

Northwest Community Evangelical Free Church

(March 10, 2024)

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Sermon manuscript

Sermon Series: Equipped BY Jesus to Live FOR Jesus

(Studies in the Upper Room Discourse; John 13-17)

Help We Need from the Helper God Gives Us

(Selected passages from John 14, 16)

Study #3

Introduction: Wind...

In February of 2017, Kathy's brother, Bob, and I drove out to Guadalupe Mountains National Park for a 3-day ridge-walking trip through some beautiful country.

Getting to the high ridge involved getting to the high point of Texas, which is Guadalupe Peak. (8,751 feet) The trip to the peak was significant because of the weather that day.

I was curious when we saw the weather report for the day of our hike. It said, "**Damaging Winds.**" Indeed.

By the time we got to the end of the three hour hike to the top, we were battling gale-force winds¹ on a completely exposed peak. It was so unsettling that we scuttled the rest of the trip and hiked back down. On that trip, I got a taste of the power of wind.

A gentle breeze will dry clothes and bring calm. Stronger winds power turbines and fill sails that drive ocean-going ships. More severe winds - hurricanes, tornadoes, mountain storms - leave behind a wake of destruction and traumatized hikers.

Some winds make history. They are memorable for their power. The Bible mentions some memorable winds.

Wind pushed back the waters of the Red Sea so that the Israelites could pass through on dry land. Winds whipped up on the Sea of Galilee made for some tough storms for Jesus' disciples.

Our New Testaments were originally written in Greek. And the most commonly used Greek word for wind - unpredictable and powerful, refreshing and destructive - is *pneuma*.

But *pneuma* is also the word for breath - personal and life-giving, as when God breathed the breath of life into Adam. *Pneuma* is also the word for spirit - immaterial, non-corporeal, invisible.

On the Day of Pentecost, a few weeks after Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, all those who believed were together in one place when they heard the sound of a loud, rushing wind.²

That sound announced the arrival of the Holy Pneuma / Spirit. The Spirit's arrival was as personal and as alive as breath, as powerful as a mighty wind, and it was immaterial, like spirit.

The Holy Pneuma's / Spirit's presence and activity was then and is now essential to the functioning of the church and to each Christian's walk with Jesus.

Today, we listen as Jesus taught His apostles about two of the Spirit's ministries that help us take some of our next steps with Jesus.

When we enter the story, Judas Iscariot had left to meet with the religious leaders to betray Jesus. Gathered in an upstairs room in Jerusalem were Jesus and His eleven remaining apostles.

These men who followed Jesus came from very varied backgrounds.

¹ We learned from the rangers that winds were clocked at over 80 mph on the peak when we were there.

² A different word is used here for wind. (Acts 2:2)

- Prior to His call to ***“Follow Me!”*** at least one of them - Simon the Zealot - had been a political radical.
- At least one of them - Matthew, the tax collector - had been a well-paid, if hated, tax-collector for the Romans.
- Several of them - Peter, Andrew, James, John - were independent businessmen - fishermen - with responsible professional lives.

All of them had left everything for Him. They were now reckoning with the news that He was about to leave them.

Four days before this night they had listened as the crowds chanted, ***[John 12:13] “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord!”***

On that Palm Sunday they were confident that Jesus was going to sit on a glorious throne, replace King Herod, restore Israel to her former glory, and throw off the hated Romans.

By this Thursday evening, though, there had been enough disruptions and setbacks that their confidence in a glorious future was riddled with doubt. And when we catch up to them in John 14, they are an insecure bunch of men.

Jesus’ disciples move from confident to confused to comforted...

Jesus has - uncomfortably - washed their feet, has painfully predicted a betrayal AND Peter’s denials, and has told them that He is leaving soon. Small wonder that their hearts were troubled.³

Jesus words were intended to bring peace: ***[1] “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.”***⁴

Faith in God and in Jesus, God’s Son, is the key to untroubled hearts. Faith in God gives confidence when life pulls the rug out from under us. Faith in God brings energy and courage and stability.

But the kind of faith that restores health to troubled hearts is not just a vague belief that everything will somehow work out OK.

No. It’s faith in a God who gives certain promises about the future, like Jesus does here.

[2] “In My Father’s house are many rooms;⁵ if that were not so, I would have told you, because I am going there to prepare a place for you. [3] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will take you to Myself, so that where I am, there you also will be.”

They were together in the Upper Room as He said this. But they would soon be parted from each other - and that was tough to process.

But in the end, on the other side, in the Father’s house, by virtue of Jesus’ death and resurrection, they will again be united.⁶

The truth that Jesus has secured a place for us, with Him, in the Father’s house, after we leave this life is a tremendous comfort in troubled times. It would have been so for the disciples, too.

Jesus came to earth to prepare them for eternity. Hours before His death, He tells them that He is going from earth to prepare eternity for them.

He then assured them, ***[4] “And you know the way where I am going.”***

To which one of the disciples says, *“Woah. Not so fast, Jesus.”*

[5] Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going; how do we know the way?”

And I say, *“Way to go, Thomas!”*

⁵ In the ancient near east, extended members of a family often lived together in the home of a wealthy patriarch. Grown kids and grown grandkids would move in, adding on to the house for each new family unit.

⁶ You’ve probably heard these words at funerals. I’ve used them in lots of funerals. And they are perfectly appropriate in that setting.

³ John used the word to describe the disciples’ hearts (***“troubled”***) to also describe the waters of the pool of Bethesda when they were ***“stirred up.”*** (John 5:7)

⁴ More literally, verse 1 should be translated, ***“Stop letting your hearts be troubled.”***

I think that when Thomas asked his question, everybody else was relieved. Now they get the answer to their unspoken question without having to appear ignorant.

Jesus clarified “*the way*” with these familiar words: **[6] *Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me.***

The problem, of course, is that in a few hours, the **LIFE** will be hanging dead on a Roman cross, the **TRUTH** will appear to have been a lie, and the **WAY** will look like a dead end.

But they will soon all learn that the end of the Jesus story is not crucifixion. It is resurrection. And the resurrection will also untrouble troubled hearts.

In what follows (John 14:7-14), it becomes painfully clear that there are eleven confused apostles who have misunderstood much.

They misunderstood who Jesus was and His relationship to the Father. And we’ve already seen that they misunderstood servanthood, Judas’ betrayal, and Jesus’ own soon-to-come death.

They’s got a lot remedial learning to do, and it won’t all get done before Jesus leaves them. So, Jesus promised that even in His absence, He won’t abandon them. He’s going to send them a Helper.

He turns the corner to that theme by stating a truism.

Introduction to the Holy Spirit (14:15-17)

Obedience: The Essential Mark of Love for Jesus (v. 15)

[15] “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

Love for Jesus is not expressed by gushing sentimentality. It is expressed through uncompromising obedience. And obedience is hard.

So, here’s the question that comes to mind when Jesus says this to His gang of confused apostles: Are these not yet full formed or informed guys equipped to love / obey Jesus?

In a word, NO. And that is why God is going to give them - as He gives all of us who believe in Jesus - the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit: The Essential Helper (vv. 16-18)

[16] “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, so that He may be with you forever; [17] the Helper is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him; but you know Him because He remains with you and will be in you. [18] “I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you.

The Spirit of God will help them and does help us - invisibly and inaudibly - in the same ways that Jesus helped when He was physically present on earth.⁷

OK - so how does the Spirit of God help? In lots of ways.

From elsewhere in the New Testament, we know that the Holy Spirit baptizes and seals, fills, anoints, and intercedes - and more.

Jesus didn’t mention any of these, though, during His last time with the disciples.

The Upper Room Discourse was not intended to be a run-down of all of the Holy Spirit’s ministries in the lives of believers. Nor is this sermon that.

Instead, Jesus highlighted two of the ministries that the Helper would fulfill for Jesus’ followers after He was physically gone.

Here is what He says about the first of those two ministries.

The Holy Spirit Leads Us into Truth (14:25-26; 16:12-15) (He equips us by giving us the Bible.)

⁷ In fact, the Spirit is to be another helper (Greek - *αλλος*, meaning another of the same kind) just like Jesus.

[14:25] “These things I have spoken to you while remaining with you. [26] “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and remind you of all that I said to you...[16:12] “I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them at the present time. [13] “But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. [14] “He will glorify Me, for He will take from Mine and will disclose it to you. [15] “All things that the Father has are Mine; this is why I said that He takes from Mine and will disclose it to you.

OK. Let's unpack this.

The Teaching Ministry of Jesus

A primary part of Jesus' mission was to give God's truth to His followers. He spent three years doing that and the Twelve were, of course, very well taught by the consummate Teacher, Jesus.

However, some things that He would have taught them, He didn't, because they weren't ready for it.

So, Jesus promised that in His absence the Spirit of God would bring to their minds all that He did teach AND all that He would have taught if they had been able to handle it. In short, every truth that the disciples will need to lead a God-honoring life, the Holy Spirit will provide.

OK. Great. How does the Holy Spirit reveal this truth to us who believe in Jesus? How do we access the Spirit's teaching?

Are you ready for this? Here it is. It is by the extremely spiritual experience of taking in the truths we find in the Bible.

We avail ourselves of the Spirit's teaching ministry when we read, study, listen to, and meditate on the Holy Spirit's *magnum opus*: The Bible.

The Teaching Ministry of the Holy Spirit

The Spirit “breathed” Scripture into existence (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21)

There are passages in the Bible that highlight the Spirit's involvement in the creation of its message.

Here is this from the Apostle Paul:
[2 Timothy 3:16] All Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for teaching, for rebuke, for correction, for training in righteousness; [17] that the man or woman of God may be fully capable, equipped for every good work.

And the Apostle Peter writes this:
[2 Peter 1:20] But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture becomes a matter of someone's own interpretation, [21] for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

Peter explicitly credits the Holy Spirit with the creation of Scripture and Paul implies it by the use of the word “*inspired*.” That word is, literally, “*God-breathed*.”

- There's Isaiah, inspired by the Spirit to write poetically and artistically prophecies that called on Israel to repent and then pointing the unrepentant nation to a God who would comfort them.
- There's Amos, a fig farmer, inspired by the Spirit to do the same thing, but less artistically.
- There's John, inspired by the Spirit to choose from all the stories he knew about Jesus a few that highlighted Jesus as the Son of God who could be trusted to give eternal life to the One who believes.
- There's Luke, inspired by the Spirit to write the stories of Jesus for a fledgling church the needed to know as much as possible about the Jesus they believed in.
- There's Paul, inspired by the Spirit to write from a Roman prison cell to his son in the faith, having “*run the race*” and facing death, urging Timothy to also finish well.

The Holy Spirit was inspiring them as they wrote, allowing them to shape their message by their own experiences, personalities,

writing styles, and vocabularies, so that what they wanted to write was exactly what He, the Spirit, wanted them to write.

I sure don't understand all that is involved in enabling flawed, human men by the Spirit's inspiration to write infallible Scripture.

But neither do I fully understand all that was involved in Jesus being fully human AND fully God in one Person.

But both are true. So, when we open up our Bible, we are accessing the written expression of the will of God.

That's why giving careful attention to learning and applying Scripture is so important. The Holy Spirit is speaking to us through the voices of Moses, David, Matthew, and Paul.⁸

So, was this what you were expecting when you heard that we were going to explore the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit? Or did you figure that we'd be delving into something a bit more...spiritual?

Are you disappointed that I'm only talking about the Bible? If so, I understand.

The priceless gift of the Bible

But we who are here, today, need to understand that believers in Jesus in Vietnam would not understand. Christians in Cuba wouldn't understand, either. Nor would believers in China or North Korea or Chiapas, Mexico, Indonesia or Afghanistan understand.⁹

That's because, in these places, Christians receive the gift of a Bible for the Word of God it is.¹⁰

⁸ When we read the Bible, we do NOT say, "Let's read Scripture and listen FOR the word of God." as if He might or might not be speaking through Scripture. No. We say, "Let's read Scripture and listen TO the word of God."

⁹ Here at Northwest, we have often made efforts to send Bibles to Christians who are without Bibles.

¹⁰ See 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

Christians through the centuries have understood that to know Scripture is to know the mind of God.

The pages of church history are filled with the stories of men and women who gave their lives to gain access to the Bible.

So why is it that we might be slightly disappointed to hear that the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit is accessed through the Bible?

The answer, I believe, is found in the well-worn phrase, "*familiarity breeds contempt.*"

The contempt familiarity can breed...

When I used to go to Colorado on annual backpacking trips, I would often drive through Albuquerque, on up to the little town of Aztec, New Mexico, and then north into Colorado by way of Durango.

A few miles after you exit Aztec, you crest a hill that gives a breathtaking view of the mountains north of Durango. I was awed by the sight every time I saw it.

I wonder...

Are residents of Aztec awed every time they crest that hill? If they aren't, it is probably because they get to see daily what I only got to see every couple of years. (Yawn...)

We who have such ready access to the Holy Spirit's *magnum opus*, the Bible, can become jaded, and respond to the truth it contains with a bored yawn.

But our response says no more about the importance of the Bible than the bored response of a resident of Aztec, New Mexico says about the majestic beauty of the Rockies.

Today's reminder that the Spirit teaches through His Word is a call to each of us to affirm the ages long value of regular, intentional, thoughtful, reflective time in the Bible. It'll change your life.

Regular exposure to the truths of the Bible

Read it alone. Study it with scholars by using their tools.
Explore it with friends. Memorize verses or passages.

Regular exposure to the Bible will result in the Bible becoming more and more “yours.”

Keep reading and studying and meditating and applying the Bible, and over a period of months and years your worldview will become more aligned with the Author's.

You'll more consistently take next steps with Jesus as you give thoughtful, prayerful, submissive attention to the Bible, the book given by the Holy Spirit's inspiration.

It is for all these reasons that one of our church's values is "Commitment to the Bible." Here is how we say it:
We believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and that its teachings and instructions are essential to finding life with God and to human flourishing.
THEREFORE, we base our lives on its truths rather than on the prevailing winds of culture which may dismiss, disallow, and reject it, advocating for its teachings graciously and confidently.

Jesus knew that the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit was so crucial that He spoke about it during His final opportunity to do so with His followers.

Under the inspiration of the Spirit, the Apostle John understood that it was so important that he included in his Gospel for our sakes.

During this time with His disciples in the upper room, Jesus spoke about one more of the Spirit's many ministries.

First, though, He assured the eleven that it was best for them that He go away.

The Holy Spirit Convicts the World of Sin 16:8-11)

(He paves the way for us to evangelize.)

A Beneficial Departure (v. 17)

[16:7] “But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I am leaving; for if I do not leave, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.”

When they heard that, do you figure that they thought to themselves, “Yeah. Right!”? - but it was true.

If Jesus didn't go away, the Holy Spirit would not arrive, nor would any of His gifts, ministries, and presence. The ministry that Jesus highlights here is that of conviction.

A Helpful Conviction (vv. 8-11)

[8a] “And He, when He comes, will convict¹¹ the world regarding sin, and righteousness, and judgment.

Jesus is speaking here of the Spirit's ministry of bringing to those who don't know Jesus a sense of personal conviction about their lostness, about their need for what only God can provide.

This work of the Spirit is unusual in that it is the only one that is directed to the person who has yet to believe in Jesus.

The Spirit's convicting work is crucial. He convinces people of their sinfulness, convinces the consciences of people that they lack righteousness,¹² and because of this, convinces them of coming judgment.

No, people don't always respond to the conviction that the Holy Spirit brings.

But without His conviction, if He didn't convict of sin, righteousness, and judgment, no one would come to Jesus.¹³

¹¹ The word “*convict*” is translated differently in different English versions of the Bible. It is variously rendered convict (NIV, NASB), convince (Phillips), and reprove (AV).

¹² This is an ironic use of the term “*righteousness*” but seems to me to resonate with the sense of the passage, more than other understandings (such as “*convicts of God's righteousness*”).

¹³ The Spirit awakens us to our need for salvation from sin. Cornelius (Acts 11) is an example of someone who understood his need for a Savior, that he was a sinner.

So, the Spirit's conviction is gracious. God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son. And He loved the world so much that He sent the Spirit to convince the world that it needs His Son!

The Spirit convicts **[9] regarding sin, because they do not believe in Me.**

Believing in Jesus is the only way to receive eternal life. By not believing in Jesus, there is no escaping God's condemnation for sin.

The Spirit convicts **[10]...regarding righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you no longer are going to see Me.**

Jesus' return to the Father after His crucifixion and resurrection will reveal Him to be righteous. His righteousness puts the world's lack of righteousness on display.

The Spirit convicts **[11]...regarding judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.**¹⁴

Jesus triumphed over sin at the cross, and over death at the resurrection, announcing Satan's defeat.¹⁵

And, as the ruler of this world was condemned, so the Spirit of God convinces people who have yet to trust Jesus that they, too, are liable for judgment and condemnation.

All of this is wonderful stuff. But how was it pertinent to Jesus' apostles and how does it speak to us, today?

First, it informs us that the Holy Spirit is right now at work in the hearts of people we love who do not yet know Jesus.

So, when we show up and begin sharing the Good News about Jesus with them, we can know that we weren't the first on the scene. The Spirit was there first.

Second, this news about the Spirit's ministry directs us to pray that God will work in the hearts of our unbelieving friends to respond to the gracious, convicting work of the Spirit.

Conclusion:

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is much more expansive than what we read about in John 14 and 16. He does more than what Jesus talked about here.

But on His last night with His apostles, Jesus highlighted these two essentials. The Spirit...

...guides us into truth, and that through the Scripture He has inspired.

...prepares the way for our evangelistic success, and that by His faithful, gracious work of convicting.

God has supplied us with just the help and with just the Helper we need.

At the moments when we may feel the most tension and pressure, we are not soloing. In Jesus' physical absence, we always have the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit had convinced him of this, but this conviction didn't save him. It did, though, prepare him for the message of the Gospel from Peter, which he believed and was then saved. (Dillow, *Final Destiny*) (Acts 11)

¹⁴ Satan is called "**the ruler**" of this world. (John 12:31; 14:30; Ephesians 6:12)

¹⁵ Those who observed the crucifixion saw that God did not interfere with Jesus' death and imagined that the judgment of God was being pronounced on Him. Actually, God's judgment was being pronounced on Satan through Jesus' death.