

Life in the Spirit: The Necessity of the Spirit, John 16:7-11, 6/30/24

John 16:7-10 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 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.

[Title Slide] One of my favorite songs to sing in church is the Doxology. In fact, we sang it together last week as we ended the student missions report. Just lifts my soul in praise. It's also nostalgic for me. Growing up as a pastor's kid in the 80s, we went to Sunday night church. Which I understood to be for the hard core Christians who didn't need all the bells and whistles of Sunday morning church- which meant a hymn sing and a 45 minute Bible lecture... it's just a 5 year olds dream scenario. So my two older brothers and I would be sitting right up in the front...no phones to entertain us for course...My poor mom would be trying to keep us from wiggling, and giggling, and drawing funny caricatures of the old lady leading hymns...she was probably 60...but to us back then, that was OLD! But we knew the hour was finally up when we would stand to sing the Doxology! My brothers and I would sing, "Praise God we finally get to go!" But I do remember singing the final words- "Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost." I kind of understood God as a Father in heaven- I had a Father so that made sense...And we talked a lot about the Son Jesus who became like one of us and died for us. I got that one...but who is this Holy Ghost? The only ghosts I knew was Slimer and the Puft Marshmellow ghosts from Ghost Busters...but this one was a friendly ghost...more like Casper? "Well," I would hear, "He's more like an invisible force that lives in us as Christians." Oh like Star Wars...man I can wait so I can do Jedi mind tricks on my brothers. "You will give me all your baseball cards." Not exactly...Well we chuckle, but I'm not sure many Christian adults are much clearer this mysterious 3rd Person of the Trinity is exactly.

V.7-8 And yet as we read in our Scripture today, Jesus said the Holy Spirit is so wonderful, so powerful and so important to the lives and mission of the disciples that it's better for Jesus to leave the earth so that the Holy Spirit can come! Think about that...If I asked, "Would you rather have Jesus here still walking the earth today, doing miracles, teaching, speaking truth to power... or the Holy Spirit with us?" We all know the right answer from the Bible now, but I think we'd all say without hesitation "Jesus!" And so, it must mean that there are some gaps in our biblical understanding, our experience, our practice of life with the Holy Spirit. That's what this series is all about. And not just filling our heads with good theology about the Spirit, it's about life- what difference does the Spirit make in our everyday life. And the answer may just be transformational to how you read the Bible, how you pray, how you attempt to share your faith, how you face temptation, and how you attempt to live out all the things we read about in the Bible.

In our Statement of Faith: *The Holy Spirit is God. He glorifies Christ. He indwells each Christian and so gives unity to the Church. He gives to the justified those graces and gifts necessary for their sanctification. And He carries out God's purposes for both Church and world.*

Our statement gives us an outline of our series. He's **GOD, who glorifies CHRIST**- his role in the Trinity, he **INDWELLS** each Christian, gives **UNITY** to the Church. **GRACES**- Filling, the illuminating and the fruit of the spirit, **GIFTS**- Spiritual gifts and empowerments, **Carries out GOD'S PURPOSES**...**necessity of Spirit [Title Slide]** today in the mission of God.

PRAY. Speaking of Mission- probably my favorite movie franchise of all time is **Mission Impossible** series with Tom Cruise...who somehow in his 60s is still doing all his own stunts. But every movie you are thinking...I know somehow MI agent Ethan Hunt is going to pull off this impossible mission, but how in the world is he going to do it this time?¹

[Title Slide] But here in chapter 16 of John's Gospel, in the upper room before Jesus went to the cross, he was preparing his followers for a mission that was actually, humanly impossible- to take this message of the gospel- that in Jesus, God became man, died for the sins of the world, and came back to life again to reunite humanity with our Creator. And proclaim this message around the world so everyone has the opportunity for salvation. And Jesus wasn't even going to be around to do it! Here you have these mostly illiterate, poor, sometimes clueless fisherman, and some women, some with questionable pasts...and you are sending them into a hostile world...saying "Tell everyone to leave their dead religion and follow Jesus." An impossible mission indeed. Why did anyone listen to these disciples? How did Christianity even get off the ground? Not only get off the ground but within 3 centuries turn the known world upside down? The reason isn't because they people were really dedicated, or had Ph.Ds or some incredible talent. It's because **Jesus sent the Holy Spirit on a mission impossible that only becomes possible through Him. The Holy Spirit is the ultimate missionary.** So today from John 16 we will see why Jesus says the Spirit is so necessary to the mission of the Gospel.

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 will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.* Notice the title Jesus gives the Holy Spirit: the Helper- we usually think of a helper as a diminishing word, other translations use comforter- but that makes the Spirit sound like a quilt or warm apple cider on a cold day. The Greek word that means "One that speaks with or alongside of another." Which is why the NIV uses probably the best translation- advocate. Who and what is he advocating for?
⁸ *And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment*

This word **"convict"** means to **convince someone of their error by means of the truth.** It's a very personal word. It's the same word that Jesus uses Matthew 18 to describe the way we confront someone privately who has sinned against us. So the picture we get is that Jesus sends the Holy Spirit on a mission alongside of us his disciples, so that when someone hears the gospel, it's the

¹ Thanks to Tim Keller for this illustration. <https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/the-mission-of-the-spirit>

Spirit's role to personally do the convincing, the persuading in every person...a "come to Jesus moment."

Now let's get a little more detailed, what does he convict the world of specifically? Three things. *sin and righteousness and judgment*. Not all of these happen at once necessarily, but in every true conversion, a Christian will become convinced of all three.

Conviction of Sin: *⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in me* The first divine encounter of the Spirit is he opens our eyes to the reality of our own sin. That the problem isn't just with the world out there, or the social conditions, or that it's my parent's fault, or political parties fault, or those people in power's fault...but that I personally, you, all of us have a sin problem.

[Blank Slide] During a high school football practice, I remember catching a ball and it felt kind of weird when I caught it. But I didn't think anything of it. A few minutes later my hand started to ache, and then swell up, and I couldn't bend it. But I was in denial, I wanted to keep playing so I just thought- no big deal, I'm sure it's fine, this is normal, I'll just play through it. After practice I was in the car and my mom saw my hand and she said- "Oh my goodness look at your hand! What happened?" "Oh nothing... I'm fine." "Ugh- no- you are going to the doctor." Sure enough, the doctor immediately said, you broken your hand...the x-ray came back to confirm it. Season over. Now imagine if the doctor said, "No you're fine, keep playing, keeping living your life as if everything's OK." I would have been happy in our collective ignorance, but not well, not whole. The Spirit, in truth and love, must grab us by the collar bring us close and tell us the truth. Must show us a spiritual x-ray of our broken soul so that we can look to Jesus as the true healer. Conviction of sin always precedes faith. Because until this happens, you might look to him as a good moral teacher, as a social revolutionary, even as an example to follow...but not the ultimate Soul Physician and Savior. And this can be news at first, like me, you don't want to face.

One author put it this way... "It's normal that the first way the Holy Spirit works on you is not very fun...in fact it can be upsetting. You wish you could go back to the place where you didn't even know about God, know about sin, know about your real problem. See, Christianity isn't an interesting set of guidelines, and facts and morals for a better society that you can either take or not take... It's being disturbed in the soul."²

Has this happened to you? You can't be a Christian unless you've had the divine presence of God the Spirit dealing with you personally at the soul-level.

Conviction of Righteousness- *¹⁰ concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer*. I believe what Jesus has in mind here is that Jesus came first to show the world what true righteousness looks like. He lived the perfect life, fulfilling God's law, that we are incapable of living out. And to show us how far we fall short of God's righteousness. Jesus says, "My righteousness is leaving the world soon. But, the Spirit will advocate for my

² Paraphrased from Tim Keller

righteousness.” He will now convict us of how far we fall short of righteousness. But also, how to receive the righteousness of God. Not by earning it, but by Jesus’ work on the cross.

Colossians 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

See this is crucial. Lots of people can be convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit and yet reject Christ’s righteousness for them. **Blank Slide** Most people walk around with some kind of scale in their heads they use to judge other people and themselves in comparison. So a criminal might be like 5% righteous...just above Washington politicians. And then those rude neighbors- maybe like 10%. Then there's other people who seem like good people, they serve in soup kitchens and pay their taxes, religious- they may be 50%, 60%, even 70%. And they usually put themselves somewhere on that scale that at least tips over toward righteous enough... “If I get up to this level, then God will accept me. He has to. I've earned it.” But the Bible says “None are righteous, not even one!”³ There is no righteousness scale in heaven. Either you have the righteousness of Jesus that he’s given to you, or you don’t have it at all. The Holy Spirit not only convicts of individual sins...but the sinful belief system of self-earned righteousness apart from Christ. See the greatest sin is the rejection of Jesus Christ for your righteousness. Have you experienced the divine intervention of the Holy Spirit convincing you that you need Jesus’ righteousness?

Conviction of Judgment- *¹¹concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.*

I think what Jesus is saying is that when we have a divine encounter with the Holy Spirit, when we’ve recognized the true state of our sin, when we have rejected our self-righteousness and have looked to the righteousness of Jesus for us, we begin to see with spiritual eyes the reality of this world system and the evil one who is behind it. He begins to give us the eyes to see the schemes of the devil all around us and in us. And no longer do we have to be under his rule- because we know his demise. The resurrection of Jesus Christ pronounced the eternal judgment for Satan. And one day when Jesus returns this sentence will be executed on Satan, on evil, and all those who follow his rule, and death itself will be destroyed.

So the Holy Spirit, as the Advocate, his role in the mission of the Gospel is to personally convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment. So the question for us today based on everything we just studied, **why is the Holy Spirit necessary in my life?** Two necessities:

Necessity #1 In your Witness:

The Holy Spirit in our world today is the one who removes people's spiritual blindness so they realize their need for Jesus Christ. *2 Corinthians 4: ⁴In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.* Now verse 6 goes on to say, *⁶For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.*

³ Thanks to Skip Heitzig for this language. <https://calvarynm.church/teachings/#/series/295/sermon/3789>

Reaching Our Community initiative: **MyHashtag**. Pray First. Love Always. Invite Often. You know when you pray for a friend, a loved one, a neighbor, a relative, a co-worker to come to Christ, you know what you're really praying for? What you are really praying for is for God the Holy Spirit to remove the spiritual blindness from these people to drop the spiritual scales from their eyes so that they can see and understand where they stand before God, be shaken at their core, and see their desperate need for Jesus Christ. When you are having spiritual conversations and you share the gospel with them remember friends, it is not our job to convict them. It's the Spirit's responsibility. If you think it's all about your winsomeness, your eloquence and brilliance, your strong arguments, your service to them- when you successfully lead people to Christ you might be prone to pride. "Look at what I did. God aren't you lucky to have me on your team." And when you don't see anything happen or experience rejection, you might get discouraged, frustrated with your neighbors. Let the Spirit do his job, through you.

Necessity #2 In your Response... to the Holy Spirit

For me, this happened slowly up to the age 18 and then all of a sudden. I began reading through Romans with a youth pastor and the Holy Spirit "unsealed" my conscience. I had stopped feeling anything about my sin. But suddenly I saw my spiritual x-ray. And the rush of reality, my own inability to live up to my own low standards came flooding into my life. And I began to see that only Jesus to heal my soul, I couldn't do it...religion couldn't do it because I wouldn't be able to follow it perfectly. Only Jesus. I didn't know it then, but the Holy Spirit was doing exactly what this passage says he will do. Have you had this happen in you yet?

I believe every person in this room today has had a divine encounter with the Holy Spirit at some point in their lives. And if not before today, I know the Holy Spirit is at work in this message because our staff has specifically prayed for you today in hearing this message, that the Spirit would open your eyes today to your need for Jesus. To be convinced of the reality of your spiritual condition- you are not OK just as you are. The x-rays are in. You're broken. You have a sin-sickness that cannot be cured by your own effort. Come to Jesus, your physician! Is the Spirit showing you the reality of this world and its evil that cannot be fixed with human effort or social system? Look to Jesus who will conquer this world system and be the ruler of this world when he comes to restore the rule of God.

Prayer: What is the Holy Spirit saying to you? He can be resisted...he's a gentleman.