

Life in His Name – Part 38
The Work of the Holy Spirit - John 16:4b-15
Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – Dec. 3rd, 2023

Intro:

- I thank God that we are in the Advent season as we prepare our hearts to enjoy the wonders of Christ anew. Jesus is the greatest of all gifts, and my prayer is that you would understand, adore, and honor Him above all things and all others.
- The Gospel of John was written to reveal who Jesus is, that He indeed is the long-awaited Christ, the Son of God, the Savior and Lord. My hope is that through this series, your love of Him has grown, and your faith has been strengthened.
- In this section of the book, Jesus is preparing His disciples for what is to happen to Him and what is to come for them. Not only would their salvation cost Jesus His very life, but their following Him would also come at a cost.
- In the midst of being hated and harmed by some, the Holy Spirit would be sent by Jesus to help them and us in our faith journey. And it is for our good that the Holy Spirit will come. In our passage for today, Jesus highlights the work of the Holy Spirit, how He works among those who do not believe in Jesus, the Son of God, and how He works among those who believe in Jesus.
- It is important for us to understand these things so that we can work alongside and, in the Spirit, identify His work and respond accordingly. Understanding how the Spirit works will also strengthen your faith in the sovereign reign of Jesus in the world and through His Church. As your understanding grows, so will your confidence and power to proclaim and claim the promises of God. So, let's jump back into our text, starting in John 16:4b.

John 16:4b-6 NIV

I did not tell you this from the beginning because I was with you, 5 but now I am going to him who sent me. None of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' 6 Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things.

- The "this" Jesus refers to in verse four is how much persecution would come to them because of Him. Up to this point, the hatred of people was focused on Jesus, and Jesus took it and dealt with it. However, when He leaves, the hatred of the world will be focused on the followers of Jesus, and Jesus needs to prepare them for that eventuality.
- The disciples, rightly so, were filled with grief, knowing that Jesus was going to go and that they would be without Him in facing this hatred. They were so consumed with Him being gone that they did not ask where He was going, and they missed the reason for His departure and the good that would come of it. This is like a parent needing to leave their children to go to work; the kids are consumed with the departure, but if they understood the good coming out of it, it would provide perspective and comfort for them.

John 16:7 NIV

But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

- It was for their and our good that Jesus physically went away so that the next part of God's plan could be enacted. So why is it good for us to have the Holy Spirit instead of Jesus physically present?

- The answer is that Jesus is His physical human body; even the resurrected human body is limited to being in one place at one time. The Holy Spirit can be in all places at all times. Instead of being with a few people in His physical body, He can be with all people by His Spirit. And not only alongside us but in us and working at all places in the world at the same time. This is about multiplication of His ministry in us and among us all in all places and every time.
- Then Jesus goes on to tell us what the Holy Spirit is going to do with those who are of the world and those who are in Him.

The Holy Spirit convicts the world

- He does this in three primary ways.

John 16:8-11 NIV

When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 about sin, because people do not believe in me; 10 about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; 11 and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

The Spirit reveals the truth about sin.

- Sin is “missing the mark” (like missing the bullseye in archery). It is falling short of perfection or the standard. “*All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God*” (Rom 3:23 ESV). The standard is Jesus. The perfection is Jesus. The world generally thinks that what it does is “okay” and justifies sin as natural, acceptable, and desired. Most people don’t think they need saving because they are pretty good the way they are, and if people don’t like it, it is their problem. They surely don’t think they deserve to go to hell—if there is one—or that there is a standard other than their own.
- And if people don’t realize that they are sinful as defined by the truth of the reality of God and in God, they will not see their desperate need for a savior and will not put their faith in Jesus; they will “not believe in me” (v. 9).
- When people realize that they are sinful and are in need of a savior, this is the work of the Holy Spirit. Anytime people “feel bad” or “feel guilty” or are “convicted” of wrongdoing, this is the work of the Holy Spirit pressing on the person the truth of their being so that they will turn to Jesus to be saved. When you see this happening, know that the Holy Spirit is working.
- We are to pray that people will be convicted and convinced of their sin so they can be converted by believing in the Christ. They need to know and believe the truth about sin before they see their need to be forgiven, their debt to be paid, and their slate to be wiped clean. And not just that they want to be better for their own sake and for the sake of those in their lives, but they will understand that they need to be forgiven by the Holy God.

The Spirit reveals the truth about righteousness.

- Then there are some people in the world who think they can earn their way to the Father by their own righteousness. The truth is that “no one is righteous, no not one” (Rom. 2:28) and “all our righteous acts, are like filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6). All, except one, Jesus, who is “going to the Father.” Jesus was the only one who was righteous, and Jesus is the only one who could go to the Father on His own merit. The only way that anyone can go to the Father and be accepted by Him is to be in Jesus and have His righteousness.
- If the world understands righteousness to be anything other than Jesus, they are wrong. The Holy Spirit reveals the truth of what righteousness is, and who righteousness is found in, to bring understanding that we must be in Christ and take on His righteousness.

The Spirit reveals the truth about judgment.

- The one thing that those in the world do not want is judgment, or any accounting of their lives, especially against a perfect standard. They don't even want to deal with the reality of the possibility of this. Or that if there is a judgment, it would go against those who are against them or hurt them. The truth is that everyone will be judged. *"It is appointed for a man to die once, and after that comes judgment"* (Heb. 9:27).
- The "prince of this world" already stands condemned. His sentence has been passed down, and his fate is determined. He was cast out of the presence of God for His sin of thinking he was greater than God and rejecting His rule and reign, and he was condemned and judged for it. The same is true for all who, in their own pride, abandon the truth and way of God for their own.
- Jesus explained this in his conversation with Nicodemus in chapter three.

John 3:18-21 ESV

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. 21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

- For in the judgment, this is justice. Those who are waiting for justice and reward see the judgment as the justice of God. And for those who justice will be served do not want to embrace it but run and hide from it.
- The world needs to understand the truth of this and be convinced and convicted of the truth of it so that they will believe in Jesus. The Holy Spirit works on those in the world so that they can and will receive the truth of sin, righteousness, and judgment so that they will repent, believe in Jesus, and receive forgiveness and new life in His name. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in the world. Pray for it, look for it, and work alongside the Holy Spirit in this work. People will never believe in Jesus unless they know the truth of these things. They have to know the bad news and how bad it is in order to receive the good news and know how good it is.
- If the Spirit did not work this way with those in the world, no one would come to faith.
- After Jesus explained how the Spirit works in the world, Jesus then turned to explain how the Spirit works with believers.

The Holy Spirit instructs the believer

- He does this in three primary ways as well.

John 16:12-15 NIV

"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. 13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. 14 He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. 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."

The Spirit will guide you into all the truth.

- Jesus had many more things to tell the disciples, but they were not ready or prepared to hear and understand it. This, by the way, tells us that growing and receiving truth is progressive and must be timed right. You can receive things now that you were not able to in the past, and you will be able to receive things in the future that you cannot receive now. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, speaks from Jesus and for Jesus.
- And He guides us into all truth. The word “guides” is an important one. This means that we are the ones who must be on a quest to discover what is true. The Holy Spirit acts as an expert guide to lead us to where we want to go and to what we desire. Think of a fishing guide or a guide to climb Mt. Everest, etc. There is a price to pay on our part, starting with a desire and then giving ourselves to discover the truth – about God, ourselves, others, our situation, etc., and we need help to do so. This truth has enormous and eternal significance and is more valuable than anything one can possess. The Spirit of truth helps us in this quest and guides us into all truth. Seek truth. And seek spiritual truth. Ask God to guide you by His Spirit, and He will because this is His will and His work.
- He also keeps His church on the path of truth, guiding us as to what is true doctrine and teaching us to reject what is not true and follow the truth. The Holy Spirit keeps His church in the truth and guides and corrects it when necessary.

The Spirit will tell you what is yet to come.

- This was surely and uniquely the case when it came to the Apostle John, who later received and wrote down the book of Revelation. This was also the case of the other writers of the words of Scripture, including the Apostle Paul as he instructed the church and wrote of things that were yet to come.
- This also occurred in the book of Acts where the Holy Spirit told them of things that were and things that were to be by directing them through prayer and prophecy. This is also the case even to this day when God prompts us into action or tells us of things that are yet to come through the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth. We are no longer writing Scripture, but the Holy Spirit is still working at illuminating and applying the Word, guiding us, and showing us what is to come.
- This, by the way, is the work of God, who knows the beginning from the end and the end from the beginning (Isa. 46:10). This is not only what will happen, but where things will lead. The Holy Spirit does this by hearing from Jesus what Jesus would communicate to you. Seek His word and trust Him.

The Spirit will glorify Jesus.

- The Holy Spirit’s primary and continual goal is to bring glory to Jesus. The Holy Spirit gives credit to Jesus and works to unveil and highlight the glories of who Jesus is. The Holy Spirit is the messenger that speaks for Jesus and as Jesus. He is not looking for glory for Himself but for Christ.
- The primary test to discern if someone or something is from the Holy Spirit is to view that person in light of the truth of Jesus. If what they are saying speaks rightly about Jesus, if what they are conveying is in line with Jesus and the light of who He is according to Scripture, it can be trusted. However, if the “spirit” and teaching of what is being taught and communicated do not align with the truth of who Jesus is and what He taught, it is to be rejected. Evaluate what you hear by looking at Jesus as revealed in Scripture, especially if it is a concept about God and ultimate realities. This is how you are to discern between what is true and what is false (please see I John 4:1-6 for more about this).

- The Holy Spirit works in believers by guiding them into all truth, showing them what is to come, and glorifying Jesus through His word by recitation, illumination, and application.

Conclusion

- Jesus gave us a good gift when He gave us the Holy Spirit. He continues to do His work powerfully and effectively in the world. Let's covenant and pray together to join with the work of the Holy Spirit as He works to convict and convince the world of the truth about sin, righteousness, and judgment. Let us give ear to the Holy Spirit as He guides us into truth. Let's work alongside Him and follow His promptings and promises as to what is to come, and let us through Him glorify Jesus mightily in our church and in our community.
- Do you want to see more of the work of the Holy Spirit in your life and the life of our community? You have to ask for it, look for it, and work alongside Him. May God give us the desire for this and the reality of it as well. In our hearts, in our church, in our community, and in the nations.

Questions for further growth

1. What from this sermon stood out to you?
2. In your own words, explain the two-fold work of the Holy Spirit from this passage.
3. How does this passage inform how you pray and think?
4. Where do you want to see more of the Holy Spirit working in your life and the lives of those around you? Earnestly and regularly pray that way.