

Message

Our Advocate

For the past 2 months or so, we have been working our way through this chapter from John's gospel – chapter 15. I believe that this chapter is important because Jesus is **teaching his followers things they need to know after he is gone**. Jesus is aware that his time in this world is coming to a close. He will be returning to heaven, where He existed and lived before coming to earth in the form of a baby born to Mary. He has gathered a group of people around him, who have abandoned their former way of life and have aligned themselves with Him. They are His followers. As we read the text, we are aware that Jesus and his followers are walking on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane. In the Garden, Jesus will yield Himself to do God's will. He will accept God's plan to go to the cross. Jesus will be betrayed and handed over to be judged, condemned and crucified. As they are walking Jesus has talked with them about their mission in this world. They are to be **fruit-bearing branches on God's vine**. He has taught them that they must stay connected to Him, to **remain in Him** just as a branch must stay attached to the vine in order to produce fruit. He has reminded them that He values His relationship with them – His disciples are no longer just servants, **they [we] are His friends**. **Jesus has taught them to anticipate rejection from the world** – that is the enemies of God. If the world hated Jesus, we should not be surprised that the world hates those who follow Him. In choosing to follow Him, we have turned our back on the world system that is in rebellion against God. We no longer belong to the world, but now we belong to Jesus. Now as we come to the end of this chapter, we hear **Jesus' response to the world's hatred of His followers**.

The anticipation of hatred and persecution does not sound very appealing or attractive to us who would be His followers. **(16:1-4)** But Jesus' promise is that **we will not have to go it alone**. He will be departing to return to the Father, but **He will send another**. Jesus **promises that He will send the Spirit**.

This is not the first time Jesus has spoken about the coming of the Spirit. Earlier on this evening, while the group was still gathered in the Upper Room, Jesus spoke of this gift:

¹⁵ ***"If you love me, keep my commands. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for **he lives with you and will beⁱⁿ in you.** John 14:15-17***

Now again he repeats the promise of the coming of the Spirit. In the earlier passage from John 14 Jesus promises that this Spirit will be **"in you."** Christ's followers will be **indwelt by the Holy Spirit**. That is an **important point in our theology**. When we choose to follow Jesus as our Savior and Lord, we will be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. In his sermon on the day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter promised: ***"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."*** (Acts 2:38-39). Everyone who makes the decision to follow Jesus as Savior and Lord will be indwelt by the Holy Spirit. If you identify yourself as a Christian – that is you have accepted Jesus as your Savior and Lord – the Holy Spirit has come into your life. Paul says in Romans 8, ***If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. (Romans 8:9).***

So what do we know about this Spirit that Jesus has promised.

Advocate. Jesus refers to the Spirit as the Advocate. The Greek word that is translated in our English Bibles as Advocate is Paraclete. It literally means **"One who is called along side."** The role of a Paraclete is to be a **counsellor, helper, strengthener, supporter, adviser, advocate (legal; courtroom), ally**. In 14:16, Jesus refers to the Advocate as **"another advocate"**. The Holy Spirit functions as "Another Advocate", taking the place of a previous Advocate. The Holy Spirit will take over the role of Jesus after He has returned to heaven. SO, as we think about Jesus' anticipation of "trouble" for His followers in the world, He assures them that they will not be alone. He has been with them, now, he will be replaced by the Holy Spirit.

He comes from the Father and Son. Jesus says that HE will send from the Father, the Spirit. We come to **another important point of our theology.** Some people are frightened by the word Theology. They think that Theology is the domain of Highly educated scholars and seminary professors. But Theology simply refers to a system of beliefs. We have certain things that we believe to be true. And those points of belief affect the way we live, the decisions we make. In our Christian Faith we believe in something known as the **Trinity**. We believe that there is **ONE GOD**, but that He exists as **Three Persons** – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We do not have the time in this sermon to fully discuss and explore the doctrine of the Trinity and the three persons of the Trinity. The point that I think is important for us to make here today is that there is a connection between the Spirit and the Father and the Son. The Spirit is sent from the Son and the Father. They are one in essence. What the Father is, the Son is, and what the Son is, the Spirit is. So when we say we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we are not talking about some “mysterious” ghost like being. God Himself is with us and in us.

He is the Spirit of truth. As Jesus promises the gift of the Advocate, he refers to Him as the Spirit of Truth. Again we see a connection between the Spirit and Jesus. Jesus says that HE is the truth (John 14:6). Now He refers to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Truth. There are many systems of beliefs and practices. But the Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. **He alone reveals what is true. All other utterances are falsehoods.**

He will testify about Jesus. A final thought that Jesus shares about the Holy Spirit is that His work will be to Testify about Jesus. In the context of what Jesus has just talked about – Hatred from the world - Jesus’ followers will need to be constantly encouraged to not give up, to not fall away. That will be the work of the Spirit to continuously testify to them, the truth about Jesus. William Barclay in his commentary on this passage writes this:

“When the story of Jesus is told to us, when the picture of Jesus is set before us, when the teaching of Jesus is unfolded to us, what makes us feel that this picture is none other than the picture of the Son of God, what makes us feel – as we say, instinctively – that here is wisdom which is divine? That reaction of the human mind, that answer of the human heart is the work of the Holy Spirit. **It is the Holy Spirit within us who moves us to respond to Jesus Christ”** (Page 219)

Jesus concludes this verse with the challenge that just as the Holy Spirit is a witness to us about Jesus, we also are called to be witnesses. In spite of the resistance from the world, we must be persistent in our work as witnesses. As the Holy Spirit convinces us of the truth about Jesus, our inner convictions about Jesus **compel us to tell others.**

As we conclude this study I encourage you to read and study, to learn more about this One that has come to us from the Father and Son to be our Helper in this world – the Holy Spirit. Jesus has not left you to fend for yourself in this world. He has come in the person of the Holy Spirit to empower you, to strengthen you, to enable you to fulfil His mission for you.