

The Holy Spirit's Testimony About Christ

John 14:15-27; 15:26-16:15

The Gospel of John Sermon Series

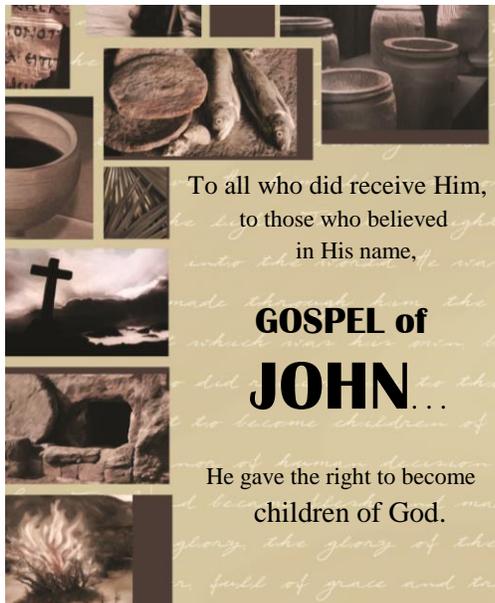
Kenwood Baptist Church

Pastor David Palmer

April 6, 2014

TEXT: John 14:15-27; 15:26-16:15

Let's look at the Word of God together. We're in the Gospel of John, looking at a series of testimonies. We've heard clear and bright testimonies from John, that in the beginning was the



Word, the Word was with God, and was God; we heard John the Baptist say, He must increase and I must decrease; we heard Mary say, do whatever He tells you. We have heard from Nicodemus, a Samaritan woman, the conflicting testimony of the crowds. Last Sunday, we heard one man within that crowd who testified: "One thing I know, I was blind, but now I see." This week, I enjoyed hearing few other versions from people who were trying to make their testimony into one sentence. One new one I heard was: "I was guilty, but now I'm innocent." Remember the English miner who said, "I can't say for sure if Jesus turned water into wine, I wasn't there, but one thing I do know is that in my house, He turned beer into furniture." Whatever your

one sentence is, it is something precious to hold onto.

This morning we shift into some deep very water in the Gospel of John, chapters 14 through 17, where our Lord Jesus speaks detailed instructions to His disciples. The discourse of John 14, 15, 16, and 17 is unique to John. It tells us Jesus' final teachings in the presence of His disciples the evening before He went to the cross. In the midst of this block of teaching, Jesus tells us that the Holy Spirit will come, and He will testify about Christ in the world. We want to look at three things together. We want to look first at the testimony of the Holy Spirit in us as believers, and then we want to look at the powerful testifying work of the Holy Spirit in the world, and lastly, as we prepare for communion, we want to look at that unique work of the Holy Spirit to really take us to Christ and make Christ known to us. So, we see the Spirit's work within us, the Spirit's work in the world, and lastly, the work of the Spirit to bring us to that place of receiving Christ.

Jesus begins with a very simple sentence in John 14:15:

"If you love Me, you will obey what I command."

That's not a complicated sentence, and yet it's very difficult for fallen humanity to do. Jesus is very clear: "If you love Me, you will do what I say." This is an important habit of the heart that we need to train ourselves in. Jesus teaches us, in John 14:16, that if we love Him and obey what He commands, this is what will happen next:

"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever--"

This word is rendered in different translations as either *counselor*, or *comforter*, or *advocate*. The Greek term underneath this is *parákletos*, which literally means, *one who is called alongside of us*. Jesus says that He will ask the Father, and He will give us One to come alongside of us in this world to counsel, to advocate, to comfort us. We are not left wondering who it is that Jesus is describing, for He tells us immediately in John 14:17a:

"--the Spirit of truth."

This Counselor, who will be with us forever, is none other than the Spirit of truth. Notice that the Holy Spirit always speaks the truth. There is no deception in God, no darkness, no gray. The Spirit of God is bright and clear and truth-speaking. Jesus tells us that the world cannot accept or receive the Holy Spirit, does not see Him or know Him; but Jesus promises His disciples that the Spirit of God will live within us and will be with us. Jesus says in John 14:18:

"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."

The first work of the Spirit for believers in Jesus is this work of indwelling, of His abiding presence. God says He will not leave us as orphans in this world. We will not be abandoned; we will not journey this world alone, but something remarkable will actually happen. It's not just an idea, a thought, a wish, or a prayer, but it is the very indwelling, real, divine presence of the living God. We receive this through faith in Jesus. An orphan is vulnerable and exposed, at high risk in the world, but Jesus promises us that He will not leave us in that way. Instead, He will come in the very real presence of the Holy Spirit. Jesus tells us in John 14:23a:

"If anyone loves Me, he will obey My teaching."

He feels He needs to remind us of that yet again. It is probably something we need to hear often. Yet, look at what Jesus says: If we love Him and obey His words, something remarkable happens. This is mind blowing, heart exploding. Jesus says further in John 14:23b:

"My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him."

Jesus is promising that the very real divine presence of God will come and fill us as believers. We will not live this life alone; we will have a Counselor, a Comforter. Jesus said: "I will be with you always." There is never a day, there is never a location, there is never a life circumstance

that you will encounter without the presence of God with you if you have received Christ. This indwelling presence of Christ is part of the way that the Spirit testifies to the truth of Christ.

We know that when you bake brownies, you can tell that a brownie is really good in only one way. You do not do a chemical analysis of the brownie; you do not conduct a marketing campaign inside the confines of your home about which brownies are the best. The only way to know if the brownie is good is to eat it. In the same way, Christ tells us that if you receive Him, then the Spirit actually comes within you. The Spirit of God does remarkable things within us. Look at John 14:26. Jesus says:

“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in Jesus’ name, does two additional things for believers: He teaches you all things, and He reminds you of everything that Jesus has said. The Spirit of God is with us in an active, living, and dynamic way. He is present, walking with us in this life, and one of the roles of the Spirit in testifying to the truth of Christ is that the Spirit of God actually teaches us and prompts us all things. Have you felt the presence of the Holy Spirit admonishing you or urging you to do something, or the presence of the Holy Spirit restraining you from doing something? God's presence is dynamic. It is not a static relationship into which He invites us. We do not receive the Gospel as a transaction for eternity, but a living, breathing presence of God in the midst of His people, dwelling in every believing heart.

The Spirit of God not only teaches us and prompts us, but He actually does this remarkable activity to remind us of the teachings of Jesus. The Spirit of God will call to our remembrance the words of Christ. The Spirit did this in a powerful way in the first generations of believers, and this is the origin of New Testament itself. The New Testament did not arise out of the perfect memory of the disciples, but the Spirit of God actually called to their remembrance the teachings of Jesus, and He does that for us, as well. The Spirit will point us to Christ's words. His presence within us, as for all who have received Christ, is a climactic gift, and that is peace. Look at John 14:27. Jesus says:

“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

The world gives gifts based on observable results. The peace of Jesus Christ comes to us as a gift. I've known people with the peace of Christ surrounding them right in the midst of extremely difficult situations. I've seen people have the peace of Christ when they receive a life threatening diagnosis. Jesus promises the presence of God, a real presence, to give us peace in this world. Isn't this a great promise?

Jesus shifts in John 15, and He speaks about the role of the Spirit in the world. I want us to spend most of our time here. In John 15:26-27, we read:

“When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, He will testify about Me. And you also must testify, for you have been with Me from the beginning. You must also testify.”

Jesus teaches His disciples here that when the Spirit comes, when the Counselor comes, the Spirit of truth: “He will testify about Me in the world.” Jesus goes on to say: “You also must testify.” This is another one of those really scary statements of Jesus. Last Sunday, He did that with just a shift to the first-person plural, saying that “**we** must do the work of Him who sent Me.” In this passage, Jesus includes us in His statement that “the Spirit of God will go throughout the world and testify about Me,” by saying: “**and you also should do this.**” Jesus reminds us in John 16:1-2 that it is a hostile world in which we go to witness, to testify:

“All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God.”

Jesus tells us you will be banished from your social community. Jesus says people will think they’re doing a good deed by treating you poorly. There is a hostility to the Gospel in the world, and yet this is precisely the reason why we need the Holy Spirit to work powerfully in the world, within our community, to testify of Christ.

Jesus has been telling His disciples that He is about to leave this world and return to the Father. Can you imagine the impact of Jesus’ telling the disciples that He was going to be leaving? Their hearts are heavy and filled with grief, as we read in John 16:6:

“Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief.”

But Jesus tells them, and us this morning, that it's actually a good thing that Jesus returns to the Father. How so? How can this be a good thing? Jesus says in John 16:7:

“But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.”

In John 16:8, He tells us of the powerful, unique work in the world that the Spirit does to testify of Christ. He says:

“When He comes, He will convict the world in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.”

These are unique works of the Spirit in the world, a total reversal of values within the world.

Dale Bruner says:

“We enter at this place into deep waters.”

Look at what the Spirit does in the world according to Jesus. How does He testify of Christ? There are three things that the Holy Spirit convicts the world about: He convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. What was Jesus talking about? Thankfully, He explains each one in more detail.

In John 16:9, Jesus says that the Spirit of God will convict the world:

“ . . .in regard to sin, because men do not believe in Me;”

When you and I look out into the world, we ask the question: “What's wrong with the world?” You may say: “What's wrong with the world is that my team didn't make it through the brackets. I'm covered with shame my office.” You may look out into the world and say: “The wrong politicians are in power, the budget isn't balanced.” You may look out into the world and observe problems with the environment. The world has all kinds of answers as to what is wrong with the world: violence, corruption, human trafficking, vast moral evils. Yet, according to Jesus, the worst evil in the world is a failure to believe in Him. The worst, most heinous sin of all is a failure to believe in Him. Jesus says it is the unique and powerful work of the Holy Spirit to convict the world of this as its greatest crime. Can you imagine the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob coming into this world, taking on human flesh, bearing the sin of humanity, dying in open shame on a cross outside Jerusalem, and yet millions of people alive today live their lives with a total indifference to those events? Jesus says this is the greatest evil in the world, and the most destructive fact in life. You and I do not believe this without the work of the Spirit. The work of the Spirit can fix the world of its sinfulness, and often this is the first step toward conversion. When you're sharing Christ with someone, one of the early effects of sharing the Gospel is an awareness of sinfulness that people do not have without the work of the Spirit. When the Gospel was first explained to me in power, the first effect I felt was that I perceived the corruption and evil within me, something I had never felt before. It is a work of the Spirit to testify to Christ.

British people are excellent at brevity. I look at C.S. Lewis, and I wonder how C.S. Lewis can say so much in those tiny, little English books. Americans are long-winded, and we're not short on resources, so we just think, sure why say in 1000 words what you could say in 10,000 words? G.K. Chesterton was asked to write a letter to the *London Times* in answer to the question: “What is wrong in the world?” He simply wrote back this, and was published in the paper: “In answer to the question: ‘What is wrong in the world?’ Dear Sir: I am! G.K. Chesterton.” What's wrong in this world? I am. It's the evil within me, a lack of trusting in Christ.

The Spirit also convicts the world about righteousness. In John 16:10, Jesus teaches us that the Spirit of God will testify:

“ . . . in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see Me no longer;”

The Spirit of God moves in this world to persuade us that though we cannot physically see Jesus anymore, the Spirit will persuade the hearts of men and women and children that righteousness is found in Christ alone. The Spirit of God goes out into this world to convince us, to persuade us, to bear testimony that righteousness is found in Jesus alone. We tell other stories of what's right, what is most right in the world. Ken Elzinga said several times throughout the week he was with us, that the American story we tell of what's right in the world is when someone goes from rags to riches. That's our cultural version of success: start with nothing and end up with much. We tell another version of the story of what's right in the world when we claim that success, achievement, or the obtainment of personal pleasure are the highest virtues. But the Spirit of God goes out into the world and persuades the hearts of people that righteousness is found in Christ alone.

How does the Spirit testify in judgment? In John 16:11, according to Jesus, the Spirit of God goes out into the world to persuade the hearts of people:

“ . . . and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.”

When the Spirit goes out and exposes your sinfulness and mine, we have a crisis, and that crisis is exacerbated when the Spirit follows that up by pointing us to the very righteousness of Jesus Christ. There is a chasm between my sinfulness and Christ's righteousness, a chasm that I cannot cross. It would be like trying to long-jump across the Grand Canyon. Even the most gifted athlete among us, who might go five feet further than a child, is nowhere near crossing that chasm. The devil loves to announce that chasm and say that there is no way that you or I can stand in the presence of God. His name, Satan, means *to accuse*, in the Hebrew form. *Devil* is the Greek form of the same word, meaning to hurl an accusation against us, saying that we stand rightly condemned in the presence of a holy God. Yet the Holy Spirit comes in precisely at this point to testify that the devil has been defeated at the Cross. The Holy Spirit testifies of the work of Christ to say that the ruler of this world has been judged forever. The Spirit will convict the world that the power of the devil's accusation is broken, that the cross, which looked to be defeat and shame and humiliation, is actually the victory of God. Jesus says in John 12:31-32:

“Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.”

Paul says it like this in Colossians 2:13-15:

“When you were dead in your sins. . . , God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all

our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; He took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."

The cross of Christ was designed for maximum shame, ultimate humiliation. Cicero says:

"It's beneath the dignity of a free Roman citizen to even use the word cross."

Jesus was nailed to the cross in humiliating death. The New Testament tells us that actually this was nothing less than a triumph of God. This death on the cross defeats the devil forever. We do not know this without the Spirit to testify. Revelation 12:9-11 says:

"The great dragon was hurled down--that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: 'Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony."

When the devil rushes at you with a verdict that you are condemned, then speak back to him: "I would be condemned were it not for this cross of Christ, and I know this cross of Christ as the very victory of God." The cross of Christ does not make sense in the world, and the effect of the Spirit's going out into the world is to bear witness to the Person and work of Christ.

Jesus tells us in John 16:13:

"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth."

The expression Jesus uses is an active verb. It literally means: "He will drive you." Imagine the Holy Spirit like a rancher, just herding lost people and moving them in this great march. Where is He driving them? He's driving them toward Christ.

In John 16:14, Jesus says:

"He will bring glory to Me by taking from what is Mine and making it known to you."

The Spirit of God is at work in the world to testify of Christ. The Spirit of God testifies to Christ by teaching us; by causing us to remember Jesus' words; by dwelling among us. John Owen writes of the Spirit's testimony in this way:

"Thus then is he a comforter. He reveals to the souls of sinners the good things of the covenant of grace, which the Father has provided, and the Son has purchased. He shows to us mercy, grace, forgiveness, righteousness, acceptation with God; lets us know that these are the things of Christ, which he has procured for us; shows them to us for

our comfort and establishment.

“These things, I say, he effectually declares to the souls of believers; and makes them know them for their own good—know them as originally the things of the Father, prepared from eternity in his love and goodwill; as purchased for them by Christ, and laid up in store in the covenant of grace for their use.

“Then is Christ magnified and glorified in their hearts; then they know what a Savior and Redeemer he is. A soul does never glorify or honor Christ upon self-discovery.”

You can never discover Christ on your own, but it is a peculiar effect of the Holy Spirit as our Comforter. Indeed, no one can say “Jesus is Lord” without the Holy Spirit. We need the testimony of the Holy Spirit to Christ; we need the living presence of the Holy Spirit within us as believers; and we need the presence of the Holy Spirit to testify of Christ in this world, to persuade the world of sin and righteousness and judgment. The evangelistic mission of this church cannot be accomplished without the real presence of the Holy Spirit.

Communion:

As we prepare to come to this table, the table of the Lord Jesus Christ, I would remind you that Jesus, on this very night, took bread, broke it in the presence of His disciples, and said: “This is My body which is broken for you.” He told the disciples: “This cup is the New Covenant in My blood which is poured out for your forgiveness.” As you come to receive the broken body and shed blood of Jesus, if you know today that Jesus is Lord, then you are free to partake. If you can say, “Jesus is Lord, my righteousness, the One who defeated the devil for me,” then praise the Holy Spirit as you partake, for He has shown these things to you and to me.

Lord God, we come into your presence. We stand in awe of You, Holy Spirit, abiding, comforting presence. We praise You that You have made known to us central truths of our sinfulness, of the righteousness of Christ, and the victory of God on the cross. Abide with us and comfort us with these truths now.

We pray in Jesus’ Name, Amen.