

## The Densest Moment | Jesus Christ's Farewell Conversation "The Spirit of Truth"

John 14.15-24

2.12.23

*"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. <sup>16</sup> "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; <sup>17</sup> that 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 abides with you and will be in you. <sup>18</sup> "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. <sup>19</sup> "After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. <sup>20</sup> "In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. <sup>21</sup> "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."*

<sup>22</sup> *Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?"*

<sup>23</sup> *Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. <sup>24</sup> "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.*

**We're looking at the "red letters," the longer teaching sections by the main Character** in the *Four Gospels*. This year, our interest is with the farewell discussion between Jesus Christ and His disciples on the night of His arrest, at the Last Supper, *on a roof-top or second floor, The Upper Room Discourse*.

The disciples are in big trouble, and they don't know it. They think they're attending the coronation of a king but instead, their Leader will be "*Throned upon the awful tree*" (hymn by John Ellerton, 1875). When it happens, the bottom will drop out of their lives because their dreams of the restoration of Israel under the Son of David will also die AND because their best Friend will be taken from them – PERMANENTLY (or so they think). He'll die – no coming back from THAT!

When He's spoken about His death, they think He's using figurative speech. Now, they're starting to wonder if they missed the point. A disciple named Judas (NOT Iscariot) asks a fourth question, "*Uh... why are You going to disclose Yourself to US and not to the world? I mean isn't that why we're in Jerusalem at this gigantic event – so we could have the big debut...public announcement? What's up?*"

But it's almost as if Jesus ignores the question. Instead, He speaks of "*another Helper, the Spirit of Truth*". He'll be God's Gift to them, who will keep them from despair.

We'll learn a lot more about this other Helper in the course of this five-chapter last will and testament of

Jesus Christ... Today, this Spirit of Truth is introduced as the One who will make all the difference. Because He is with them and IN them, they'll be somehow different from the world... AND, this Spirit is given to every believer in Jesus Christ since the Day of Pentecost and HE makes all the difference for modern day believers too.

**Let's look at: 1) Why He's Needed 2) Who He IS and 3) What difference HE made and MAKES.**

As we tried to establish last week, it's hard to compare my hurts and your hurts; it's rarely a fruitful exercise. We've had pain and disappointments and so did they, but their expectations were so high and disappointment is related to expectations – they thought He was the Savior of the Nation! They'd seen things that convinced them.

When Jesus dies that cruelest of deaths, the disciples will be more than devastated. They'd seen actual miracles (14.11) and could never forget what they'd seen...and they KNEW that Jesus of Nazareth was the One they'd been waiting for since we were expelled from the Garden (Gen 3.15).

And personally... each of them had a story of time spent with Jesus. He told them things about themselves that no one else even knew (John 1.37ff esp 48; 4.29). He had proven Himself to be the Good Shepherd. We read two weeks ago, *"Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end"* (13.1-3). They were convinced that He was Messiah AND they were each one, loved, befriended, counseled and helped by Him. They looked forward to their kids knowing Him.

Even when He said really hard words, when they surveyed their options, they couldn't even consider going elsewhere because He was UNIQUE – One of a kind. Once He spoke of the requirement to eat His flesh and drink His blood, we read, *"As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and did not walk with Him anymore. So, Jesus said to the twelve, 'You don't want to go away also, do you?' Simon Peter answered 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God'"*. (Jn. 6:66-69)

He healed others and He healed them. He was, to them, the Friend who's closer than a brother (Pro. 18.24) So, the prospect of losing Him – of His defeat and death and of His extended absence was too much for them to bear.

When the crucifixion took place – the inner confusion and grief would've been unbearable. They would think back on the miracles (*"Did they not happen?...We saw them with our own eyes!"*) and the way we were loved and understood and the future they were anticipating WITH HIM – but then, arrest, mockery, beating, defeat, crucifixion...death.

Again, I've had some disappointments and regrets even some real disillusionment (you too!) but nothing like this. The disciples were in trouble and they didn't even know it.

Jesus Christ was about to suffer like no one's ever suffered and yet He's thinking of THEM. He knows they will lose their minds... lose their bearings... lose their faith.

And all the friends that begged them NOT to follow this Man from Galilee ("can anything good come from Nazareth?") The disciples would have no one... no thing...no hope...orphans.

This is why they needed... not just someTHING...but someONE. If Jesus had to go...if He could not remain with them bodily, they would have to have another Helper. And the Helper Jesus was proposing would be the only One who could possibly fit the bill, the Spirit of Truth who once hovered over the waters and brought order out of chaos (Gen 1.2). Only He could hold them together and keep them from utter despair and loss of faith and insanity.

And before I go on to say more about WHO He is, I should note: IF YOU are in danger of "losing it" – losing your faith, losing your sanity, sinking into despair and your whole psyche imploding... if you're bereft, alone, afraid, guilty, an orphan? Maybe this other Helper is for you.

Who is HE? (second point) Well, the two names given Him are *Paraclete*, here translated "Helper" and "*the Spirit of Truth whom the world cannot receive.*"

He's not a force (as some cults try to claim) though He is often associated with the power of God. He's a Person in the same way Jesus Christ is a Person – thus, "Another Helper" (Jesus, being the First Helper).

He does personal actions... because He's a Person.

He is the Spirit of God. The Heart of God – the inner Essence or Being of God, distinct from the Father and the Son but equally God – the same in substance, equal in power and glory. ONE GOD (not three) in Three Persons (NOT personalities) – one God existing eternally in three Persons. As with Father and Son, the Spirit had no beginning.

He's the Person in the Trinity often associated with communication: "*people moved by the Holy Spirit, spoke from God*" (2 Peter 1.21). We can think of the Father decreeing and planning, the Son executing the eternal decree and the Spirit of Truth as the One who communicates or applies the benefits to people.

And that brings up our last point: what difference HE made and MAKES.

These disciples had three years of schooling in the best school ever conceived: the personal tutelage of Jesus Christ. After that three-year course, when the bottom fell out, they all ran away. Peter boasted that he'd defend Jesus if anything ever went down... Then a little girl asked Peter him some questions and he denied Jesus three times, a rough, tough fisherman afraid of a little girl.

But when the Spirit of Truth came upon them after the resurrection, the disciples became bold and even fearless. He, the Spirit of Truth, applied or communicated the Life of God to the souls of the cowardly

disciples. Verse 19, Jesus says, “Because I live, you will also live” and it’s this other Helper, the Spirit of Truth who communicates the resurrection life of Jesus – here’s St Paul in Romans CH 8 *“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you”*. (v.11)

He’s the same Spirit who breathed life into Adam and breathed life into the *Valley of Dry Bones* (Ezk 36). He communicates the Life of God. He’s *“the Lord and Giver of Life”*; He’s the Communicator. HE is the essential difference between the world and the Christian – the believer in Jesus Christ has the Life of God communicated to her/him by the Spirit of Truth, the other Helper. The one who doesn’t believe is still dead in sin and unable to respond to God.

God shoots Himself, like an arrow into a dead heart and that heart comes alive...and believes.

Second (what difference does He make): He is the Illuminator for all who believe. As the Spirit of Truth, He convinces God’s people that God’s Word is TRUTH. For the disciples, this meant that the pronouncements and claims and promises Jesus made for those three years were all like so much kindling wood the Teacher piled up in their souls... But when the Spirit of Truth came, He was the Spark that kindled the kindling! He convinced them that these claims were not just a really good opinion or even the BEST opinion but were TRUE. *“The word which you hear is NOT Mine”*, says Jesus, *“but the Father’s who sent Me.”* That’s to say, *“I actually speak the words of God...and it’s all TRUTH!”*

Until the Paraclete (Helper) opens a person’s eyes to see the truth and instills faith in that person’s heart, that person can’t see that the Good News of God is true Truth!

Third, He becomes an affectionate principle in the lives of God’s people. We love because He first loved us (1 John 4.19). He is transcendent, He’s infinite, eternal and unchangeable but He is also intimate and close-by. He enters IN to a believer and makes His “abode,” His dwelling in the Church and IN the life of each true believer.

The evidence that He dwells in a person is LOVE – *“the Fruit of the Spirit is LOVE, i.e. joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control...”* (Gal. 5.22) He communicates God’s love to us and He produces our love for God... He daily convinces us to love God because God is altogether lovely and WE NEED HIM more than food, water or oxygen.

Lastly, He made and MAKES a difference in that He enables the believer to obey. It’s a major emphasis in this passage, vv. 15, 21, 23, and 24 all point to it.

There’s a circularity to it. Does it seem that we get rewarded for our love to God when you read the words (23), *“If anyone loves Me he will keep My word; and My Father will love him...”* ? Well, the believer in Jesus will be rewarded for his love for God, the LOVE THAT THE SPIRIT PRODUCES. God takes the initiative, and we’re moved by the Spirit, we move with the Spirit and we keep in step with the Spirit (Gal 5.25)... and we ARE rewarded with deeper and deeper intimacy with the God we NEED!

Jesus is announcing the New Covenant – the great promises in the Hebrew Prophets saying that God will give us a new heart, tender, flexible, a heart of flesh NOT stone. God will write His Law on our hearts so His will becomes OUR WILL.

He sweetly liberates us again and again to trust Him who loved us so much that He shot Himself into the world – lived in pure goodness, died an atoning sacrifice for my crimes, rose victorious over the thing I fear most (death and judgment – Heb 2.14-15) and then shoots His holy Presence into my heart and motives.

Do we obey perfectly? No (think of Peter at the picnic in Galatians 2.11ff who was NOT walking in step with the Spirit and the Gospel... Peter the Rock who had the Spirit [post-Pentecost!]) but we do continue to repent and believe... and I return to His words... where else can I go?

The Spirit of Truth lives IN me ever helping me obey Jesus Christ because HE is Lord (NOT my consultant) and His commands are good because HE is Goodness Himself. It's not smorgasbord obedience! I obey the commands I agree with AND the commands I don't like because under my fickleness is a heart that belongs to God and is indwelled by Jesus and His Agent, the Spirit of Truth.

I return to obeying and I'm not content with a forced or joyless obedience because I'm NOT an orphan or a slave but a SON! When I am obeying like a slave, in self-pity and half-hearted, I repent of my sub-Christian motives... I repent even as I'm "obeying."

I have the DNA of God in me, transferred by the Spirit of Truth... And I persevere in it... Even when I want to let go... I don't because the Spirit won't let me.

Maybe some of you are NOT believing in Jesus because you just can't LIVE that way... Well, if it were up to us NO ONE would live His way. We NEED the Spirit of Truth!

Why not call on this Spirit of Truth?

He can blow life like an animating wind ...turning our dead works into trophies of His grace that point to the Father who planned it all, the Son who carried out the plan and the Spirit of Truth who is daily liberating those who believe to walk in freedom as the cherished children of God!

## QUOTES

*Every Christian would agree that a man's spiritual health is exactly proportional to his love for God. But man's love for God, from the very nature of the case, must always be very largely, and must often be entirely, a Need-love. This is obvious when we implore forgiveness for our sins or support in our tribulations. But in the long run it is perhaps even more apparent in our growing – for it ought to be*

*growing – awareness that our whole being by its very nature is one vast need; incomplete, preparatory, empty yet cluttered, crying out for Him who can untie things that are now knotted together and tie up things that are still dangling loose.*

– C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (1960; introduction)

I remember one of the poets had an ingenious way to express the affection toward God with which he himself was eventually overcome after a long resistance. He imagined that the God of love had shot all His golden arrows at this poet but could never pierce the man's heart. Finally, God put Himself into the bow, and launched Himself straight into the poet's breast. I think, this helps illustrate God's method of dealing with people: He had long wrestled with a stubborn world and thrown down many blessings on us. When all His other gifts could not prevail, He at last made a Gift of Himself, to prove His affection, and to engage ours.

– Henry Scougal, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, (1739; modernized English)