

## **“John: Spirit of Truth”**

*Deuteronomy 6:1-12 • John 14:15-31*

First Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, TX  
Rev. Charles S. Blackshear • November 19, 2023

This morning’s passage in John 14 is a continuation of what is called Jesus’ “Farewell Discourse.” Jesus knows that he will soon be arrested and crucified. He knows that his disciples’ world is about to be thrown into chaos. So he wants to give them some final words to hold on to when everything seems to fall apart. He is reclining at the table with eleven of his disciples. He has washed their feet. They have eaten together. Judas has left to betray Jesus, although the others don’t know that yet. But they know that Jesus said one of them would betray him and that Peter would deny even knowing him before the night was over. Jesus tells them that it’s time for him to go and they can’t follow him. Needless to say, they were troubled and anxious. So Jesus tells them that they don’t need to be troubled. What they need, instead, is to have faith in him.

This morning we find that Jesus gives the disciples more reasons why they don’t need to worry. He tells them that he will “ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth.” He’s talking about the Holy Spirit. In this final message he gives us one of the clearest descriptions of the Trinity – one God in three Persons. Jesus, who is God the Son, says he will ask God the Father, who will send God the Holy Spirit, who will dwell with us and in us. The point is that even when Jesus leaves bodily he will still be present with his followers.

In verse 18 Jesus says, “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” You can imagine how the disciples would feel when Jesus was crucified and buried. They had left everything to follow him for a little over three years. He was like a father to them. But Jesus assures them that they won’t be left alone and that he will in fact come to them. This could be interpreted in a couple of ways. First, as he said, he could be referring to the coming of the Holy Spirit to be with them. Jesus will be with them through the power of the Spirit. The other way to think

about this is that he is referring to his Resurrection. In verse 19 Jesus says, “Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me.” Once he is raised he comes to them several times but he doesn’t go around publicly preaching. He tells Thomas to touch his hands and his side. He eats with them. So I think both of these ways of understanding what Jesus means here are correct. He both comes to them after his Resurrection, and he comes to them in the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit has been sometimes called the forgotten member of the Trinity. Many Christians misunderstand who the Holy Spirit is or what he does. Which brings us to the first thing we need to know about the Holy Spirit: He is a divine person. I think a lot of people think of the Holy Spirit as a divine force, maybe like The Force in *Star Wars*. Rick Phillips says, “Thinking this way, many Christians desire to get more of the Spirit in the same way that one gets power from an electrical outlet. They speak of ‘plugging into’ the Spirit and emphasize spiritual techniques or experiences that will ‘tap into’ the Spirit’s power.”

Instead, we need to understand that the Holy Spirit is not merely a power or force, but is the third person of the Godhead. He is coequal and coeternal with God the Father and God the Son. In many places in the Bible we find the Holy Spirit speaking and thinking and acting. James Montgomery Boice says, “If we think of the Holy Spirit as a mysterious power, our thought will continually be, ‘how can I get more of the Holy Spirit?’ If we think of the Holy Spirit as a person, our thought will be, ‘How can the Holy Spirit have more of me?’ The first thought is entirely pagan. The second is New Testament Christianity.”

Who is the Holy Spirit? Jesus says, “You know him.” How do they know him? Jesus was born by the miraculous conception of the Holy Spirit. In his humanity Jesus was equipped by the Spirit at his baptism and then sent out into

the wilderness by the Holy Spirit. Everywhere Jesus went and everything Jesus said and did was appointed by the Father and carried out by the Spirit. The disciples knew the Holy Spirit because they knew Jesus. If you know Jesus you also know the Holy Spirit, because he dwells with you and in you.

What is the work of the Holy Spirit? In verse 26, Jesus says, "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 disciples would go on to write the New Testament under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who would help them remember what Jesus said and did. As 2 Peter 1:21 teaches us, "men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." The truth is that the entire Bible is the work of the Holy Spirit. When we read it, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, shines the light of truth into our minds and hearts to help us understand it. As Rick Phillips puts it, "It is only as the Spirit shines on the heart that anyone comprehends and believes God's Word today and is saved." It's been said that the Bible is the only book where the author is present every time it's read. So part of the work of the Holy Spirit is to reveal God to us through the Scriptures, to show us who Jesus is.

Jesus says this very thing in verses 19 and 20. He says, "the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you." When he says, "you will see me," the word he uses for "see" means more than just seeing with your eyes. It has to do with perceiving and understanding. Jesus is saying that because of the Holy Spirit working in your life, you will perceive who Jesus is. When the disciples see Jesus in his resurrected body, they finally understand what he's been trying to tell them – that he is God in person. The same goes for you and me. When the Holy Spirit indwells you, you are finally able to understand who Jesus is and commit your life to him. Does that mean you will no longer sin? No. As long as

each of us lives we will struggle with sin. But *struggling* with sin, feeling sorry for it, is a sure sign that the Holy Spirit is working in you and that you belong to Christ.

In our translation of this passage Jesus uses the term "helper" for the Holy Spirit. In verse 16 he says, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper." Then again in verse 26 he refers to "the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name." The word translated as "helper" in the ESV is translated as "advocate" in the NIV. Other versions translate it as "counselor" or "comforter." In each of these, though, the idea would be similar to a defense attorney. It's the Greek word *paraklatos* or *paraclete*. It comes from the prefix *para* which means alongside, and the root word *kalos*, which means to call out. A paraclete is someone who comes alongside us to call us to repentance and faith. One way to understand this is to think about the large ships that come into the port. One of the ways you can know that ship is about to enter the bay is that the tugboats go out of the port to meet the ship. The tugboat is like a paraclete. It comes alongside the ship to guide it safely. The Holy Spirit comes alongside us to guide us safely to Christ.

Notice, though, that Jesus says, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you *another* paraclete." For there to be another, there must already be one. That one is Jesus. He is described as the paraclete in 1 John 2: "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate (a paraclete) with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

So the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives is to teach us, to reveal God to us in the Scriptures so that we see and know Jesus. It's also the work of the Spirit to apply to each of our lives the work of Christ on the cross. Jesus said in verse 19, "Because I live, you also will live." Then in verse 23 he said, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." That's the work of the

Spirit. Finally, the Holy Spirit gives us the peace of Christ. As Paul says in Philippians 4: “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Jesus tells his disciples in verse 27, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.” The Holy Spirit, by pointing you to Christ, will give you that peace of knowing that Jesus is in control and that you are safely in him.

That leads us to the last thing we need to see here. Jesus says several times in this passage, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” I know some of you would probably like to quote that verse to other people regularly. In verse 21 Jesus says,

“Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” Does this mean that God only loves you when you keep his commandments? No! What this means is that when you come to know Jesus in a saving way, your attitude changes. Your love for him overflows in a desire to keep Jesus’ commandments. And what are his commandments? Love God with everything you’ve got, and love other people. When we love Jesus we will naturally love other people and that will change us from the inside and others will get to see what God is like. And you know what loving God like that is called? Thanksgiving.

*Amen.*