

A Friend For The Jesus Way

John 14:15-24

Call: Isa 43:1-2; 19; 20b-21 (NIV)

Scripture: Acts 2:1-4; 16-18 (Children's Storybook Bible)

I. Introduction

Good morning! This morning I want to tell you about a friend of mine. We have been friends for a long time now, for a few decades. I try to make time for my friend on a regular basis, and when I do, my friend provides strength and joy and peace and wisdom and comfort to me. The really great thing about this friend is he is always with me and never leaves me. I am of course speaking about the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. He is the friend we have with us along the Jesus Way.

Review

We continue our studies in the book of John this morning. We are on the night before Jesus goes to the cross. Jesus had gathered his first followers together for a Passover meal somewhere in downtown Jerusalem. During the meal, he redefines everything, instituting the Lord's Supper. After the meal, he washed his disciple's feet.

After that, he told them what was initially devastating news. He said he was going away. He had come from the Father and now was going back to the Father. As we said last week, this refers to his crucifixion, resurrection and ascension. And, for the rest of the evening, Jesus went on to teach and prepare his followers (and us) to go on living in the absence of his physical presence. He begins with a command: "Do not let your hearts be troubled." In other words, don't be anxious or afraid. Eventually, he will even say, "It is to your advantage that I go away" (John 16:7). I can imagine the disciples thinking to themselves, "What Jesus? How can it be to our advantage? How can it possibly be to our advantage that you go away?"

I have a very good friend of mine who serves as a spiritual director to me. How would I respond if one day, he would all of sudden say, "I'm moving to Texas and it is to your advantage that I go away." I would say no way! It can't possibly be to my advantage for my friend to move away.

How can it possibly be advantageous for the disciples (and us) if Jesus goes away? Because says Jesus, "If I go away, I will send the Holy Spirit to you to be your friend along the way." That moment happens at Pentecost, what we just read from the Children's Storybook Bible.

I invite you into our text this morning, beginning in John 14, verse 15.

II. The Promise of the Friend (14:15-24)

15 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world

cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”

*19 Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. 20 In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. 21 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.” 22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?” 23 Jesus answered him, “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. 24 Whoever does not **love** me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me. (ESV)*

A. Love

Did you hear how many times love is used in those verses? Eight times in those verses alone. We’ll talk about that in a little bit.

B. The Promise

Jesus says, “Don’t be troubled, anxious or afraid. Even though I’m going away, I will not leave you as orphans. I will not leave you alone. I will give you a friend to be with you forever.” So, who is this friend?

C. Characteristics of the Friend

From these verses, we can make five important observations about this friend: name, personhood, “another,” “with you (pl) forever,” and “in.” So, let’s walk through these five observations. First of all, name.

- **Name:** What is the name of this friend? He is the Holy Spirit. Jesus will call him the Holy Spirit in a few verses. In these verses, Jesus calls him the “helper” and the “the Spirit of truth.” You may know that the Greek word behind “helper” here is “paracletos” or “paraclete.”

Not parakeet. My friend, Darrell Johnson, likes to tell the story, that after preaching on this text, a hard-of-hearing member of his church came up to him and said, “Pastor, I’m so confused. I thought the Holy Spirit was a dove, but you kept calling him a parakeet.”

It's to our advantage that Jesus goes away because when he does, he will send the “paraclete.” This word “paraclete” is notoriously hard to define, as can be seen with our English translations. The King James translates it as “comforter.” The NIV and NLT translate it as “advocate.” The NASB and ESV – as “helper.” The Holman Bible - as “counselor.” The Message - as “friend.” The JB Phillips paraphrase from the 1960s renders it as “someone to stand by you.” Although this is a phrase, it is a good option. “Para” means alongside. “Cletos” means “to call.” The paraclete is “one called in alongside.” Along the Jesus way, we don’t have to be afraid because Jesus will call a friend alongside us, the blessed paraclete.

- **Personhood:** So, how are we to think about this friend? Answer: this friend is a person. As we read how Jesus describes the paraclete, we realize He does not describe him as an “it.” Throughout this upper room discourse, the paraclete is described using personal pronouns. The paraclete, the Holy Spirit, is **not** an impersonal force or influence, like the force in Star Wars. We do not speak of the paraclete as an “it.” The paraclete is a person. The Holy Spirit is personal. This is critical because if we think of the paraclete as an “it,” we are tempted to manipulate “it.” We would think we could control “it.” As we embark on this adventure along the Jesus way, we are not in control of the journey. We give up control to the purposes and plans of the paraclete.

The personal-ness of the paraclete becomes even more evident as we read the rest of the New Testament. We find that the Holy Spirit can speak, think, forbid, help, search hearts, teach, lead, predict, intercede, groan, and can even be grieved. Only a person can do those things.

So, the Holy Spirit is a person, like Jesus and like the Father, a community of persons, the holy trinity of persons.

But, in verse 16, Jesus says he will send “another” paraclete to be with us forever.

- **“Another”:** What does Jesus mean by “another”? Who was the first paraclete? The word Jesus uses here for “another” is “allon.” There are two words in the Greek language for another, “allon” and “heteron.” Heteron means “another of a different kind.” It comes into the English language in words like heterogeneous and heterosexual, another of a different kind. Allon means “another of the same kind.” Jesus uses “allon” here meaning “another of the same kind.” Jesus will send an “allon paracleton” to be with us forever, another paraclete of the same kind. When Jesus goes away physically, he will send another of the same kind.

Okay, so who was the first paraclete? Answer: Jesus. John tells us that in his first letter, 1 John 2:1. Jesus is the first paraclete. This is why Jesus can say in verse 17, “You know him.” And, I can imagine the disciples saying, “We do?” Yes you do! Because the Spirit is another of the same kind, stamped with the personality of Jesus.

Now why is this so important? Because it means the person and work of the Spirit cannot be separated from the person and work of Jesus. Having the Spirit with us is just like having Jesus with us on the way. The presence of the Holy Spirit is just like the presence of Jesus. Again, this becomes evident throughout the rest of the New Testament where the Spirit is said to do the same tasks as Jesus did in his physical presence (Burge, 141). Not only that, but throughout the rest of the New Testament, we find that to be in the Spirit is to be in Christ, to be indwelt by the Spirit is to be indwelt by Christ, to receive the Spirit is to receive Jesus. The phrases are used interchangeably. So, even though they are separate persons, they cannot be separated

in experience, because the Spirit is “another of the same kind.” Jesus will not leave us as orphans. He will come to us in the “another.”

But, there’s more. Jesus also says we cannot separate the person and work of the Spirit from the person and work of the Father. Throughout the upper room discourse, Jesus draws a distinction between the three persons of the trinity, but also implies some kind of oneness. So, in verse 23: *Jesus says, “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.* Did you hear those pronouns? **We** will come to them and will make **our** home with them. The person and work of the Spirit cannot be separated from the person and work of Jesus *and* cannot be separated from the person and work of the Father. To be on the Jesus Way is to have the presence of the Trinity with us.

But, it gets even better.

- **“with you (pl) forever”**: Verse 16. Jesus will ask the Father, and he will give you another helper to be with you (plural) **forever**. The plural “yous” in these verses speak to the Spirit’s presence to all disciples on the Jesus way. Up until this point, the presence of Jesus has been restricted by space and time. If Jesus was in Galilee and his disciples were in Jerusalem, Jesus couldn’t be with them. But, with the coming of the “another,” the presence of Jesus is no longer restricted in those same ways. As John Stott says, “The Holy Spirit universalizes the presence of Jesus... and makes the presence of Jesus real to all of us” (Stott, 41).

Ultimately, this means we don’t need to go to some sacred shrine in Jerusalem or anywhere else to find Jesus. He meets us everywhere we go. We don’t need to wait for that special day when he was to come to Cupertino. He comes to Cupertino everyday and stays forever! In Matthew 28, when Jesus says, *“I am with you always”* in the Great Commission, he means he is with us always in the person of “the another.” For, in the presence of “the another,” the “God with us” triune God is realized and universalized. There is nowhere you can go where the Spirit is not, and therefore where Jesus is not. We don’t have to be afraid because we are never alone! The another is present with us forever and will never leave us or forsake us.

- **“In”**: As good as that is, it gets even better. In verse 17, Jesus says this friend, the Holy Spirit, will dwell not only “with us” but also “in us” forever. Inside us! You realize you can’t get closer than in, right? Can you say “in” with me? In. In. This is so amazing! It is to our advantage that Jesus goes away, because the relationship with the another is even closer than when Jesus was in the flesh. He will dwell in you Jesus says. If you belong to Jesus Christ, then another person lives inside you. So Paul will say to the Corinthians, *“Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”* (1 Cor 3:16). In you! We are inhabited people, indwelt by another.

I remember a friend of mine telling a story about her daughter going to school as a kindergartner and telling a friend that Jesus was living in her heart. And, the friend asked her if it hurt to have a person living in her heart.

The paraclete, the third person of the Trinity, is not only with us, but is also in us!

So five key characteristics of the Holy Spirit that help us think rightly about him: name, personhood, “another,” “with you (pl) forever,” and “in.” What a friend we have in the Spirit paraclete!

D. Works of the Friend

Now that we know *about* the paraclete, what is He doing inside us? We will talk more about this next week, but, in this discourse, Jesus uses two primary character descriptions for him: holy and true, as in Holy Spirit and Spirit of Truth. These two descriptions are helpful in understanding what the Spirit paraclete is doing as he indwells us.

1. The Holy Spirit

Holy. The paraclete is making us holy. The Holy Spirit “holifies” us. I think this word holy sometimes scares us, because we think perfectionism or flawlessness. But we don’t need to be afraid of this word. It does mean to be set apart or sanctified or to be made pure. The Holy Spirit indwelling in us, does make us pure and clean. Over time, He does purify us and cleanse us from the “pollution and uncleanness of sin” (Packer, 96). The Holy Spirit is fulfilling God’s command to us, “You shall be holy as the Lord, your God, is holy” (1 Pet 1:15-16).

But maybe it’s more helpful to understand this term as making us whole, w-h-o-l-e. To be made holy is to be made whole as in complete or unbroken.

Humpty-dumpty sat on a wall.

Humpty-dumpty had a great fall.

All the kings horses and all the kings men could not put humpty together again.

Well, I have good news today for humpty-dumpty and every one of us that feels broken like humpty dumpty. I have good news for all of us who see and feel the brokenness within ourselves and want to be fixed. There is a king who can put us back together again, who can make us whole. King Jesus can put us back together again.

And the way King Jesus puts us back together again is through the spirit paraclete working with us and in us. The rest of the New Testament emphasizes that when the Holy Spirit enters our lives, he goes to work making us like the most whole person to have ever lived, Jesus Christ.

And, the primary way the Holy Spirit does this is by teaching us how to love. We become whole and holy by learning how to love. Learning how to love is the supreme lesson of life.

In fact, this is why you are here, to learn how to love, to move from self-centered-ness to others-centered-ness. As the Holy Spirit works in us, he enables us to love Jesus and keep his commandments to love others just as he loves us. As the Spirit works in us, he enables us to love Jesus and keep his commandments to serve others as people of the towel. And as we do this, we become more and more whole and more holy, looking more and more like Jesus himself.

2. The Spirit of Truth

But, Jesus also describes the paraclete as true. He calls the paraclete the Spirit of Truth three times in this discourse, also saying that when the paraclete comes he will “guide you into all truth” (16:13). He dwells with us and in us, guiding us into all truth. He teaches us about ourselves, our world, our relationships, our circumstances and about the nature and character of our God. Not all at once of course, but day by day, week by week, year by year, he teaches us as we are able to handle the truth. He comes to us and slowly unfolds the truth to us, and *“we shall know the truth and the truth will set us free”* (John 8:32). The Holy Spirit lives in us to fulfill that promise. This is such good news because it means we are not left to figure the truth out for ourselves. In our time of great confusion and uncertainty with all kinds of truth claims around us, the Holy Spirit promises to lead us through all that confusion.

Think about it. How often has something happened at work or at home which didn't seem to feel right, that was troubling for you? And, you stayed awake at night trying to put your finger on what was wrong, but you couldn't quite figure out what it is. So, you wrestled and wrestled with it. And you wondered why you felt so unsettled about it. The Spirit of Truth was there helping you make sense of what is happening.

Or, think about our hearts. How often do we feel like something is off in our hearts? Something within ourselves is troubling. Jeremiah says that *“the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”* (Jer 17:9). I have an answer for Jeremiah! The Paraclete can understand the heart! He knows all the nooks and crannies of the human heart. And, he sees clearly the games we tend to play. The games where we justify our actions and excuse our misdeeds. He knows us. And, if we yield to his leading, he will lead us to freedom. *You will know the truth and the truth will set you free!* That's a promise!

Because who is the truth? Jesus. And, the paraclete loves Jesus and is always pointing us toward him. I like how JI Packer describes the paraclete. He is a great spotlight. He is always shining a light on Jesus! When something is spotlighted well, you never see the spotlight, do you? No. Nowhere do we find the Spirit telling us about himself. He is sometimes called the shy member of the trinity because he's always spotlighting the Son. He's always pointing us to Jesus in the hopes that we will come to love Him like He does. His great passion is that we know and love Jesus too. His great passion is that we would become obsessed with Jesus, that we would be wonderfully preoccupied with Jesus, so

much so that we would see Jesus in all that we do. We would see everything we do in light of Jesus, the truth –

- that we would surf the internet in light of Jesus,
- that we would watch TV and movies in light of Jesus,
- that we would participate in politics in light of Jesus,
- that we would engage with our neighbors and community in light of Jesus,
- that we would take part in social movements in light of Jesus,
- and that we would understand ourselves and our hearts in light of Jesus, the way, the truth and the life.

As the Spirit of Truth, this is what the paraclete is doing inside of us, shining a spotlight on Jesus, so *we would know the truth, and the truth would set us free*.

Yes, a teacher has taken up residence within us to lead and guide us into all truth. As one writer says, living inside us is “The world’s greatest theologian,” and he will teach us everything concerning Jesus.

III. Conclusion

Jesus says, “Don’t be anxious. Don’t be afraid. It is to your advantage that I go away, because if I go, I will send a friend to be with you. He will live with you and in you forever. And, slowly but surely, he will put you back together again, making you look like me. And, he will lead and guide you into all the truth.” Amen.

Benediction

Do not be anxious!

Do not be afraid!

Jesus is with you always

And in you always

Through the paraclete

He will make you whole and
will lead you into all truth.

So, don’t be anxious!

Don’t be afraid!

Go in peace.

Resources

Burge, Gary, *The Anointed Community*

Carson, Don, *The Farewell Discourse and Final Prayer of Jesus*

Johnson, Darrell, *Preaching the Gospel According to John* (Regent College Course)

Klink, Edward, *John* (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the NT)

Packer, JI, *Keep In Step with the Spirit*

Stott, John, *Christ the Liberator*