

INTRO:¹

So I don't know exactly what all your takeaways've been as we've gone through the *Gospel of John* this year, but I'll tell you: One of MINE has been that: The more I see what God, in Christ, is REALLY like - which of course is what *John* is all about - the more I feel I'm ALSO seeing ways in which we, as the church, tend to live incongruous WITH that. For example, it seems to me there are a lot of churches that LOVE to talk about spiritual experience, usually cuz they RIGHTLY see things like the power, authority, miracles of Jesus in the Bible. BUT to the point that they almost get obsessed WITH experience. So everything becomes about the look and feel of worship gatherings; the charisma of speakers; these emotionally ecstatic moments, with powerful music, and memorable preaching. And honestly, I mean NO disrespect to these churches. I wish I was a more memorable preacher. I just personally have a hard time wrapping my mind around some of the methodology, AND tend to think that folks with no background in the church might feel a bit lost...But then on the other hand there also seem to be a lot of churches/maybe ESPECIALLY in New England, that are afraid of any kind of spiritual experience. And so they only ever wanna talk about doctrine, truth, following the rules. And again, no disrespect to these churches, cuz I think on the whole, WE might lean a little more in this direction. It's just that if you put a lot of these churches next to your average HR meeting, the only difference is there's less sitting and standing...in the HR meeting...And so sadly, the impression you can get from all this, is that, we're imbalanced. And not just in church, but as people - many being ALL ABOUT experience and aesthetic, while others of are more about rhythms and routines.

Maybe the best remedy for this imbalance...is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. BECAUSE the more you understand the Spirit, the more you realize that to EXPERIENCE the Spirit, goes hand-in-hand with truth...That's what we're talking about today. *The Holy Spirit!* BECAUSE there's just something so important ABOUT Him that Jesus, not only reserved a major portion of His Farewell Discourse here to talk about Him. BUT ya see there in v.7 even tells His disciples that it's to their advantage that HE go away if it means THEY get the Spirit...So, let's read *John 16:5-15* together, and then look at *3 Things Jesus tells us about the Spirit: 1. Why We Need Him, 2. What He Does, and 3. How He Works*. So let's stand together...

TEXT:

So recall, Jesus is hanging out with His disciples here, on the eve of His crucifixion. And knowing He's about to depart from em, is giving them this final set of instructions ABOUT how to, you see there in v.5, live in His absence. Pre-Resurrection instructions for Post-Resurrection living. And in view of, as Jesus says there in v.6, "*(the) sorrow that's filled (their) hearts;*" Jesus has, you know, been comforting em. And what He begins to do here is conclude this farewell discourse BY detailing the resource He's gonna make available to the disciples for living in His

¹ Works Consulted:

- Bruce Milne, *The Message of John: Here Is Your King! With Study Guide*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 228-32
- J. D. Greear, "5 Ways the Spirit Leads Us: John 16:7, Et Al." in *J. D. Greear Sermon Archive* (Durham, NC: The Summit Church, 2017), Jn 16:7.
- Caspar Wistar Hodge, "The Promise of the Spirit," in *Princeton Sermons* (New York; Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1893), 29.
- The Holy Spirit Convincing the World of Sin, Righteousness, and Judgment - John 16:8 - Sermon 40 - George Whitefield, *Selected Sermons of George Whitefield* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1999).
- "The Mission of the Spirit - Gospel of John, Part 2 - February 9, 1992 - John 16:5-11 // The Great Mentor - Gospel of John, Part 2 - February 2, 1992 - John 16:12-15 - Timothy J. Keller, *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).

absence; namely, the Holy Spirit. And ya see there in **v.7**, the **First** thing He talks about with respect to the Spirit is: **Why We Need Him**. Cuz He calls him “*the Helper*.” So not “the Power,” or “the Enlightenment,” or even the “Inspiration,” but “*the Helper*.” **Why?** Well 2 reasons: **One**, because no matter how self-sufficient we like to bill ourselves - and we do like to think we’re in-the-know and in-control **don’t we?** - the reality is, we’re incredibly dependent people in **NEED** of help! And sure maybe not in the ways we once were, since of course, we’ve progressed since being hunters and gatherers. But you understand, that progress hasn’t lead to, say, the eradication of evil and what’s wrong in the world. It hasn’t lead us to truly figuring out why we’re here/what our purpose is. Heck, it hasn’t even eliminated things like loneliness or worry. In some senses, it’s heightened em. And that’s BECAUSE our illusion of self-sufficiency is just that; it’s an illusion. We’re a dependent people in NEED of a “Helper.” You have to see that!

But the **Second** reason Jesus calls the Spirit “*the Helper*” here is because, remember the mission for which He’s preparing His disciples and to which He’s subsequently called you if you consider yourself His disciple. It’s quite literally, a mission impossible. **You remember those movies?** There was always that climactic scene in which the agent would get a recording that said, “*Your mission, should you decide to accept it, is to basically save the world even though there’s like a one in a billion chance that you’re gonna live.*”...In many respects, that’s the mission for which Jesus is preparing His disciples and to which He’s called us, as His church. It’s impossible! And I don’t say that hyperbolically. What I mean is: Jesus is about to, as Tim Keller says: send out a bunch of illiterate fishermen and blue-collar workers; who have no rank in their country; who are FROM a country that at that time had virtually no political clout. AND He’s sending em out with a message that He says is gonna turn the world upside down, despite the fact that it was utterly unconventional and implausible. Cuz I know there’s a certain plausibility to Christianity these days, given, at least, how long it’s been around. But understand when these disciples are, for example, going out to their fellow Jewish citizens, how well do you think it’s gonna over when they say, “*Hey, guess what? Ya know Yahweh, the uncreated Creator and transcendent King of the universe - the One you’ve been worshipping since Abraham and Moses - that one? Yeah He became a poor Preacher, who was crucified as a heretic and criminal, BUT who’s death and resurrection is proof that even the best of you are unclean unless you believe in him.*” **How’s that gonna go over?** Or think about them going out to the Greeks and Romans, who believed, as Aristotle and Plato taught, that truth, beauty, and justice were these cosmic ideals. Telling them: “*Hey guess what, you know your idea of truth? It’s actually become embodied in, not just a person, but an executed criminal from a no-name nation, whose beauty isn’t in His appearance, but in His perfect love for God and others. And unless you believe in Him, you’re lost!*” **You see what I mean?** The absurdity of trying to convince people that their relationship with righteousness, acceptance, justification...salvation is in their relationship to Jesus!² How once-sided, full-of-grace that is when we are SO hell-bent on squeezing those things out of the Law of Moses or just personal fulfillment.

The “absurdity” of that mission requires an equally “absurd” resource, which is exactly what Jesus is saying in **v.7** when He says, “*I tell you the truth: it’s to your advantage that I go away,*

² Insight adapted from “What Must I Do: Part 3” - larksite.com

(so that) the Helper (will) come.” He’s saying, “*you need the Holy Spirit even more than you need me here!*” Now, think about that: **How awesome would it’ve been to’ve had JESUS beside you for 3 years like these guys did? As your counselor, your advocate...your helper?** Like if I stood up here and announced my resignation...and hopefully a couple of you would be sad...but then I said, “*but don’t worry. We’ve already hired a great new Pastor to take over. Really experienced guy. I think you’re gonna love Him. His name...is Jesus.*” **Like, how exciting would that be?** To eat breakfast pizza...with Jesus Christ every week.” That’s like Jesus telling His disciples here: “*I’m resigning from, but don’t worry. I’ve got someone coming in... The Holy Spirit.*” **Are you as excited about having the Spirit as you would be about having Jesus as Pastor?** Cuz if not, it shows how far removed you are from grasping the reality of both your daily NEED AND the resource Jesus has given to MEET that need!

Cuz the **Second** thing you see here is: **What The Spirit Does TO Meet That Need.** And you see it there in **vv.8-11** in which Jesus says that, as “*the Helper,*” He’ll “*convict*” people of 3 things. And of course the Greek “*paraclete*” there, which gets translated as “*Helper,*” can also be translated, Comforter, Counselor...BUT paired with that word, “*convict,*” which literally means “*to convince;*” might be best translated “*Advocate,*” or even “*Defense Attorney,*” since a Defense Attorney, you know, is someone, who “*advocates*” by seeking to “*convince.*” That’s really what the Spirit does. He’s sent by Jesus to cross-examine you...to in a sense show you, your error. And specifically, Jesus says, with respect to 3 things: “*Sin, Righteousness and Judgement.*”...Now those are kinda churchy words but Jesus actually breaks em down for us. Says, you see, “*we need to be convicted, first, concerning sin, because we don’t naturally believe in Him.*” So right off the bat, “*sin,*” according to the Bible, isn’t primarily about your behavior, but your belief. In other words, while we think of sin as things we might do wrong; the Bible thinks of it in terms of what you trust in...Where you put your confidence, hope, happiness in. If that’s anything other than Jesus - as He says, “*not believing in me*” - it’s sin.

C. Everett Koop - the famous pediatric surgeon and U.S. Surgeon General in the 80’s - in his biography, He describes how the Spirit began working on Him for the first time. And he talks about how one of the first things that happened was, he became convinced that though he was trying hard to live a decent life - ya know, be true to yourself, nice to others, good to your family kinda stuff - it was to no avail. He began to realize that no matter how good he lived, HE really wasn’t that good. And that’s coming from an incredibly educated, successful, well-respected individual. But one of the first things the Holy Spirit’ll do/one of the first evidences, you might say, that the Spirit is working in your life is He’ll make you feel bad in order to get ya good... Like a doctor! If you’re really sick, the last thing you want your doctor to do is just be nice to you **right?** Ya know, be someone who because they don’t wanna upset you, doesn’t tell you the truth about your sickness. No! You want your doctor to be honest with you even WHEN it hurts!...In many ways, the Spirit does the exact same thing, just at a deeper-heart level. Which is to say, He’ll start to convince you that you’re not actually that good of a person, and that the ways in which you’re trying to MAKE yourself good or presentable/what the Bible calls, “*righteous,*” isn’t actually working. He wants to convince you of that, not to be mean, but to, like a good doctor, in a sense make you feel bad, so you can actually BECOME good. Cuz that’s

what Jesus means when He says, “*the Spirit convicts you of sin BECAUSE you don’t believe in me.*” That’s deeper, you understand, than just feeling bad. THIS is talking about seeing the things you place your confidence, meaning, purpose, hope in, and seeing that they don’t work! ***Do you sense that to be the case in some way today?*** Cuz that’s often the first thing the Spirit’ll do.

The ***Second*** thing is to convince you, you see, “*concerning righteousness, because, Jesus says, He’s gone to the Father.*” ***What’s He saying?*** He’s saying/***listen***: If “righteousness” means being presentable/approved of - think about a resume for a job. Your resume is essentially your record of righteousness or why an employer should approve of you - if righteousness means being presentable and approved of, then what the Spirit does, in the absence of you being able to look at Jesus face-to-face, is force you to put all of your, quote-unquote “resumes” or ways you’ve “developed your own righteousness,” and put em up against Jesus’ perfect righteousness. And not just so that you begin to see how woefully insufficient YOURS is in comparison to His, but ALSO, how HIS is freely given to you by faith...It’s like after my sophomore year in college. I thought I wanted to go to Law School. So I started applying to all these summer internships. And the one I wanted most was with Georgetown University Law Center. All summer long, super prestigious, I think actually paid. But there was a problem: Most of the people, and there were like thousands, who were applying for that internship had resumes that included things like clerking for famous justices; having interned with specific law firms; even publishing peer-reviewed articles. The best thing on MY resume...was working for a movie theater, popping popcorn! (Don’t ever get the extra butter by the way)...In other words, when I put my “record of righteousness” up against others, I fell woefully short. And it’s one thing to fall short for a summer internship. It’s quite another, to fall short before God...for eternity! So to be “*convicted of righteousness*” MEANS you see that with “*Jesus having gone to the Father,*” which is to say having died and risen for your sin, that a perfect resume of righteousness has now been given to you by faith. As ***2 Corinthians 5:21*** says, “*For our sake (God) made (Jesus) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*” You have to see that!

And you say, “*Why?*” Well, look at the 3rd thing He convicts of in ***v.II***: “*judgment, because, as Jesus says, the ruler of this world is judged.*” And what He’s saying is something like two sides of the same coin. ***On the one hand***, as you begin to see your sin and realize that nothing you do can make you perfectly acceptable or righteous - with that realization comes a kind of judgment! Just this week, Martin Scorsese, was interviewed by Vanity Fair,³ and I think, put it perfectly. Said, “*I wish I could take a break for 8 weeks and make a film at the same time, cuz the whole world has opened up to me, but it’s too late. It’s too late.*” And then he was asked to elaborate. He said: “*I’m old. I read stuff. I see things. I wanna tell stories, and there’s no more time. It’s too late.*” And you say, “*Martin Scorsese. Come on! 80 years old. Look at you’re accomplishments. Be kinder to yourself.*” But if you think that, then it just means you don’t understand how deep our desire to make ourselves presentable goes. How even saying, “*be kinder to yourself*” is a WAY of thinking you can make yourself enough by simply believing you’re enough. So on the one hand, there’s a kind of judgment that comes with it...But ***on the other***, when Jesus says that,

³ <https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2023/05/martin-scorsese-im-old-i-want-to-tell-stories-but-theres-no-more-time>

“the ruler of this world is judged,” what He’s literally saying is that the Devil - the one who’s constantly driving you to feel the need to develop that righteousness of your own, and then accusing you of not being enough when you do - HE’S been condemned. So here’s what that means: When you realize that you don’t HAVE to develop your own righteousness, because Jesus’ has been given to you by faith, and therefore Satan can’t condemn you, then what happens is, that fear of not living up in some way - not being a good enough parent, successful enough, beautiful enough, even moral enough - that fear gets removed. But too, the pride of ever thinking you could live up in the first place, gets eliminated as well. In other words, you begin to live free of judgment, and therefore...at peace...safe, because you know: In Christ, there’s nothing you could do so well as to make God love you more. And there’s nothing you could fail to do to make Him love you less! Peace! ***Have you experienced that? ARE you experiencing that?***

And maybe you’re thinking, *“I want to”... “I’m not sure.”* Let me ***Finally*** show you, not just Why You Need The Spirit, and What The Spirit Does, but **HOW He Works**. And if you look in **vv.12-15**, you see that the answer is: He works through the truth of the Gospel. Cuz you see there, Jesus describes the Spirit working, as a process of teaching. Says, *“When the Spirit of truth comes, he’ll guide you into all the truth,”* and *“He’ll take what’s mine and declare it to you;”* even *“will GLORIFY me BY declaring it to you.”* ***So you see what He’s saying?*** He’s saying, the way the Spirit works is through progressively revealing the truth about Jesus to you! So what that means is: you don’t get everything you need to know in one fell swoop. As Jesus says, *“I still have many things to say to you.”* Rather, there’s an element of continually trusting God to awaken you to the reality of life with Christ. And what I mean is, often times, I’ll be reading my girls a Bible story or even helping to put together the Kids Lesson here on Sundays, and I’ll run into a sentiment that says something like, *“The Bible is the story of humanity’s continual search for God.”* ***Ever heard that?*** And oh man, that sounds so good ***doesn’t it?*** 66 Books, 1,189 chapters, 31,103 verses all boiled down into a nice, tight summary! Here’s the problem: It’s wrong! The Bible isn’t about your or anyone’s search for God. It’s about God’s revelation of Himself to people like you and me, who AREN’T naturally searching for Him. Abraham, hanging out in a random land and God comes to Him with a covenant...Moses, as a baby, having his life preserved by God so that God can then find Him while he’s in hiding after killing a man and call him to lead Israel...David, in a field, called by the prophet Samuel to be King OF Israel...Jonah, being told to go preach forgiveness to the Ninevites; fleeing God, but God still coming after Him...In the NT, Jesus Himself, giving the 3 parables of the lost sheep, lost coin, and lost sons to show how God lovingly, mercifully, and graciously pursues those who are far from Him...Heck, just the Incarnation of Jesus! ***Is that not God coming to us because we would never come to Him?*** Of course it is! And over-and-over this is the story! Which is WHY a great acid test, if you will, for not only whether you’re a Christian vs just generally religious or moral, is: Do you think you’re searching for God/truth OR do you sense God is, in a way, handling you. That who He is/what He’s done isn’t something you’d naturally pursue, but yet see yourself becoming awakened to your NEED for Him, and the validity OF Him. THAT is the Spirit!

Cuz understand, the Spirit doesn’t reveal generic truth or even ALL truth. After all, there’s nothing specific in the Bible about quantum mechanics or artificial intelligence ***right?*** No! The

truth the Spirit is revealing isn't generic or even ALL of it, but rather the truth you NEED... which is the truth about Jesus! As Jesus says, *He'll take what's mine and declare it to you/will glorify me BY declaring it to you.* **You know what it means to glorify something?** It means to hold it in highest esteem. To see it's value, significance, importance. It MEANS, to fall in love with it. Cuz when I fell in love with Abby/way before she fell in love with me by the way...I didn't just say, *"oh yeah she's really beautiful."* I said, *"wow, I want her to become the most important person in my life. I want her opinion of me more than anyone else's."*... THAT is what the Spirit is trying to get you to with Jesus. So not just learning doctrine/theology, getting you into church, or even living a certain way. But rather, getting you to fall in love with Jesus! You say *"why?"* Because THAT'S the one thing you can't do without. Cuz of course when you fall in love with someone, it's like everything gets ordered **right?** Spouses, you know this: When things are good between you and your husband or you and your wife, it's like the whole world can fall apart - your work can be a nightmare; kids a disaster; the bills unpaid - but because you love your spouse and you know their love for you, there's a sense in which everything's gonna be ok. Single folks, you know this with your best friends. When those friendships are off, even the slightest thing can set you off. But when they're good; it's like no matter what comes your way...you're good too. **How much more with the One for whom you're created?** When you know the love of Jesus, everything doesn't become easy, but it does start to get ordered rightly. For example, you begin to be able to take criticism and be snubbed by the opinions of others BECAUSE Jesus' opinion of you is more glorious. You're able to lose out on opportunities BECAUSE you know that loss doesn't shock Jesus, whose love for you is big enough to hold you...The list goes on-and-on. What the Spirit is trying to get you to see is Jesus as the most glorious thing in your life! **Is that true for you?** Cuz Friend, who else could ever say TO you, *"all that sin/those things that you've been trusting, which are wreaking havoc on your life, cuz they can't bear the weight of your soul; it's forgiven...And that righteousness that you so desperately long for in the people and things you're pursuing; I've gifted to you...And the judgment you feel when you fail and which still hangs over you when you succeed; it's been condemned."* No one else can say that you, but Jesus!...So see Friend, the beauty of the Gospel is that deep experience and concrete truth aren't opposed. They're perfectly wed together...by the Spirit! **Do you see your need for Him today? Do ya sense Him convincing you about certain things, even IF you still have questions? Are you falling more in love with Jesus?** Come before the Spirit now and say, *"Spirit, I need you! Fill me! Glorify Jesus BEFORE me! And send me out to glorify Jesus THROUGH me."* Come to him now...**Let's Pray:**