

(1) The Spirit of Jesus

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[0 : 00] Our reading today is from John 14, verse 15 to 24. It can be found on page 1086.

If you love me, you will keep my commandments, and I will ask the Father, and he will give you another helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him.

You know him, for he deals with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world will see me no more, but you will see me.

Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me. And I in you. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me.

And he who loves me will be loved by my Father. And I will love him and manifest myself to him. Judas, not Iscariot, said to him, Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us and not to the world?

[1 : 18] Jesus answered 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 home with him.

Whoever does not love me does not keep my words, and the word that you hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thanks very much indeed for reading for us. Why don't I pray? Heavenly Father, we thank you very much for the Bible. Thank you that it is your word written for us.

And we pray that as we look at it this morning, that you yourself will be our teacher and guide. For Jesus' sake. Amen. Well, do keep, please keep the Bibles open at John chapter 14 on page 1086.

And we're starting a new series of talks today. And the aim really of this series over the next four Sundays is to look at what we might call the core work of the Holy Spirit.

[2 : 31] And we're going to be looking at Jesus' own teaching on who the Spirit is and what he does from John's Gospel. And as we do so, my hope and my prayer really is that we would rediscover a hunger for the work of the Spirit in our own lives, in our own lives, and also in our life together as a church family.

Sadly, Christians often disagree on some aspects of the Spirit's work. What is prophecy? Should Christians speak in tongues? Those sorts of questions. And sadly, as a result, I think we all too easily lose sight of what is at the very heart of the Spirit's ministry.

Hence the aim of this series, to look at the core teaching on the Holy Spirit from the lips of Jesus himself. However, of course, while for some the Spirit's work is a source of division, for others the work of the Spirit can often be a source simply of confusion.

So I want to begin by asking a question, which is this, how can we know God in 2007? How can we know God in 2007? It's a question, of course, any child asks.

After all, we can't see God. We can't touch him. We can't hear his voice in the same way that we can with other people we know. And it's a question, too, that many of us perhaps can find ourselves asking.

[4 : 04] Perhaps those of us looking in on the Christian faith, or even as Christians, we can find ourselves thinking, well, do I really know God? Now, if we had lived in first century Israel, if we had seen Jesus in the flesh, the answer to that question would have been simple enough.

Because Jesus came to earth to reveal God. His words and works demonstrate to us what God is like. Which is why back at the beginning of chapter 14 of John's Gospel, in chapter 14, verse 6, Jesus says, I am the way and the truth and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. Because it's Jesus who reveals God. He's taught his disciples that if they know him, they know God.

As Jesus goes on to say in verse 9 of chapter 14, whoever has seen me has seen the Father. However, by this stage in John's Gospel, Jesus is about to leave.

It's just a few hours before his arrest and crucifixion. Jesus is spending his last moments with his disciples, teaching them all about how to follow him, but to do so in his absence.

[5 : 23] Perhaps we can imagine them thinking to themselves, well, it's all very well, Jesus saying that if we've seen him, we've seen God. But Jesus is about to leave.

What then? And this section we're looking at today, verses 15 to 21, assures them and us that it's going to be business as usual, even though Jesus will have left.

Why? Because Jesus will send the Holy Spirit. Now, if you turn to the outline on the reverse side of the service sheet, you'll see three points there, and we're just going to look at each one in turn.

Some people find it useful to take notes. If you find that sort of thing useful, so you can look at them again later, then do feel free to take notes. First of all, he is the Spirit of Jesus. He is the Spirit of Jesus.

And have a look with me at verses 15 to 17. If you love me, says Jesus, you will keep my commandments. And I'll ask the Father, and he will give you another helper to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him.

[6 : 40] You know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you. Now, it's important, straight off, to see that the Spirit here is a person.

He is a he, not an it. Verse 17. The world neither sees him nor knows him. He's not some impersonal force or power.

He doesn't give us energy and strength in some sort of impersonal, purely functional way. He is a person. Now, before I became a Christian, I remember being terribly confused, when I heard people talking about the Holy Ghost, which are sort of old-fashioned language, slightly, for the Holy Spirit.

I knew what ghosts were. Those sort of floating sheets that you saw on Scooby-Doo programmes. And I thought to myself, well, what could that have to do with God?

But no, we see here, the Holy Spirit is a person, not some sort of impersonal force or power. Now, I know that's a simple thing to say, to start with, but we need to be reminded of it.

[7 : 51] I think we easily think of the Holy Spirit as a something, something weird or intangible or mysterious, perhaps hard to understand, but actually he's a person. But notice he's not just any old person.

He is another Jesus. That word, helper, in verse 16, in other versions of the Bible, is unhelpfully, I think, translated, counselor, which, of course, in our context, brings to mind, doesn't it, all the wrong images of many white coats and the psychiatrist's chair and so on.

This translation, helper, is much better. It could also be translated to advocate or encourager, one who comes alongside, one who strengthens us. Jesus was all of those things, but now he is leaving and so he promises another helper.

And that word, another, means another of the same kind or precisely the same sort. Now imagine, for example, that you go and visit an elderly aunt for tea.

She gets out her best china, but to her great distress, you manage to break one of her prized plates. So you say, don't worry, I'll get you another.

[9 : 06] So you turn up the following week with a 99p replacement from Ikea. Now I imagine she wouldn't be very happy. Indeed, she might even say, but I wanted another one of exactly the same kind, just in fact like the one you break.

Well, in the same way here, the first helper was Jesus. Jesus, the Spirit is another helper of exactly the same kind.

He is another Jesus. In fact, he's so much like Jesus that having the Spirit in us is actually having Jesus in us.

Which is why in these verses, Jesus speaks of himself and of the Spirit almost interchangeably. So for example, look at verse 18. I will not leave you as orphans.

I will come to you. Now Jesus has already said he's going, so in a sense he will leave them. But now he says he will come to them. By which he means the Spirit will come to them.

[10 : 18] Or look on to verse 23. As Jesus says, if anyone loves me, he will keep my word and my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him.

Now again, you see, Jesus in verse 23 is talking about the coming of the Spirit. But instead of saying the Spirit will come and make his home in you, he says that he, Jesus, and the Father will come and make their home in them.

When I was around the age of seven or so, I used to go around to my best friend's house every Saturday morning and Adrian and I would watch what back in the mid-70s was a great Saturday morning program, The Lone Ranger.

And the title tells you everything you need to know about the film for this particular purpose. Every episode finished in exactly the same way with the Lone Ranger riding off into the sunset on his own on his stallion accompanied by the theme tune which I will spare you.

Well, I think sometimes we can imagine the Holy Spirit is sort of a bit of a Lone Ranger, if you like, that he basically does his own thing, that he has his own ministry entirely divorced from the work of Jesus or the work of God the Father.

[11 : 39] But I hope that right from the outset we can see here that the Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus. Like God the Father and God the Son, he is fully God, but he is not a Lone Ranger doing his own thing.

He is the Spirit of Jesus. And therefore, as we think about the work of the Spirit, both this morning but also over these next three weeks, I hope we can see we'll expect the work of the Spirit to be actually very similar or the same, in fact, to the work that Jesus does and the work that God the Father does.

And so, for example, it means that we can't have an experience of the Spirit, for example, which isn't also an experience of Jesus because the Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus.

That's the first point. Secondly, the Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus who lives in those who love Jesus. Who lives in those who love Jesus.

And have a look at verse 17 again. Even the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him.

[12 : 54] You know him for he dwells with you and will be in you. The world doesn't know the Spirit. In John's Gospel, the world refers to those who reject Jesus.

But the disciples will know him because he will live within them. Now we'll discover in two weeks' time that there is a particular work that the Spirit does in the person who is not yet a Christian.

His work in them is to convict them of the truth about Jesus and of the truth of their rebellion against God and the rightness of God's coming judgment. But I think it's just worth saying at this stage that nowhere else does Jesus tell us that the Spirit will be at work more generally in those who aren't Christians.

I don't know if you've picked this up but sometimes you hear people saying something like that we need to listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying, to what the Spirit of God is saying through other religions.

But the point is he isn't. He doesn't speak through other religions. Besides, it would be rather strange, wouldn't it, if Jesus, having just told us in John chapter 14 verse 6 that he alone is the way to heaven if he were now to tell us to expect the Spirit to speak to us and to be at work in other religions like that.

[14 : 17] But positively then, who does receive the Spirit? Well, did you notice in verse 17 he says to his disciples, you know him? Which raises the question, of course, well, who is the you?

Well, have a look at verse 15. If you love me, you will keep my commandments. You get the same thing in verse 21. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves me.

And he who loves me will be loved by my Father and I will love him and manifest myself to him. Or then verse 23. If anyone loves me, he will keep my word.

And my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him. You see, these great promises of the coming of the Spirit are linked to this description of those to whom he comes.

He comes to those who love Jesus, to those who obey him. Now, we mustn't think at this point, we mustn't think that Jesus is laying down a condition here.

[15 : 27] He isn't saying, well, if you love me, if you obey me, then I'll give you my Spirit as a kind of reward. As if, well, only some Christians will receive the Spirit. Perhaps those who particularly love him or those who are especially obedient.

But the rest of us, the run-of-the-mill Christians, won't receive the Spirit. Now, Jesus is not laying down conditions here. Everything we receive from God is a gift of grace.

It is totally undeserved. The Bible is consistent from beginning to end about that. That none of us deserve the gift of the Spirit. Rather, these verses are descriptions rather than laying down conditions.

Jesus is simply describing those to whom the Spirit is given. It's his followers. In other words, those who love Jesus. And if you're someone who loves Jesus, you'll be seeking to obey Jesus.

What's more, notice this is a promise for all who love Jesus. Verse 21, whoever has my commandments.

[16 : 35] Verse 23, if anyone loves me. Now, I want to spend some time applying this because I think it's easy to be confused on it.

It's clear, isn't it, that Jesus equates receiving the Spirit with being a Christian? And as such, they're challenging words, aren't they?

In other words, we don't receive the Spirit simply by attending church services. I went to a school chapel for years without ever following Jesus Christ, without knowing Jesus or receiving the Spirit.

Nor do you receive the Spirit at baptism or confirmation. nor is it enough simply to have some sort of sense of the spiritual. No, the mark of the true believer is that they love Jesus.

If they love Jesus, they are seeking to obey Him. They are the ones who receive the Spirit. In other words, every Christian, everyone who, as we heard earlier, has been born again, to use the language of John chapter 3.

[17 : 46] And notice too, we don't receive the Spirit by installments. So again, what does Jesus say in verse 18? I will come to you.

I think this is where it's so unhelpful if we begin to think of the Spirit in terms of a power or a force. Because then we can imagine it's possible perhaps only to have part of the Spirit.

But no, the Spirit is another Jesus. And you can't have only part of Jesus. with you. For example, imagine that I have to tell you that this coming weekend my mother-in-law was going to come and stay.

Now, however much I might like only part of her to come and stay for the weekend, the fact is that all of her would be coming. Now, actually, we get on very well and I would be absolutely delighted if all of her were to come.

I do. We do get on very well. I see. Underlines for twice. And therefore, when some Christians, however well intentioned, tell us that we can have more of the Spirit, then actually, this is a really good passage, isn't it, to keep on coming back to.

[19 : 01] Not only is it wrong to think like that, it's actually very damaging. Because this teaching that Jesus is giving the disciples here is given to assure them that they will continue to know Jesus and experience Jesus even in his absence.

Jesus' answer is, you won't be without me. I will come to you and live within you. He doesn't say, you'll only have part of me, which wouldn't be, perhaps, which wouldn't, perhaps, give them so much confidence.

No, he wants to assure them that even though he is going, his Spirit will come and therefore, it will be business as usual. They will have the Spirit.

They will have Jesus with them. So then, when we find the Christian life hard, here is a great encouragement. The Spirit of Jesus lives in those who love Jesus.

So don't go looking for more of the Spirit. Rather, appreciate what it means to have the Spirit. It is to have another Jesus living within us, dwelling within us.

[20 : 15] And of course, that totally transforms, doesn't it, the whole way in which we think about every aspect of our lives. Wherever we are, whether we're at work, at home, with friends, at a party, on holiday, in a difficult meeting at work, Jesus is living in us if we are Christians.

Christians. So he is the Spirit of Jesus who lives in those who love Jesus. Thirdly, and he is engaged in the work of Jesus.

The Spirit is engaged in the work of Jesus. Now, we've already said that the Spirit is another Jesus. He's not some lone ranger doing his own thing. So we wouldn't expect him, would we, to be involved in anything but the work of Jesus, which is exactly what we see here.

To start with, notice he doesn't come on his own initiative. Verse 16, And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another helper to be with you forever. Jesus asks the Father, and the Father sends him.

The Spirit does not come on his own initiative. Nor does he work on his own. He's not involved in some sort of separate mission, so to speak. That's clear, isn't it?

[21 : 30] From verse 19, as Jesus says, Because I live, you also will live. The Holy Spirit's work is to bring to us the eternal life, the life with God that Jesus offers.

What's more, verse 21, he brings the love of God, the Father, to us. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.

And then verse 23, he brings both God and Jesus, God the Father, and Jesus, to us. If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

is that not an amazing picture of God and Jesus Christ together making their home within the Christian? It's a wonderful picture, isn't it?

Dwelling within the Christian believer. Possible, of course, only because of Jesus' death, he died, so that we can be forgiven, reconciled to God, and God now, therefore, indwells, lives within his people.

[22 : 51] So what is the Spirit's work? Well, he is engaged in Jesus' work of bringing people to new life, bringing God's love to his people, bringing Jesus and God the Father to dwell within his people.

Just as Jesus reveals the truth about God to us, that he is the way, the truth, and the life, so the Spirit is the Spirit of truth who brings Jesus to us.

And next week, we'll see exactly what that looks like. Now, I haven't done my research on this, but I presume that John McEnroe will be in the commentary box once again at Wimbledon this year.

He may not be, but I'm working on the assumption that he will be. And imagine for a moment that John McEnroe were to offer to take an afternoon off and to come down and give you some private tennis lessons.

Now, if his patience lasted, and I have to say in my case, I think that would be fairly doubtful, but nonetheless, if his patience lasted, it would be a terrific occasion, wouldn't it?

[24 : 03] What a great thing to have someone like that, John McEnroe, come alongside and coach you. Well, similarly, the Spirit is the one who comes alongside us and brings Jesus to us.

You see, I wonder if you've ever thought how wonderful it must have been for those original apostles, the ones to whom Jesus is speaking here, how wonderful it must have been for them to have Jesus with them all the time.

And perhaps we've thought to ourselves, well, if only, if only that could be true for us. Now, of course, in fact, Jesus wasn't with them all the time. There were times when he sent them off on their own, or when he went to pray, or they went fishing, because, of course, when Jesus was on earth, he could only be in one place at a time.

But it's different now. Jesus lives in all his people by his Holy Spirit. The Spirit and Jesus are almost interchangeable, aren't they, in this passage? You could say the Spirit lives within us, or you could say that Jesus lives within us by his Holy Spirit.

It is a wonderful thing. And I want to apply this especially in the context of serving Jesus, because that is the context here. Back in chapter 12, sorry, back in verse 12.

[25 : 28] Jesus promises whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do. Jesus is promising that those who follow him will be engaged in his work, explaining his word to others, seeking to bring eternal life to others.

But that is hard work, isn't it? It can sometimes seem very discouraging. Perhaps there are times when we feel, well, only a few of our friends, or neighbours, or family, or colleagues are interested in the claims of Jesus.

Or that those who are seem to be stuck in their understanding and perhaps not really making much progress. Or it may even be that some of us face outright opposition as Christians in some areas of our lives.

Well, I hope you can see this passage gives us the assurance and the confidence we need to live confident Christian lives in the face of that. With a certain knowledge that as we engage in God's work of telling others about Jesus, so Jesus himself lives in us by his Holy Spirit.

So then, what is the core business of the Spirit? It is to bring the very presence of Jesus to those who put their trust in him.

[26 : 54] It is to make Jesus real, really real to us. It's why Christians can say with absolute confidence, I know Jesus.

He lives within me. That is not an arrogant claim. It is simply based on Jesus' clear teaching. It's why the Christian can say with absolute confidence, I know God as my heavenly Father.

Therefore, of course, the whole of life is transformed as we seek to live every moment for Jesus, confident that we do so in his presence, thanks to the Holy Spirit.

Well, let's spend a few moments in quiet and then I shall lead us in prayer. I'll ask the Father and he will give you another helper to be with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth.

Heavenly Father, we praise you for this glorious truth. We thank you for your Spirit in dwelling, each one who knows and loves the Lord Jesus.

[28 : 06] We thank you that he brings Jesus to us, that you and Jesus make your home in us. And therefore, we thank you for the experience of knowing you as our Heavenly Father and knowing Jesus with us in every aspect of our lives.

We're sorry, Heavenly Father, when we are slow to appreciate the work of the Spirit, and we pray that you would help us to hunger after his work more and more. And we ask it for Jesus sake.

Amen.