

Northwest Community Evangelical Free Church

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Sermon manuscript

Sermon Series: Trustworthy

Equipped by Jesus to live for Jesus (John 13-17)

Help from the Helper

(selected passage from John 14, 16)

Study #15

Introduction: Windy...

Wind is an amazing thing.

A gentle breeze will cool us off on a hot summer day and can bring calm to our souls. We can harness stronger winds to power windmills and propel sailboats. Severe winds - hurricanes and tornadoes - leave behind a wake of destruction.¹

Some winds figure prominently in stories from the Bible. For instance -

- Wind pushed back the waters of the Red Sea so that the Israelites could pass through on dry land.
- High winds whipped up on the Sea of Galilee made for tough sailing for Jesus' disciples.

Now, our New Testaments were originally written in Greek. And the most commonly used Greek word for winds of any kind is *pneuma*.

¹ In February 2017, my brother-in-law and I drove to the Guadalupe Mountains National Park for a 3-day ridge-walking trip. The first leg of the trip involved climbing Guadalupe Peak, the high point of Texas at 8751 feet. That hard hike was made harder because the “Damaging Winds” that were forecast hit hard. We battled strong winds all the way up and 80 mph gusts at the exposed peak - so the

But *pneuma* is also the word used in the Bible for breath. God’s *pneuma* filled Adam’s lungs.²

And *pneuma* is the word for spirit. *Pneuma* describes something that is immaterial and invisible.

On the Day of Pentecost, a few weeks after Jesus’ crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, those who believed in Jesus were all together in one place in Jerusalem when they heard the sound of a loud, rushing wind.³

That sound announced the arrival of the third member of the Trinity, the Person of the Holy Spirit / *Pneuma*. The Spirit’s arrival was vibrant, invisible, and immaterial, and as powerful as a gale-force wind.

Today, we listen as Jesus has things to say about the role the Holy Spirit / *Pneuma* would play as a “Helper” in the lives of the first disciples and the “Helper” He is in our “Next Step” journey with Jesus.

The scene at the table...

Again, the scene is an upper room in a Jerusalem home. Judas was gone, leaving Jesus with His eleven flawed, but faithful, disciples.

These men who followed Jesus came from varied backgrounds.

- 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, much hated, tax-collector for the Romans.
- Several of them - Peter, Andrew, James, John - were independent businessmen (fishermen) - with responsible professional lives.

Park Rangers later told us. 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.

² See 2 Thessalonians 2:8 where the **“breath”** (*pneuma*) of the Lord will put an end to **“that lawless one.”** (the one we refer to as “the Antichrist”) Also Revelation 11:11 where the **“breath”** (*pneuma*) was restored to **“the two witnesses.”**

³ A different word is used here for wind. (Acts 2:2)

All of them had left everything for Jesus and they were beginning to reckon with the news that He was about to leave them.

A few days earlier, they had listened to the crowds shout, **[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 in Jerusalem, replace King Herod, restore Israel to her former glory, and throw off the rule of the hated Romans.

But, by the time of this Thursday evening Passover meal, there had been enough disruptions and setbacks that their confidence in that glorious future was shot full of holes.

This morning, we are listening as Jesus spoke to an insecure, unsteady group of men in desperate need of comfort and peace.⁴

From Comforted to Confused (John 14:1-15)

Jesus’ Comforting Words (14:1-4)

Faith in God, the cure for the troubled heart (v. 1)

Jesus’ first words were intended to bring that peace: **[1] “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.”**⁵

Faith in God and in Jesus, God’s Son, is the key to untroubling troubled hearts. Faith in God brings energy and courage and stability.

But the kind of faith that restores calm to troubled hearts isn’t a vague belief that everything will somehow work out OK. No. It’s faith in a God who gives promises about the future, as Jesus does here.

Peace from an assurance for the life to come (vv. 2-3)

[2] “In My Father’s house are many rooms;⁶ 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.”

These men heard this direct from Jesus. He was with them to give this message.

The message was that they would soon be separated - and that would have been tough for them to process. But that tough message came with a peace-giving element, as well. In the end, on the other side, in His Father’s house, they and He will be reunited.

This message was of great help to them - and it is for us, too. Jesus has secured a place for us, with Him, in the Father’s house, after we leave this life.⁷

Jesus added, **[4] “And you know the way where I am going.”** - and that comment prompted a question from the Apostle Thomas.

The Disciples’ Confusion

Thomas (vv. 5-7)

Thomas voiced his confusion (v. 5)

[5] Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going; how do we know the way?” - to which I say, “Thank you, Thomas!”

⁴ 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)

⁵ More literally, verse one should be translated, “**Stop letting your hearts be troubled.**”

⁶ 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.

⁷ That truth energizes us to live for Him now. A Christ-follower who embraces the truth of Jesus’ words will be willing to take great steps of faith. “*Sure, I’m willing to risk it all for the Lord. I’ll step out in faith for Him. What’s the worst that could happen to me? I die. Then I go to a dwelling place Jesus has prepared for me in glory.*”

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

Jesus spoke to Thomas' confusion (vv. 6-7)

[6] Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me.

We're glad that this was the answer He gave to Thomas and to us because in a few short hours...

...the **LIFE** will be hanging dead on a Roman cross.

...the **TRUTH** will appear to have been a lie.

...the **WAY** will look like a dead end.

But Jesus was speaking the truth. The end of the Jesus story is not crucifixion. It is resurrection. Not death, but life. He then said...

[7] "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him." - and that prompted a request from the Apostle Philip.

Philip (vv. 8-15)

Philip voiced his confusion (v. 8)

[8]... "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us."

On the one hand, this request from Philip was bold. Hats off to Philip for boldness. He was asking to see what no one had ever seen.

In responding to Philip's request, Jesus reproved him, but He didn't reprove Philip for his boldness.

Jesus spoke to Philip's confusion (vv. 9-15)

[9] Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

That reproof was to say to Philip, "You have misunderstood who **'I AM'** if you have to ask this question. Having seen Me, you have seen all that you need to know of the Father."

[10] "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. [11] "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves."

So, hours before His departure, the disciples were in the dark about servanthood, about His death, about Judas' betrayal, evidently even about Jesus' essential equality with the Father.

Knowing full well how far they still had to go, the Lord is going to assure them that even in His absence, He wouldn't abandon them. They won't be driving solo. He will send them a Helper.

He turned the corner to address that theme with this: **[15] "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.**

This is important. We don't express our love for Jesus by saying that we love Him. We show our love for Him by uncompromising obedience - and obedience is hard.

So, here's the question that pops into our minds when we hear Jesus say this to these confused apostles: Are these not-yet-fully-formed or even fully-informed men equipped to give Jesus their unalloyed love and obedience?

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

Introduction to the Holy Spirit (14:16-18)

[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* believers - invisibly and spiritually - in the same ways that Jesus *helped* believers when He was physically present on earth.⁸

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, illuminates, indwells, and intercedes, that He can be quenched and grieved - and more.

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

In this session in the Upper Room Discourse, Jesus didn't intend to give a run-down of all of the Holy Spirit's ministries.

Instead, He highlighted two of the ministries that the Helper would perform after He was physically gone.

Here is the first, taken from John, chapters 14 and 16.

The Holy Spirit Leads Believers into Truth (14:25-26; 16:12-15)

[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.

⁸ The Spirit will be another helper (Greek - *ἄλλοσ*, meaning another of the same kind) just like Jesus, "As I have been with you, so now the Spirit will be with you."

[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.

Let's unpack this.

The Teaching Ministry of Jesus

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

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 (the "Helper") would bring to their minds all that He had taught them AND that the Spirit would teach them all that He would have taught if they had been able to handle it.⁹

Every truth the disciples would need to lead a God-honoring life, the Holy Spirit would make sure they received.

OK. Great. Exactly how does the Holy Spirit reveal these essential truths to us who believe in Jesus?

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

The Teaching Ministry of the Holy Spirit

The Spirit "breathed" Scripture into existence

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

⁹ We notice in the Gospels that often, after Jesus taught, people went away either scratching their heads (not getting it) or walked away with an incorrect interpretation of what He had just said (thinking that they got it).

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 wrote 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 credits the Holy Spirit with the creation of Scripture. Paul implies the same thing by the use of the word "*inspired.*" That word is, literally, "*God-breathed.*"

The Holy Spirit was inspiring every writer of Scripture (Moses, Samuel, David, Solomon, every prophet, the four Gospel writers, and every New Testament letter writer) as they wrote.

He allowed them to shape the message by their own experiences, personalities, writing styles, and vocabularies, so that what they wanted to write and what they did write was exactly what He, the Spirit, wanted them to write.

I don't fully understand all that was involved in the Spirit's work of inspiring flawed men to write infallible Scripture. But that is what He did.

This is why, when we open up our Bibles or our Bible apps, we are opening the written expression of the will of God.

And that is why gaining exposure to Scripture is so important.

It is, actually, God - in the Person of the Holy Spirit - speaking to us through the voices of the biblical writers.

The priceless gift of the Bible

It is through Scripture that we learn of God's holiness and justice, of His love and mercy. The Bible is where we learn of God's plan for our salvation by faith alone in Jesus alone.

It is through what we read in the Bible that we learn of the arc of Jesus' story and of the indescribably great gift of God's grace.

And that is why people who receive the first Bible they have ever seen accept it for the life-changing gift it is.

One of our cross-cultural ministry partners (i.e., a missionary) spends his life working to translate the Bible for people groups in remote areas of southeast Asia who don't have a translation in their heart language.¹⁰

When these believers receive the gift of a Bible that they can read for themselves, they are overwhelmed with joy. They receive that Bible for what it really is, the life-changing Word of God.¹¹

The two-thousand-year story of Jesus' church is filled with the stories of men and women who have given their lives to gain access to the Bible for themselves or to provide God's Word to others.

Jesus' teaching that the Spirit teaches us - and that through His Word - is a call to each of us to regular, intentional, thoughtful, reflective time in the Bible. It'll change your life.

The life-changing power of the Bible

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

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

¹⁰ Here at Northwest, we have sponsored many projects to send Bibles to Christians who are without Bibles.

¹¹ See 1 Thessalonians 2:13.

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 that of the Author.

God will use your thoughtful, prayerful, submissive relationship to the Bible to transform your character, rebuild you from the inside out, and to conform you to the image of Jesus.¹²

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

John included it in his Gospel (which was inspired by the Spirit!) so that you and I would pay close attention to all that is included in the Bible.

And, during this final time with His disciples, Jesus spoke about one more of the Spirit's ministries.

The Holy Spirit Convicts the World 16:7-11)

A Beneficial Departure (16:7)

[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, I wonder if the disciples 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.

¹² It is for all these reasons that one of our church's stated 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.*

¹³ 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).

The ministry that Jesus highlights here is the ministry of conviction.

A Helpful Conviction (16:8-11)

[8a] "And He, when He comes, will convict¹³ the world regarding sin, and righteousness, and judgment.

The Spirit's conviction...

In view here is the Spirit's ministry of bringing to those who don't believe in Jesus a sense of personal conviction that they are, in fact, lost.

The Spirit will bring conviction to lost people of their need for what only God can provide.

This work of the Spirit is unusual in that it is the only one I can think of that is specifically for the benefit of the person who has yet to believe - and this convicting work of the Spirit is crucial for them and, as we'll see, for us.

He convicts lost people of their sin, pricks their consciences by letting them see their lack of righteousness,¹⁴ and, due to this, convinces them of coming judgment.

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

But without His conviction of their lostness and of their desperate need, no one would come to Jesus.¹⁵

¹⁴ This is a counter-intuitive use of the term "**righteousness**" but resonate with the sense of the passage, more than "**convicts of God's righteousness.**"

¹⁵ See Acts 11. Cornelius, a Roman centurion, was an example of someone who understood that being a sinner, he needed a Savior. The Spirit had convinced him of this, but this conviction didn't save him. It did, though, prepare him to believe the message of the Gospel from Peter. (Dillow, Final Destiny)

And in that, we see that the Spirit's conviction is not only critical. It is gracious.

He takes the initiative to work in the hearts of those who have yet to believe in Jesus so that they will thirst for what only Jesus can give them.

John 3:16 says that God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son. John 16 says that God loved the world so much that He sent the Spirit to convict the world of its need for His Son.

...regarding sin.

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

That is to say that since Jesus is the Son of God who alone can offer eternal life, rejecting Him is the ultimate and most fatal sin. The Spirit convicts the person who rejects Jesus of their sin.

...regarding righteousness.

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

From the perspective of that evening in the upstairs room, 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. And the Spirit makes it clear to the lost person that they lack the righteousness they need to approach God or to get right with God.

...regarding judgment.

And the Spirit convicts **[11]...regarding judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.**¹⁶

Jesus triumphed over sin at the cross. He defeated death at the resurrection, announcing Satan's defeat.¹⁷

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

All of this is great to hear and to learn.

But how was it pertinent to Jesus' apostles and how does the Helper's conviction of the world "help" us, today?

Well, because it is the Spirit of God who convicts people:

THE PRESSURE IS OFF.

In sharing the good news of Jesus with a friend, it is not up to you to convince or convict them of their sin, their lack of righteousness, or of coming judgment. The Spirit of God does that.

You aren't prohibited from engaging with your friend about any of these. And, at times, it may be helpful for you to talk with your friend about these things. But their being convicted of them is not up to you.

You can assume, you can take it by faith, that at deep places in your friend's soul, the Spirit has already been convicting their conscience of their desperate need.

¹⁶ Satan is called "**the ruler**" of this world. (John 12:31; 14:30; Ephesians 6:12)

¹⁷ 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.

WE ARE GOSPELERS.

So, instead of doing the work of “convicting,” the message that we are called to share with a lost world and with lost people is that Jesus came into the world to seek and to save them.

We tell them that Jesus was born, lived, died, and rose again to give spiritual life to those who are spiritually dead when they simply believe in Him for the eternal life He offers.

ALL CREDIT GOES TO THE SPIRIT.

As we speak with those who have yet to believe in Jesus, we can be assured that we weren’t the first ones on the scene. The Spirit was there first, convicting them of their state and their need.

We were there second. And we thank God that we get to have the privilege of pointing our friend to Jesus.

And, if our friend believes in Jesus for eternal life, it was because of the Spirit’s work before we ever got there, convicting our friend of their need for what only God can provide.

He, the Holy Spirit, gets all the praise, glory, and credit for fruit from our sharing the Good News.

This teaching about the Spirit’s ministry compels 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.

In either of these ministries, the Spirit’s wind may blow as gently as a light breeze to open a lost person’s heart to their condition or a Christian’s heart to wonderful truth from God’s Word.

Or, that wind might be stronger and could compel a Christian to take this or that action in obedience to Scripture or an unbeliever to take Jesus and His claim to be trustworthy seriously.

The Spirit’s wind can even blow in such a way that it wrecks havoc, revealing through Scripture a much-needed repentance for a Christian, or opening the eyes of the person without Jesus to their desperate condition, prompting them to flee to Jesus for the eternal life they need and that only He can provide.

Today, we give thanks for the priceless gift of God’s Spirit.

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.