

The Spirit and the World, Part 2

John 16:1-15

Call: Ps 46:1-3; 10-11 (NIV)

Scripture: 1 Pet 4:12-14 (NLT)

I. Intro

Good morning! We continue our studies in the Gospel of John today, continuing in our journey with those first disciples through what has traditionally been called the Upper Room Discourse. This week we will continue exploring some of the same themes as last week. If you remember, we ended last week with a reflection about what we know to be true about those places where we spend most of our time. And we listed four things we knew to be true about those places. These four things are actually true about all the places we work and live.

1. I know that for the most part the people we interact with in the places where we work and live are trying to make sense of life. Some are progressing. Others may be struggling. But, on the whole, the people we interact with throughout our days are trying to make sense of their existence. They are trying to become “fully human, fully alive,” to use St. Irenaeus words.
2. I know that the enemies of life are at work in all those places. Sin, evil and death are at work in the places we work and live. Sin, evil and death cause injustice and power-grabbing and jealousy and broken relationships. They also cause frustration and disappointment and sickness and pain and suffering. There are powers at work where we work and live which oppose Jesus and his good purposes.
3. I know that these powers do not have the last word in any of the places where we work and live. Sin, evil and death do not have the last word. It sometimes feels like they do, but things are not always as they appear. Sin, evil and death are defeated foes. Jesus has not abolished them yet, but they are defeated foes. And, therefore, He has the last word on everything.
4. And, lastly, according to this upper room discourse, I know that we are never alone in any place or situation. There is a presence with us in all of the places where we work and live. The paraclete, the Holy Spirit, is with us. The paraclete, which is just like the presence of Jesus, is there at work in all of these situations. He is on the job there, bearing witness to Jesus. Yes, we who believe in Jesus are also called to love and do good. But, what Jesus emphasized in last week’s text is that even if we don’t show up, the paraclete is still there on the job bearing witness. The paraclete is actively bearing his own witness to Jesus. As Michael Green has said, “It is the role of the Spirit to make Jesus attractive to people. We try to make Jesus real and attractive to those around us. But, in the end, there never was a man, woman or child who came to living faith in Christ unless the Holy Spirit made Jesus real and winsome to them. You and I cannot do that. We can only construct a neon light. The Spirit has to light it up.”

So, what are some of the ways the Spirit lights up the neon light? That’s what we’ll talk about today.

I invite you into our text today, John 16, beginning in verse 1.

II. The Persecution Re-stated (16:1-4a)

1 "I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. 2 They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. 3 And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. 4 But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.

A. Persecution

Here, Jesus restates his words regarding persecution from the world. If you remember, last week we saw that the world, according to John, is human society organizing itself without God. The "world," to John, resists, rejects and rebels against Jesus and Jesus' disciples. Anyone who follows Jesus can simply expect to be persecuted. Because the vine was persecuted, any branches connected to the vine will also be persecuted. This is simply the cost of discipleship.

Now, it's probably important to point out here that this is no theoretical matter. Researchers have determined that "the 20th century has produced double the number of Christian martyrs [than] all the previous 19 centuries put together." According to Open Doors, an organization which exists to stand with the persecuted church so they know they are never alone, 1 believer dies every waking hour. This is no theoretical matter.

This is why the Wednesday morning prayer group prays through the World Watch List that *Open Doors* publishes. Their list contains the top 50 countries of highest persecution in the world. I probably don't need to mention that some of our partners live in the persecuted countries on this list. This week, we prayed for Tunisia at number 35, where women are particularly vulnerable to persecution. I would encourage you to grab a hand of someone being persecuted and stand with them.

B. Persecution in God's Name

If you've been a Christian for any length of time, these things may not surprise you. What is surprising is that Jesus says that some of the worst persecution will be done in the name of God.

You may be familiar with *The Book of Common Prayer*. It's a liturgy for the Anglican Church. We sometimes pray prayers, called collects, from this book. It was originally written by a man named Thomas Cranmer. And, it is said that a sermon was being preached while he was burned at the stake in 1556. According to Jesus, some of the worst persecution will be done in the name of God.

C. Take Courage

So, why does Jesus tell his disciples these things? It is not to scare them off, but to encourage them to stand firm and not fall away. The thinking is that if persecution had hit them without prior warning, it would definitely cause defection. But now, with this warning, Jesus' disciples

can be better prepared for persecution. Because it *is* coming. And, today we can truly say that “the blood of the martyrs *is* the seed of the church.”

D. Encouragement

Although it might sound discouraging to us, as I have reflected on these texts, I have found two particular points helpful:

- One is that the context of this persecution is the intimacy of Jesus. We walk through life abiding in him. We are connected as a branch to the vine. We have a deep intimacy with him throughout our lives on this earth.
- And, secondly, we are never alone! We have the presence of the paraclete with us. We have the Spirit of Truth with us. And, that’s where Jesus goes next.

III. The Paraclete Will Convict the World (16:4b-11)

“I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. 5 But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ 6 But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. 7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper [Paraclete] will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. 8 And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; 10 concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; 11 concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

A. Advantage?

It is to the disciple’s advantage that Jesus goes away. We talked about this a few weeks ago, but let me summarize in case you missed it. How could it be to the disciple’s advantage that Jesus goes away? Because he will then send the paraclete. And the paraclete can be present everywhere. For those first disciples, if they were in Jerusalem and Jesus was in Galilee, they could not experience his presence. They would need to travel to Galilee to be with him. But after the paraclete comes, there is no need to travel anywhere to experience the presence of Jesus. The Paraclete’s presence, which is just like the presence of Jesus, is everywhere. The paraclete, the Holy Spirit, universalizes the presence of Jesus.

So what is the Spirit doing everywhere? He is *“bearing witness about Jesus”* (John 15:26). He’s testifying to the truth of Jesus everywhere. But, how does he do it? Verse 8: the Spirit *“will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment”* (John 16:8).

B. Convict

The paraclete will convict the world. The word here for convict means to “bring a person to the point of recognizing wrong” (BDAG). In this sense, the Spirit is like a prosecuting attorney, proving someone to be in the wrong, not in the sense of proving it before a judge, but in the sense of bringing about personal conviction within a person’s heart and mind. But, in this sense, convict can also mean convince. The paraclete will “convince” the world about Jesus (BDAG). Notice it is the paraclete who convicts and convinces the world. Not us. It is the

paraclete to break through to the world, not us. How does he particularly do this? I don't know. But, I know he does it. He did it for me. I am evidence of the convicting and convincing ministry of the Spirit.

So what is the paraclete convicting and convincing the world of? Jesus says three things in verses 8 through 11: sin, righteousness and judgment. Now those are heavy theological words, aren't they? Let's look at each one individually.

1. **#1. Sin.** The paraclete is out there convicting *the world of sin ... because they do not believe in Jesus*. This is the one of the most audacious things Jesus ever said. Did you notice it? Jesus just re-defined sin right here. Jesus has just revealed the very root of sin. Fundamentally, sin is unbelief in Jesus. Sin is not just bad attitudes and bad behaviors. Sin is not just missing the mark. It is all of that. But, essentially, sins – plural – are symptoms of sin – singular. Sin is not believing Jesus, all he stood for and all he claimed to be. Sin is refusing to trust Jesus. And, all of our sins plural essentially arise from not trusting Jesus and his way of life. And Jesus says here that the paraclete is at work in all of our places and situations convicting people of this sin of unbelief.

This is exactly what happened at Pentecost in Acts 2. After Peter's sermon, the text says that the people were "*cut to the heart*" and asked Peter what they should do (Acts 2:37). Peter told them to repent about being wrong about Jesus.

2. **#2. Righteousness.** The paraclete is out there convicting the world concerning righteousness ... *because [Jesus] go[es] to the Father, and you will see [him] no longer*. Righteousness is a rare term in John. Paul uses it everywhere. John doesn't. And, here, it's used in a negative sense. And, I think the nuance here refers to the rightness of behavior. What Jesus is saying here is that the Spirit will convict people of their knowledge of right and wrong.
 - Throughout the Old Testament, God denounced those who "*call evil good and good evil*" (ie. Isa 5:20). In the time of the Judges, the repeated refrain was that the Israelites were doing what was right in their own eyes, not in God's eyes. In Isaiah, we are told that "*the righteousness of the people was like filthy rags*" (Isa 64:6). They didn't know the right way to live. They weren't living God's way.
 - Then in John, Jesus denounced the Religious leaders for their self-righteousness. They placed great emphasis on the Sabbath rules, but got angry at the healing of a lame man (Jn 5:16). They possessed the law of Moses which says do not murder, but end up participating in the murder of Jesus (Jn 7:19). They got it all wrong.
 - Then Paul comes along and insisted that unbelievers "*do not know the righteousness that comes from God and seek to establish their own righteousness*" (Rom 10:3). Their sense of right and wrong was all wrong.

And, Jesus says that the paraclete will convict people of a faulty view of right and wrong. He convicts, according to verse 10, "*because Jesus goes to the Father*" (John 16:10). What does he mean by this? Jesus' path to the Father goes through the crucifixion, the

resurrection and the ascension. And in the resurrection and ascension, Jesus and his way of life are vindicated. Jesus' view of right and wrong is vindicated. Through the resurrection and ascension, the Jesus way is confirmed as the true and right way to live. What he said and did *really was* of God, and is confirmed when he goes to the Father. The Spirit convinces people of this truth.

And who's the primary example of this? Saul of Tarsus, the apostle Paul. He hated the name of Jesus and everything it stood for. Saul wanted to get rid of the Jesus movement and anyone involved in the Jesus movement. But, the Spirit broke through to him that he was, in fact, wrong about Jesus' death. The Spirit revealed to him that it was only through that death that Saul would find righteousness before God.

3. **And #3. Judgment:** The paraclete is out there "[convicting the world concerning judgment... because the ruler of this world is judged.](#)" The world's standards of judgment are all wrong. The world's judgment of the living God is all wrong. The world thinks the cross is where Jesus is judged, and Jesus is condemned. But the exact opposite is the case. The cross is where the world is judged and then redeemed. The cross is actually where Satan is judged, defeated and dethroned. The battle is won at the cross. That was D-Day, and it's only a matter of time before V-Day. And the paraclete comes to convince the world of this great fact.

So, three ways the paraclete breaks through to the world that resists, rejects and rebels against Jesus. Sometimes it happens quickly. Sometimes it takes a lot of time. Sometimes the work of the Spirit brings great hostility. But Jesus says that we can trust that the paraclete is at work in all of our places and situations, convicting and convincing the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. How does he particularly do it? I don't know. But, I know he does, otherwise there would be no hope for any of us. Without the Spirit, no one could ever break free from the chains of this world and turn to Jesus.

C. Encouragement

And, so, I think this passage should provide great encouragement to those of us who follow Jesus. As we go about our daily lives interacting with a thoroughly secular culture, it sometimes feels hopeless to be a witness for Jesus. Am I right? As the people around us search for meaning and hope, how do we bring a word of grace and truth? It isn't easy.

But, hopefully this passage encourages us again that long before we show up, the Spirit of truth is already there and has been working to convict and convince. As we defined evangelism last week, "Evangelism is listening in on a conversation the Holy Spirit is having with another person. And, entering the conversation only if invited either by that person or by the Holy Spirit" (Johnson).

I was reminded this week of our RSCP ministry. We're just finishing our month of serving the homeless within the Rotating Safe Car Park (RSCP). Thank you to all who served! Over 70 of you were a part of this ministry this month. I was reminded that we describe this ministry as a

“listening ministry.” We listen before we talk. Listening sends a message of love and care. Listening tells the other person they are not an object, but that they are a person made in the image of God. And, you know what, by doing this, many of our guests in the RSCP ministry have invited us to pray over them this month. You all have been an incredible blessing to our RSCP guests. Thank-you!

Our entire life could be considered a listening ministry. We listen in on a conversation the Holy Spirit is having with other people. And, if they invite us into that conversation, or the Holy Spirit invites us into that conversation, we enter.

Now, at this point, Jesus continues giving more details about the work of the paraclete, but he switches to how the paraclete will work within his disciples, verse 12.

IV. The Paraclete Will Help the Disciples (16:12-15)

12 “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14 He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 15 All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. (ESV)

A. The Setting

Remember that Jesus is speaking to confused, fearful and anxious disciples. They don’t understand much, and the events of the next few days will raise their confusion, fearfulness and anxiety even further. How can Jesus explain the significance of the events before they’ve happened? Answer: The ministry of the paraclete.

B. Three Ministries of the Paraclete

And, three ministries of the paraclete to the disciples are spoken of here:

1. **Will Guide Into Truth.** The paraclete is the Spirit of truth, and he will guide believers into all truth. In chapter 14, Jesus told them that the Spirit would remind the disciples of all Jesus says. Here is a bit of a restatement of that. As Jesus spoke the words of the Father, the Spirit will speak according to the words of Jesus. Of course! As Bernard taught us from Hebrews, God spoke in times past through the prophets, then through his Son, Jesus. And, now Jesus promises to speak through his Spirit. Of course! This is a God who speaks. The Holy Spirit will speak and guide the disciples into all truth, and the truth will set them free.
2. **Will Declare the Future.** So, part of this speech and guidance is that the Spirit will declare the things that are to come. Before this discourse, Jesus did some of that already. On the Mount of Olives, Jesus disclosed some of the future, recorded in Matthew 24 and 25. But, apparently there was more to declare, and Jesus says the paraclete will declare it.

I think this promise is primarily fulfilled in the writing of Revelation. As we are reading the last book of the Bible, we are reading the declarations of the paraclete through John. Indeed, John begins Revelation saying to the churches: *Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from Jesus Christ... the ruler of kings on earth. [and from the seven spirits who are before his throne].* The number 7 reminding us of the perfection of the Spirit. And, Revelation ends with the Spirit crying out with the churches, *"Come Lord Jesus"* (Rev 22:17).

The Spirit knows what is to come and discloses it. The Spirit knows that if we know what is to come, it will change how we live in the present. Eugene Peterson says this, "For if the future is dominated by the coming again of Jesus, there is little room on the screen for projecting our anxieties and fantasies." The paraclete wants us to look out on the horizon of the future and see the one who has already won the victory. The future is not up for grabs! Jesus has already won the victory, and that changes how I live today.

3. **Will Glorify Jesus.** Jesus is going back to the glorious presence of the Father. But, in doing so, he will receive even more glory from the paraclete's ministry among believers. Nothing brings more glory to Jesus than for his followers to live his way through the power of the Spirit. As we walk through our lives in the Bay Area sometimes feeling confused or fearful or anxious, the paraclete is at work in us to encourage us and empower us to live the Jesus way. "And, great, great glory comes to Jesus as the truths of the Gospel are established [and manifested] in the lives of [us] his followers" (Carson, 151).

So, while the paraclete is working in the world convicting and convincing, the paraclete is also working in us, guiding, declaring and glorifying. Thank-you, oh blessed paraclete!

V. Conclusion

So, as we leave this auditorium this morning, we do know at least four truths about every place where we work and live. People, like us, are searching for a life to the full. Sin, evil and death are at work, but keep your cool for they are defeated foes. And, the Spirit of him who did the defeating is at work out there doing what none of us can do.

Yes. We are to pray. We are to speak the truth in love. We are to be good-newsizers. We are to be salt and light. We are to work the works of Jesus, aiming to be first-string foot-washers.

And, in the midst of it all, the paraclete, the Holy Spirit, is working, doing his ministry of bearing witness to Jesus, within us, but also without us. He's at work out there, convicting and convincing. And, he's in here (inside us), guiding, declaring and glorifying. In all things, bearing witness to Jesus, the way, the truth and the life.

So, this week, when all those families come to your door asking for candy, listen for those conversations that the paraclete is having within you and outside of you. And, join him in those conversations if he invites you in or another person invites you in.

What a friend we have in the paraclete. He is always on the job, and thankfully he never gets tired of bearing witness to Jesus. Amen.

Benediction

If you would like prayer this morning, there will be pastors and elders up here who would love to pray with you.

Now receive this benediction. This is adapted from one of Thomas Cranmer's collects: God, the king of glory, which has exalted your only son Jesus Christ, with great glory to your kingdom in heaven. We ask you to leave us not comfortless, but comfort us, guide us and speak truth to us by your Holy Spirit, and one day exalt us to the same place where our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has gone before, who lives and reigns forever. Amen.

Resources

BDAG = *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (3rd Edition)*

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)

Newbigin, Leslie, *The Light Has Come*

Peterson, Eugene, *The Message*