

God is With You

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- [0 : 01] Speaking of the Bible, if you have one with you, you can open it up to John chapter 15. We're continuing on in our journey through the Gospel of John.
- Most of you know that, in case you haven't been here. This is the night of Jesus' betrayal. And Jesus is with his disciples, the eleven disciples, the twelfth one, Judas.
- He has started to betray Jesus and has left them. And Jesus has been basically just encouraging and challenging and teaching and comforting his disciples.
- Preparing them for the difficulty that they're about to go through. So last Sunday, we heard Jesus change the subject with his disciples and address some of their fears and concerns. They're worried that Jesus is about to leave them.
- They're worried about all this opposition and disdain. From Jesus' opponents, the religious leaders and some of the Jews who were loyal and followed them closely.
- [1 : 07] And Jesus confirmed, yes, you will be hated by the world because you do not belong to it anymore. You will be hated by the world because of your association with me, says Jesus.
- You will be hated by the world because these people do not know God. Their hatred of me and of you, he said, was totally unjustifiable, without reason.
- And they will be held guilty for their treatment of me and of you unless they repent. Well, now we come to the comfort part. I said, am I cutting in and out here?
- No. The comforting part, as I said last Sunday, Jesus is going to give comfort. And here it comes. So we will pick it up in chapter 15, verse 26.
- Jesus says, So encouragement number one to his disciples.
- [2 : 29] Jesus says to his disciples, You will not be left alone. God's Spirit is coming. And we heard Jesus promise this earlier in the evening, that the Spirit of God would come.
- If you recall, back in chapter 14, verse 16 and 17. And there the Spirit was, Jesus called him, another counselor or another advocate, another helper, guide.
- There's many different words that the translations have used here. Because the precise translation of this Greek word is difficult into English. There's no English word that fully captures the meaning of this word.
- And so I encouraged us back then to focus on the fact that the Spirit would be another counselor or another comforter, another guide to the disciples, just like Jesus has been for these men.
- What Jesus has been for them, the Holy Spirit is going to be another of that for them. While Jesus is gone. So now, here again, possibly an hour or two later in the evening, Jesus reminds them that this counselor, this comforter, this guide is coming.
- [3 : 44] And Jesus has a few different things to say about him. First, Jesus clarifies just who this counselor is. He says he is the Spirit of truth.
- Next, we notice this interpersonal relationship between Jesus and the Spirit of truth and the Father. All three persons of God's triune nature are present right here in this verse.

Jesus says, I will send to you the Spirit of truth. And if you remember back to chapter 14, verse 26, there Jesus said that the Father will send the Spirit to them.

So we might be wondering, well, who is it that sends the Spirit of truth? Is it Jesus? Is it the Father? The answer is, it's both. As we heard way back in John chapter 5, Jesus and the Father, they work together in harmony with one another.

And so, both the Father and the Son will send the Spirit of truth. Next, we notice, where from? Jesus says that the Spirit goes out from the Father.

[5 : 05] He will be sent. He will go out from the Father. And why is that? Well, I don't think we need to make it complicated. I think the simple answer is just that the Spirit of truth is God's own Spirit.

Amazingly, God is the sort of being who is able to send out His Spirit.

Think about that. This is one of the ways in which God is different than us. We can't send our own Spirit anywhere.

We often tell people that, I'm with you in Spirit. But actually, we're just thinking about them. We're not there. This is one of the ways that God is different than us.

Our own spirits, our inner being, they're confined to our bodies. And until the day we die, our spirits stay there.

[6 : 08] But God is not like us. He is able to have His Spirit go forth from Him. Next, we see to whom the Spirit of truth will go.

Jesus says, I will send the Spirit, the Advocate, to you. And we notice here in the original language, it's a you plural, referring in immediate context to the disciples.

This is an amazing thing about God. He is able to send His Spirit people. We saw this in the Old Testament. God sent His own Spirit upon people.

People like Samson, and Elijah, and the prophets of old. And then, three years prior to this conversation that Jesus is having right now with the disciples, some of them were likely there the day that Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River, and God's Spirit came down from heaven and came to rest upon Jesus.

So Jesus is saying, in a sense, what happened to me, the Spirit coming down from the Father in heaven upon me is going to happen to you, my disciples.

[7 : 30] He's going to come down from the Father to you. Now, we might wonder about this sort of thing. The spiritual realm is not really something that we understand very well.

We are creatures who take in our surroundings through the faculties of our body, our eyes, our touch, our smell, our taste. We take light into our eyes.

We take sound waves into our ears. The electrical pulses in our nervous system let us know when we've made contact with another object, with our skin.

But the Spirit is immaterial. Spirits are not made up of the same sort of stuff that we're so used to in this physical and tangible world.

And so there's mystery in these words. Amazingly, God is the sort of being who can envelop one of his creatures with his own spirit.

[8 : 32] He can put his own presence right into people and live within them. I'm kind of getting ahead of myself because here it just says send to you.

But that's how the story is going to continue. It's not just to you. It's in you to live with you. Now, what will the Spirit do when he comes?

Jesus says, and this is the main thought of this statement Jesus makes, when he comes he will testify about me, says Jesus.

So this is what the Spirit will do. He's going to bear witness to Jesus. He's going to point to Jesus. He's going to make the case for Jesus. He's going to give evidence about Jesus.

Jesus. And we might wonder, well, how? Is he just going to fly around and whisper in people's ears or into their hearts or into their minds?

[9 : 35] I think this is so interesting. The Spirit is coming to testify about Jesus and at the same time he's coming to the disciples, the apostles.

Where's Jesus going with this? Why testify to them? They already believe. The next verse seems to clarify this. Verse 27. It says, and you also must testify for you have been with me from the beginning.

So the Spirit's going to testify to the world about Jesus, but he's being sent to the apostles. apostles. And they also must testify. And if you see the implication here, God will send the Spirit, Jesus will send the Spirit to his apostles and it's through them that he will bear witness to Christ in the world.

They themselves will become like the prophets of old, the very mouthpieces of God. Now imagine for a moment that you're one of the eleven apostles with Jesus this night and he's saying these things to you.

The world's going to hate you and persecute you, but you must testify about me and my Spirit is going to come to you, the Spirit of Truth to help you with that.

[11 : 12] this is an assignment that no doubt will not be easy. But if we can get our hearts and our minds fixed on this fact that God himself will be there with us, his Spirit with us, in us, it changes everything.

So this is the first comfort. Jesus says, you will not be alone on this assignment. I will send the Spirit and he will come to you and he will do this work of bearing witness alongside you and as we'll see deeper than that, he will bear witness through you.

Jesus goes on, all this I have told you so that you will not fall away. They will put you out of the synagogue. In fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God.

They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. I have told you this so that when their time comes, you will remember that I warned you about them.

Wow. First, the comfort, the promise of the Spirit, but then Jesus has more to say about how things are going to get difficult for them. Earlier, he told them that the world would hate them, verse 18.

[12 : 54] Then, that the world would persecute them, verse 20. And now, Jesus tells them just how difficult it's going to get for the disciples in the days ahead.

He says in verse 2, they will put you out of the synagogue. You know, this is something that's difficult for us to imagine what it would be like.

But in Jesus' day, there in Israel, before the church became a thing, the synagogue was at the heart of each community. to be kicked out of the synagogue would signal to everyone that you are not to be trusted.

You're not to be associated with. It would be like social alienation. Your reputation would be ruined. It would make it hard for you to go about your ordinary affairs of life. Because anybody who saw you, they wouldn't want to be seen having dealings with that guy who's been excommunicated by the ruling council of the Jews.

But then Jesus goes on to tell them the full extent of the persecution they will face. Not just excommunication and social ostracism, but they will hunt you down and kill you.

[14 : 11] In fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God. Surely Jesus would have had a tear in his eyes as he said this.

Can you imagine a service to God? This is how self-deceived some of the religious leaders in Israel are right now.

Jesus' opponents, they think they will be helping God bring justice, bring truth, bring righteousness on the earth by hunting these men down and killing them.

how could they think that way? Jesus says they will do such things because they have not known the Father or me.

And as we heard last week, this is not ignorance, it's that they do not have that close favorable relationship with the one true God like they should.

[15 : 17] They claim to worship Yahweh, they claim to know the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But the reality is, says Jesus, they don't know him and they don't know me.

Verse 4, Jesus says, I'm telling you all this now so that when it happens, you'll know. You'll know because I gave you warning. You'll know what's happening and you'll understand some of the why.

And if you know the story, as the story goes, none of these 11 men will be killed right away. In fact, some of them will go on to testify about Jesus all over the place for decades before they are finally caught and killed.

You could think back to the stoning of Stephen in Acts. He wasn't one of the 12, but he was a spirit-filled member of the early church.

He was the first one that we know of to be killed for his faith in Jesus. And then later in Acts, we see how some of the Jews came to come up with this plot to assassinate Paul, another of the apostles.

[16 : 32] So if you're one of the 11 men with Jesus this night, aren't these difficult words to hear? Here's the Messiah, the Savior, Savior, but he's telling you that you are soon to be hated, excommunicated, and even killed.

Right about now you're probably wondering, why didn't you tell us that it was going to get this bad? Why didn't you let us know way before that this was coming? Jesus sort of answers this question here in verse 4.

He says, I did not tell you this from the beginning because I was with you, but now I am going to him who sent me. This is sort of the last opportunity for Jesus to warn them about what is ahead.

Before, it wasn't needed. The target was on Jesus' back, back. But now that Jesus is leaving, the target is about to be on the disciples' backs.

Again, Jesus tells them, I am going to the one who sent me. And I imagine at this point in the conversation, the disciples are all just kind of sitting there, speechless, shocked, trying to process these words of Jesus.

[17 : 58] And it seems from the text that Jesus is kind of just waiting for them to respond. He told them, I am going to the one who sent me.

It seems this is supposed to be a teachable moment because Jesus looks at them and he says, none of you asks me, where are you going? This is kind of a curious question that Jesus asks.

It has been thoroughly debated and some point to this as a contradiction. in the Bible since Peter asked back in chapter 13 verse 36, where are you going?

And Philip kind of asked the same thing back in chapter 14 verse 5. Lord, we don't know where you're going, so how can we know the way? Well, there's several good guesses about this.

Most of them are speculation. My best guess is that Jesus is not saying that they never asked the question before, but that now is the time to ask the question. And instead of asking it, instead of seizing this teachable moment, they're so focused right now on themselves and on this despair that's creeping in over the things that Jesus has just told them.

[19 : 15] None of you asked me, where are you going? Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things. Perhaps the grief has become something so all encompassing, so overwhelming that they're just distracted, they're just, they can't even think straight anymore.

Whatever the case, one thing is sure, the disciples were deeply rocked by the warning that Jesus gave them about being hated, persecuted, and killed.

You are filled with grief, quite literally, but because I have spoken these things to you, grief has filled your hearts.

But very truly, I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the advocate will not come to you.

But if I go, I will send him to you. Now, I'll be honest, if I'm one of the eleven apostles here with Jesus, I'm thinking, it's hard to imagine anything better without Jesus here.

[20 : 36] I'm thinking, how could it be good for you to leave us? But this is one of those moments where Jesus seems to be calling them to just trust, to believe him.

Yes, somehow, it's actually for your advantage, it's for your benefit that I'm going away. Again, if I'm honest, I kind of scratched my head here.

Why can't you stay here with us on earth, Jesus, and send the Spirit too? Why not both at the same time? them? There's mystery here.

Whatever the reason, Jesus knows that he must go, he must leave, he must go to the Father and join with him in sending the Spirit to them.

It's for their good, it's for their benefit, it's the best plan, whether we understand it or not. So let's reflect for a moment on what we've heard so far.

[21 : 42] Jesus has told the disciples that they will be hated and persecuted, but Jesus is going to send the Spirit to them from the Father.

He's going to be with them, he's going to counsel them and help them just like Jesus has been doing. He will help them through the trials and difficulty ahead. And Jesus has expanded on what those trials will include, excommunication and even death.

But do not be filled with grief, do not be troubled about all this. My going away is needed and it is for your good, it is for your benefit to send the Spirit and he will make all the difference in the difficulties ahead.

So that's what Jesus had to say to them. Hated, yes, even worse, killed, but you will not be alone.

God himself will be with you through all of it and he will help you testify about me.

[23 : 02] now probably most of us are wondering here, so what does this have to do with me? How does this apply to my life today? Well, this is one of those moments where I hate to break it to you, but not everything in the Bible is about you or about me.

me. This is God's story. This is the story of his son. And at this point in the story, it's about the father and the son and these eleven men with him that evening.

But there are things that we can take from this. First of all, we should care deeply about this part of the story. We should love this part of the story because this is the story of how the church got started.

Jesus is preparing them for the work, the testifying work that will see the good news of Jesus and salvation go around the globe.

You and I wouldn't be here today worshiping Jesus if it wasn't for that. As Paul says in Ephesians chapter 2, verse 19, consequently you are no longer foreigners and strangers but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household.

[24 : 26] And I didn't get the second part of the verse on there. Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone on the foundation of the apostles.

What these men would go on to do with God's help laid the foundation for us today. And so we should appreciate this part of the story because this right here is our spiritual heritage.

Another thing we see here that's precious is Jesus' truthfulness. We live in a world where all too often people beat around the bush or where people are trying to sell you something but you're not getting the truth with it.

maybe it's a car that you bought that just wasn't in as good of condition as the dealer or owner led you to believe. Maybe it's a friend who's staring at that mustard on your face and just doesn't have the love and the guts to tell you about it before you embarrass yourself all over town.

Isn't it refreshing to see and hear Jesus speak the truth in love to his disciples? He doesn't sugarcoat it. He tells them the full extent of what they will suffer for his sake.

[25 : 49] And that's hard. But what a comfort to know the truth about what's really coming. I don't know about you but I would rather know the hard truth than be lied to and misled.

I'd rather know what's really at stake, what the consequences will be, than be led to believe that everything's just going to be fine and then find out later that it wasn't.

Along with the truthfulness of Jesus we see his grace. We see his love here in this conversation with the disciples. His tender care for them. Yes he tells them the hard truth but you can hear, you can feel his tenderness and compassion throughout this.

He's deeply sensitive to how they're feeling, what's going on in their hearts. He knows that they're troubled by this. He knows just how hard this is going to be when it comes.

But verse 1, all this I have told you so that you will not fall away. There is love in the heart of Jesus here.

[26 : 57] Tender, compassionate love for the disciples. And it comes by giving a warning. Sometimes we need a warning. We need a heads up. Jesus doesn't want to leave them just guessing and wondering when all this stuff comes to pass.

He cares about the fears in their hearts. And he brings the tender comfort that they need. It's this perfect mix of grace and truth. Something Jesus always got just right.

Yet another thing we see here which I mentioned earlier is Jesus' deep and mysterious connection to the Spirit and to the Father. Now this isn't a practical thing but I love to learn as much about Jesus, as much about God as I can.

I love to find myself put in my place thinking about how God is so other, so different than I am. He doesn't have the limitations that I do.

He's got this mysterious interconnectedness within his tri-personal being. It moves me to reverence and awe and worship.

[28 : 18] Finally, what Jesus lays out for the apostles here is a similar framework for all of us. Whenever followers of Jesus meet opposition, disdain, persecution, ridicule, we are reminded by these words that God is with us.

The Spirit of God is God's gift to all of Jesus' followers. We see that clearly declared, Acts 2, verse 38 and 39.

God's God's promise to us. God's promise to us, His precious promise is that we're not alone.

We don't have to go through that by ourselves. He is with us. His Spirit lives in us. Just as He did in the disciples.

Now, we aren't apostles like they were. We haven't been given the same responsibility of testifying authoritatively on Jesus' behalf like they did. Notice what Jesus said to them.

[29 : 27] He said, You also must testify for you have been with me from the beginning. That's something that we can't say. There was a uniqueness to the role that they had been given. They would go on to speak for Jesus just like the prophets of old did and write scripture, inspired scripture, God breathed scripture, but each one of us here today has been gifted and given a role to play in the body of Christ according to God's determination and His Spirit works powerfully in us as well for the benefit of each other and to make Christ known in our world.

So let's take encouragement from this. You know, as we hear about the things going on in our world, it's easy to just get bent out of shape by that and concerned and worried, but we are not alone in this world.

The Spirit of truth has come. He is with us. He is in us. And God will help us through whatever comes our way because just like the eleven men there, we are precious and dear to Him.

Let's pray. Lord Jesus, we bow before you now and we thank you for these words that you spoke to the eleven and through them you speak them to us.

And we pray and ask that they would sink deep into our hearts. We pray and ask that in this week ahead we would be more conscious of your presence in us and with us than ever before and that we would just grow in that knowledge and understanding.

[31 : 18] We pray and ask that the fears and anxieties and concerns in our hearts would just melt away with the realization that you, the creator of the universe, are with us and in us.

Go with us this week, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.