹⁰ these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹ For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. ¹³ And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.”

This is the very same thing Jesus was saying to his disciples in the Upper Room. When the Holy Spirit came, he would take the deep things of God and declare those things to them. It was their job then to teach those things to those who became disciples after them, and they would be able to understand them because of the Spirit of truth in them.

The Holy Spirit unlocks the communication barrier. The disciples hadn't received the outpouring of the Spirit yet in the Upper Room, but Jesus knew they would on the Day of Pentecost, a few days after his ascension to heaven. The Holy Spirit would teach them and bring to their remembrance everything he had taught them and they would then teach others who became followers of Jesus after them. And that's what they did. As the church was growing in Jerusalem it says in Acts 2:42 that one of the things the new converts did was to devote themselves to the Apostles teaching.

And then, what has become a tremendous gift for us of unfathomable worth, before the disciples died, they wrote down their teachings in Gospel accounts and letters that were copied and circulated among churches and became what we know as the New Testament today.

So now today, we who are in Christ and have the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives are able to read and study the teachings of the Apostles and grow in our understanding of spiritual truth and the deep things of God. The communication barrier has been broken by the Holy Spirit and we are able to know and understand God's will.

But the question for us is this: Are we devoting ourselves to the Apostles' teachings? Are we reading the Scriptures on a daily basis in order to grow in our knowledge of God and spiritual truth?

The Holy Spirit's work of teaching us spiritual truth from the Word of God can only happen if we are actually taking the time to read and study the Word of God. If you don't spend time studying the Scriptures you are not going to grow very much in your understanding of spiritual truth. Listening to sermons and podcasts is great, but it doesn't replace the power of our own time spent studying the Word of God.

Do you have a regular practice of Bible reading and study? Have you been in the Word this week? We have all kinds of things that will distract us from doing this. Are we letting them. A lot of distractions come from a device with a screen. Our phones are purposefully addicting and can be very difficult to put down. But if we don't put them down, they are going to rob us of communicating with God.

I encourage you to set aside a time every day where you put your phone away and you get out your Bible and study the Word of God. Don't even have your phone in the room. I know you might have a Bible reading app on your phone and that might work for you, but it doesn't work for me. There are way too many other things on that phone that draw my attention. I want to check the weather or email or respond to notifications. So I've started leaving it in a different room when it's time for Bible study and it makes a huge difference.

Let's grow in becoming students of the Word so the Holy Spirit can take what we read and open the eyes of our hearts to seeing and understanding the deep things of God.