

## The Role of the Holy Spirit

### John 14:15-27 and 16:5-15

Let me start with a question? Have you ever had the chance to talk with someone who you respect, someone who you admire; someone you love, right before that person dies? I'm not talking about a sudden death. I'm talking about a person who maybe is on his/her death bed, they are aware the end is near. It might have been a grandparent, maybe a parent, maybe a long-time mentor—someone who you have great admiration for and you tried to model after.

Chances are the conversation starts off with some reminiscing. Walking down memory lane, a few laughs about the dumb stuff you used to do, mistakes you made. And as you talk and laugh you can't escape the thought of how fortunate you have been to have that person in your life. What happens next? If you are anything like me you would be overwhelmed with emotions, or maybe fear sets in as you think about the upcoming loss.

That is when I imagine the conversation shifts. Shifts from reminiscing to, "Here's the last thing that I want you to know." The person dying wants to say, "Here's the last thing that I want to leave you. The last thing that I want you to know—here it is."

I thought about this for myself. If something were to happen to me and I had one chance to write my kids a letter, or record a video for them what would I say? What would I try to leave them with? In those final moments what would be the last thing that I would want to tell my kids?

That's the scene for John 14 through to 16. WE are Jesus' last days, they have spent three years together, but their time is coming to an end. We have been going through the Gospel of John but today is going to be the last message on John until next year, as Christmas is upon us. We will pick up the remainder of John as we move into Lent and Easter next year.

So today we look at bits of two chapters – chapter 14 which Matt started a couple of weeks back and the first part of chapter 16 – both chapters touch on the role of that Holy Spirit which is the theme for this week.

#### **Set the scene**

John 14 is the end of the Last Supper, and then chapters 15 and 16 are really Jesus and the disciples heading out to the Garden of Gethsemane. The crucifixion is only about 12 hours from this point and Jesus knows it. The disciples are still quite confused as to what exactly is going on, so in John 14 you see a sprinkling of questions from the disciples, but the vast majority of these three chapters is Jesus talking. It's his last conversation with His disciples—the guys who He has poured into,

the guys who He spent every single day with for three years, the ones who He has taught, and laughed with, and corrected, and encouraged, and shaped, and empowered. He has one more chance to talk to them. Jesus doesn't waste any words. In His last conversation with His disciples what He has to say is pretty intentional. So what does He say?

### **The disciples frame of mind**

Well, we know at this point the disciples are really starting to freak out. They had left everything for Jesus. They had bet their lives on Him. They pushed all of their chips into the middle of the table for Jesus, and now He's telling them that He is leaving and that they can't follow.

The disciples are connecting the dots and realizing that what they actually had in mind—about how Jesus was going to be this amazing political leader with 10 times the “Jacinda effect” and 20 times any “Key charisma”. Their hopes were that he was going to overthrow the Romans, he was going to re-establish Israel's greatness, that He was going to usher in this new earthly kingdom where He would rule and reign and they would be seated around his table. But for the very first time they are realizing that what they had bet on was not going to happen. They were worried.

There is desperation in their voices and, understandably they're asking questions. Questions like, “where are you going? What do you mean we can't follow you? Which way is the way? How are you going to reveal yourself to us?” The underlying theme to all of their questions is they are terrified of being alone. They're afraid of being abandoned. As one guy said “They're afraid that when the music stops they're not going to have a chair”. (Musical chairs!!)

**Let me just pause** and ask you, do you feel like that? A bit fearful of being on your own. Hello Jesus, where are you? And the thing is that it doesn't matter what your circumstances are. They can be either good or bad. Your life circumstances could be fantastic, your relationships are great, they are flourishing. Or you could be in the gutter. Your relationships bankrupt, non-existent. It doesn't matter if your life circumstances are good or bad—all of us can be paralyzed with the fear of being alone or of having the feeling of being alone, regardless of our circumstances.

It is this fear that Jesus chooses to speak to in some of His last moments with the disciples. Look at verse 15 of John 14. We're going to go all the way through verse 27.

*<sup>15</sup> “If you love me, obey my commandments. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, **who will never leave you.** <sup>17</sup> He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because **he lives with you now** and **later will be in you.** <sup>18</sup> No, **I will not abandon you as***

orphans—I will come to you.<sup>19</sup> Soon the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Since I live, you also will live.<sup>20</sup> When I am raised to life again, you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.<sup>21</sup> Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them.”

<sup>22</sup> Judas (not Judas Iscariot, but the other disciple with that name) said to him, “Lord, why are you going to reveal yourself only to us and not to the world at large?”

<sup>23</sup> Jesus replied, “All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come and make our home with each of them.<sup>24</sup> Anyone who doesn’t love me will not obey me. And remember, my words are not my own. What I am telling you is from the Father who sent me.<sup>25</sup> I am telling you these things now while I am still with you.<sup>26</sup> But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you.

<sup>27</sup> “I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don’t be troubled or afraid.

From my simple reading there is one key message that Jesus is wanting to get across in this passage. If the disciples are terrified of being alone, Jesus, is promising to be with us in some shape or form. In 12 verses, there are about nine references to not being left alone: never leave; lives with you; will be in you; will not abandon you; you in Me, I in you; you will see me; make our home with you; the Father will send the advocate.

You get the idea - Jesus is wanting to promise that he will be with us. I remember hearing a sermon preached years ago. The preacher said there are only two unconditional promises in the New Testament that we can claim while here on earth. – two guaranteed promises you can rely on with no conditions. That God will always be with us and that we will be persecuted. Let me know if you think the preacher is wrong!

In Jesus final words to his disciples, he is saying, “You’re not alone. You’ll never be alone. I will always be with you and in you. In verse 26, Jesus says this assurance is going to come from the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom He will send. So this assurance comes through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit can get a bit of a bad rap at times and there is a certain amount of confusion about what he does exactly, and that is not surprising when we try and put

God into a confined definition. At times he gets treated like the crazy cousin at the family reunion? To be acknowledged but then avoided. Or to be played with, but only within the walls of the church. Some people concentrate on what we know about the Holy Spirit from the day of Pentecost and early church and focus on the gifts or people's manifestations of the Spirit. Other Christians seem to think that the three members of the Trinity are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Bible because they really don't understand what the Holy Spirit is all about. Sadly if we don't understand/know the role of the Holy Spirit then all we are going to do is stunt our growth in Christ and deny ourselves access to the power that has been given to us through Him.

**So, what does the Holy Spirit do?** There are multiple passages throughout the New Testament that talk about the different roles of the Holy Spirit. Today, we're going to hit on two roles that Jesus really focuses on here in John.

### **Advocate**

Here in chapter 14 John calls the Holy Spirit an advocate. Other translations use helper or counsellor (legal not therapist), all from the Greek word Paraclete which basically means to come along side.

As some of you know, my wife, Gay was away for a couple of weeks, so while I was 'little Brian no friends' on Mondays on my day off, I decided that I would head out for a game of golf out at Oropi, I do this about once or twice a year. I am not much of a golfer but I enjoy getting out and trying to bash that little ball in some sort of a straight line.

I went out twice while Gay was away and each time there was someone about to tee off looking for someone to play with. That is a bit scary for me, because I am not that good, and if I am going to stuff up, I would rather do that on my own!

Anyway when they asked if they could join me, I said sure. And in actual fact each time it has been helpful. I nearly always get tips to improve my game, or they remind me of some technique. I need all the help I can get. I could do with a caddie.

I remember when I was a lot younger hearing a professional golfer talk about the importance of a caddie. At that stage I just thought they carried the clubs and moved the flag when you putt. But I now understand there is so much more to being a caddie. A good caddie will know and understand your game, your style, your strengths and weakness. They are looking at your game and the course and they help you to make good decisions on club choice and length and lie of the green etc. A caddie is with you the whole time, they **walk along side you** and a good one, I am told, can transform your game.

Now, I'm not saying that the Holy Spirit is like a celestial caddy. That would be selling the Holy Spirit way too short. What I am saying is that a professional golfer would never dream of playing golf without a caddy because they know the benefits, just as a Christian would be stupid to try and do life without the Holy Spirit once you know what he does. If we don't understand what He does, we don't know the resource we have in us. We don't know how advantageous He is. But, if we can grasp the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the power that he gives us then He will give us a calm confidence in a very chaotic and troubled world.

### **I will be with you – you are my child**

So in chapter 14 we get the promise of the Holy Spirit, this helper, this advocate, this person who to walk alongside us. This chapter is all about the Spirit being with us and Jesus definitely wanted his disciples to understand this, so tells them nine times!

And the image that Jesus uses to show this covenant relationship that he has with us that we are adopted son or daughters of God. The assurance that we get from the Holy Spirit is that if you're an adopted son or daughter of God that means that God the Father will never leave you, or abuse you, or neglect you, He will never deny you.

No, we were not born into this divine privilege or inheritance. We certainly didn't earn it. You cannot earn adoption. No adopted child ever earns their family. No they are chosen, despite their circumstances, despite their past, despite their flaws—a father and mother comes in and says, "You, you're mine. I love you. You are my son, you're my daughter—that will never change."

So Jesus is wanting to emphasise, if you're in Christ you're never, never alone. You're not alone when your child is in the hospital. You're not alone if your spouse leaves you. You're not alone at work. You're not alone at school. You're not alone even when you're standing over a fresh grave. You're not alone in the middle of persecution. You're not even alone when you face death. Even if you can't feel the presence of Christ He is still with you. That's the promise of what the Holy Spirit will do.

### **Chapter 16**

Let's flip the page to chapter 16. We're going to look at another role right here. I am sure you have heard the expression, "ignorance is bliss"? There are times in life that I believe that that statement is absolutely true. Often it's when you hear disaster coming down from your kid's rooms. "I don't want to know who did what. I don't want to know who hit whom, or who said what swear word —I just don't want to know."

Not knowing or pretending like it didn't happen or isn't happening—that means we can stay in our happy place. But as we all know, in reality, and more importantly in

the gospel “ignorance is bliss” is a card that nobody gets to play because what we don’t know will certainly hurt us. This is where the role of the Holy Spirit comes in.

Let’s start reading from verse 5. This is Jesus speaking,

*<sup>5</sup> “But now I am going away to the one who sent me, and not one of you is asking where I am going. <sup>6</sup> Instead, you grieve because of what I’ve told you. <sup>7</sup> But in fact, it is best for you that I go away, because if I don’t, the Advocate won’t come. If I do go away, then I will send him to you. <sup>8</sup> And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God’s righteousness, and of the coming judgment. <sup>9</sup> The world’s sin is that it refuses to believe in me. <sup>10</sup> Righteousness is available because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more. <sup>11</sup> Judgment will come because the ruler of this world has already been judged.*

*<sup>12</sup> “There is so much more I want to tell you, but you can’t bear it now. <sup>13</sup> When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future. <sup>14</sup> He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me. <sup>15</sup> All that belongs to the Father is mine; this is why I said, ‘The Spirit will tell you whatever he receives from me.’*

So in this chapter Jesus says that the Holy Spirit has a three-part role concerning the world. And the world in this verse is talking about anyone who is outside of Christ. It’s talking about non-Christians.

1. So Jesus says that the first thing is this, **the Holy Spirit will come to convict us of sin.** v9. And in today’s culture that in itself is a real problem. As we look at the world and if we observe the history of the world, the understanding of sin has changed drastically over the Centuries. It goes all over the place. It gets very blurry. Sin is becoming completely subjective to ‘it’s irrelevant’, to ‘does sin really matter’, to ‘does sin even exist’?

We are told here that the first role of the Holy Spirit is to give us the resounding answer throughout Scripture that, yes sin does exist, yes we are all guilty of it, and yes it really does matter. And by sin we don’t just mean obvious bad stuff, but falling short of God’s mark – perfection.

So the role of the Holy Spirit in the world is to bring to light sin – to show that we aren’t perfect. But let’s be very clear about something. There is a great difference between conviction and condemnation. Conviction of sin is actually an act of grace.

The Holy Spirit convicts you of sin in order to remove condemnation. The goal of the conviction of sin is to lead you to Romans 8:1 - *that there is no condemnation for*

*those in Christ Jesus.* It's an act of grace. It's meant to lead you down the path to find relief, which is only found in the mercy of God.

2. First you have to see the conviction of your sin through the Holy Spirit **then the Holy Spirit will show you that righteousness is found only in Jesus.**v10. The word "righteous" means right standing with someone, or to be presentable. We are all looking for ways to be righteous, right? We're all looking for ways to make ourselves presentable.

- Maybe it's through morality where we are trying to justify ourselves to God—or to others—through being good.
- Maybe you are trying to make yourself presentable through your study or career. You're nailing those exams, or you are climbing the corporate ladder, "The higher up the ladder I go, the more presentable I am,"
- Maybe you're trying to make yourself presentable by being a part of a service project. You go and serve. You take a couple of pictures. You put them up on Facebook. "here I am. I'm presentable."

These are all good things, but if your motivation behind those things is to make yourself righteous, let me just say as directly and gently as I can, you will fall very, very short.

3. **The third role of the Holy Spirit is the conviction of judgment.** v11 This is the one we like to talk about least of all. We don't want to hear about judgment, we don't want to talk about it, and we don't want to think about it. We want to eliminate it from our mind-set.

If we don't want to acknowledge it, that's fine, but just because I don't want to acknowledge the judgment I would face for robbing a bank, that doesn't mean that that judgment doesn't exist. If judgment doesn't exist, what did Jesus save us from on the cross?

The Holy Spirit does not convict us of judgment to scare us, He convicts us of it to secure us, because you will only know how amazing Jesus is once you have realized what He has saved you from. That's why the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, righteousness, and then judgment. It's all an act of grace. It's all to encourage us down the path of grace.

**So how do we respond to this gift of the Holy Spirit?** Well, Jesus says multiple times in chapter 14: if you keep my commandments; he who has my words and keeps them; he who loves me keeps my commandments. **Our response is simply obedience.**

Here's an important thing to note about these passages. Jesus never commands obedience. Not once. You will not find a commandment to obey in this chapter. He

says, *“If you love me, obey my commandments... All who love me will do what I say.”* Love for Christ gives us assurance that then produces obedience. Obedience is always a response. Obedience to Christ does not produce love. Love for Christ produces obedience.

So if you're trying hard to love Christ by keeping a list of commandments, if you think that love for Jesus is going to come out of your obedience that's a burden that you will crumble under. You will become disillusioned, most likely become bitter—that's religion. I obey therefore I am loved. I obey to get something in return. And Jesus is saying, “No, no, no. It's none of that. Just come to experience Me. Love Me because I so greatly love you.” And that love will give birth to a faith that will produce repentance and obedience.

So Jesus says in 16, verse 7, “Hey, me leaving is to your advantage because if I do not go away then the Advocate, the alongsider, won't come.” I think that comment probably baffled the disciples. It really seems hard to believe that there is something better than having Jesus, in the flesh, right with you. That seems hard to believe. But that's exactly what He says. He says, “No, it's better for you that I go.”

At that stage the disciples had no idea what it meant to have the Holy Spirit, and therefore didn't want Jesus to go. I guess the question is for us? Do we know what we have in the Holy Spirit? Do we know how advantageous He is? Do we know what He does? Or do we even want to know what He does? Are we listening for His voice as He fulfils His roles? May we hear the whisper of the Holy Spirit as He assures us and convicts us. That's my prayer for today.

And yes as strange as it might sound, may we remind ourselves and enjoy the fact that it is much better to have the Spirit in us, than to have Jesus in the flesh next to us.