

Accept The Counselor And Find Truth

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Preacher: Harry Robinson

[0 : 0 0] present among us, and though we can sometimes very awkwardly communicate with one another through words and gestures, you with wonderful precision can make known your will in our hearts by your Spirit. And so we ask that in the midst of all that is said and all that we offer to you in our worship, that you will indeed speak to the circumstances of all our hearts with the wonderful precision that you by your Holy Spirit can have. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, now the passage that we're looking at, which I take for my text for the day, consists of John chapter 5, verse 26, through to John chapter 16, verse 15. And this is found in your pew Bibles on page 104 and 5, and so you can follow it there. But I'm not going to take the time to read it. It's the gospel which was read for you this morning concerning the coming of the counselor or the comforter. Now, what I want to say to you this morning, I guess I should really give a short appeal for joining a Bible study group. Many, many people in the congregation this morning and every morning really have a head start because they've been in a group that studied this passage through the week. And if you weren't in one of those groups and didn't study the passage, I hope you won't be left behind. But it means you've got to work hard to keep up. And so I want you to be thinking with me and to remember this passage so that you can take it home with you and go over it again. First, I want to tell you about a man who lives in our kind of world. And this is what he has to say. He says, I want to belong. If I'm left off the invitation list, I feel it very much. I want to be invited. I have a car. I have a mortgage. I have a ballot. I have taxes. I have memberships. I have credit cards. I have income. I have stocks, RRSPs, and guaranteed savings certificates, and bank accounts appropriate to the advertising ability of the bank to which I belong. I have a credit rating. I shop on

Sunday because most everybody else does. I know my sign in the zodiac. I have a cupboard full of clothes I never wear. I have preference for the Oilers over Boston. I like to cheat a little at the border.

I watch TV. I read the province but prefer the sun. I contribute to the United Appeal, the heart fund, the cancer society. I drink more than I should. I'm a little overweight, and I feel younger than I really am. And that's one person, one profile. I want you to have that clearly in mind. Over against that profile, I want you to look at this profile. I call myself a Christian. I'm baptized, confirmed, go to church, take communion. I take envelopes, and am an identifiable giver. I believe in marriage, family life. Sexual propriety is important to me. I belong to a Bible study and prayer group.

I'm discriminating about the TV I watch and the movies I go to. I am not good at prayer, but I try. Mother Teresa, John Vanier, John Stott, Jim Packer, Michael Green, and Billy Graham are all important people to me. I try to bring my faith into my business. I found my sexual orientation very difficult and keep it private. I have an undefined concern about abortion, environment, peace, nuclear arms, human rights, Nicaragua, Israel, and Northern Ireland. That's another profile. But I have a great surprise for you. It's all the same person. Got the picture? Like I tried to contrast them, but I really want to tell you that by and large, it's all the same person. The reason I want to tell you that is because the Christian is in the world, and the world is in the Christian, and so these descriptions apply to both. And that's the issue that Jesus is dealing with when he turns to his disciples in John 15 and said, the counselor is coming whom I will send to you from the Father. So we turn to John, and what is he saying? He says this to his disciples, and I want you to think of yourself as a disciple, subject by and large, to the description I have just given. The perhaps two sides of your nature, one of which you use on Sunday and the other the rest of the week. Jesus tells his disciples what is going to change their world. In other words, there's a drastic change coming into their world. He says he is going away.

[5 : 37] But in the fact that he is going away, he will send into the world the counselor, the enabler, the spirit of truth. That will be the new factor. You often have people come along and say to you, what's new? And you may fall for that, but in fact, there is nothing new.

It's as it has been from the beginning, and we'll go on being that way. And the only radically new thing happens with the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the coming in of the Holy Spirit into our world.

That's what's new, and that's what's renewing in our world. Well, he will send into our world the counselor who is the enabler, the spirit of truth. That's how this counselor is described. He's a very high-level counselor. If you and your business are used to being a consultant or to paying consultants, this is a highly paid consultant, someone whom you bring in to handle the most difficult and most complex problems, this is the counselor that Jesus will send.

But he's not just somebody who gives advice. Having given you the counsel, he then enables you to fulfill it. So he is a counselor and an enabler. I recommended to you Klaus Bachmühl's book on living by faith, and he talks about the counselor there and makes a great case for the fact that the counselor is the enabler. What he counsels you to do, he enables you to do. And it's hard to pay a counselor, a consultant, enough money to get him to do that. So that's who is sent into the world.

Well, he is the revealer of the true state of affairs, what it's really all about. You know that when you watch television, when you read the newspaper, when you pick up the gossip on the street, you always walk away wondering, I wonder what's really happening. Because you don't trust. You've learned not to trust all those sources of information to which we are subject all the time. You learn not to trust them. The function of the counselor is to give you the true state of affairs. He is the one before whom nothing is hidden. He is the one who reveals things. You really want to know the truth? And most of us don't. We want to search for it, but we sure don't want to find it. And I mean, that's our nature that we don't want to find it. But this counselor comes to reveal the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth to you. He is that the counselor also is the one who makes you aware of Jesus Christ.

[8 : 52] That's how he works. He makes you aware that Jesus is not somebody you can easily overlook. He's not somebody you can ignore. Furthermore, it tells us in verses 9, 10, and 11, what the function of this counselor is in the world in which we live. It says he will convict the world of sin, of righteousness, righteousness, and of judgment. That counselor is present in the world, even to people who know not his name, who don't know where he's coming from, who don't know where he's going to, but he is present in the world. And his function is to bring the world to the conviction of sin. And the conviction of sin essentially means that he's going to tell us about God and about Jesus and about his death on the cross and about his resurrection. And he's going to make us aware that either we have faith and confirmed by the counselor, or we deny the faith which is being witnessed to by the counselor. That's how he convicts the world of sin. If you want to know whether there is sin in your life, don't count the empty bottles in your basement or the secret charges on your credit card. Say what you think of Jesus Christ, whether there is faith or whether there is rejection. The counselor brings this conviction of sin into the world. He not only brings the conviction of sin, but he brings the conviction of righteousness. Now, most of us settle for a righteousness which emanates from our better selves. We believe ourselves to be the best that we can be. And we condition our view of ourselves to see ourselves as a model of righteousness. And the function of the Holy Spirit, the counselor, is to come into the world and tell you, righteousness? You want to know what that is?

Let me point you to the man who died on the cross. Then you will know what righteousness is. Don't make any mistake. There isn't anything else which is righteousness except that.

No fraud or imitation that you can perpetrate is righteousness. And you will no longer be fooled by that because of the work of the counselor bringing the conviction of righteousness into the world.

He's going to bring, thirdly, the conviction of judgment into the world because he says the ruler of this the world is judged. That this world is under universal condemnation. Justified, righteous, universal condemnation.

And we all are part of that. And that's going to be one of the functions of the counselor to make you aware of that. And he is the expert. And he is the one that's going to reveal the truth, the true state of affairs, the way things really are.

[12 : 17] And the way things really are is that the way of life, which is our world, is under the condemnation of God. No mistake about that. You can argue with the counselor about it, but he will bring you to that conviction.

This counselor knows your capacity. He knows that you can't bear very much, that it's a slow and tortuous process to bring you under conviction and to make you aware of how these things happen and to make you aware of the reality of sin and faith, of righteousness and self-righteousness, of judgment and condemnation.

You can't bear very much. And the counselor knows that. He knows our limited capacity. And he can work with our limited capacity, even though he has an unlimited resource of material that is available to us and which he wants to bring to us, but he has to work with us and he recognizes our limitations.

You can see that clearly when it says, when Jesus says, I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. You haven't got the capacity to hear all that needs to be said.

Your capacity has to be enormously increased to hear what God has to say. And it's the function of God, the Holy Spirit, to give that to you as you are able to bear it.

[13 : 54] This counselor comes then with truth, with authority, with the word about things to come. His chief function is to glorify Jesus Christ.

And he is the one through whom everything is open to you. All that the Father has is mine. Therefore, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

You know what I think this means? I think when we come to the communion service and we begin by saying, Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, from whom no secrets are hid, that we are confronting the God who by the work of the counselor is saying to you, Almighty person that you are, I am the God and I hide no secrets.

I hide no desire. There is nothing that I want to hide from you. I want you to know me and to know me in all fullness. Even as we want God, we come to the place where we acknowledge that God knows us.

So he wants us to come to the place where we know all about him. And so that's the ministry and function of the counselor. Now, the distinction comes in our world in this way.

[15 : 18] And this is what I want to finish with, telling you that what really happens in our world, the dynamic reality of our world is our response to the counselor who has come, to the person of the Holy Spirit.

And we're told that some people react in this way. Anybody who is identified as being with the counselor is excommunicated, put to death, that these people are tempted to fall away from what the counselor confirmed, they have chosen ignorance, they don't know the Father.

They will have an hour of power, and you can see their hour of power in verse 4, when he says, Jesus says, I've given you certain words that when their hour of power is upon you, you won't forget my promises and my purpose.

You will find the work of the world is resistant to change. Sorrow has filled your hearts when you should be rejoicing.

You will find in your world that sin is normative, not faith. Faith is escapism. Righteousness is self-generated.

[16 : 42] And judgment will never come. All those things are characteristic of those who reject the ministry of the counselor.

That they excommunicate people. They put them to death thinking they're serving God. They tempt them to fall away. They have chosen ignorance of the Father. They have their moment of power.

They are resistant to change. They find sin normative and faith and escapism. Righteousness is self-generated. And judgment will never come.

Now that's how we resist the Holy Spirit. Resist the ministry and counsel of the Holy Spirit. And we don't do that just on a bad night. We do that all the time.

That is the consistent pattern of our behavior. To resist the counselor whom God has sent in every circumstance of your life. Every word you speak.

[17 : 42] Every act you do. Every conscious moment you are alive. Every thought you think. Is either response to the counselor who is opening up the nature and character and will and purpose of God to you.

Or it is rejection of that. And Jesus speaks to his disciples and he tells them in the presence of the counselor you find the truth.

You find not the truth as simply a static reality but as something which acts. Truth is something which once you come to know it you act on it.

Like an alcoholic once he acknowledges he's an alcoholic he can act on it. But it's terrible getting him there and it's terrible getting sinners to the place where they acknowledge that they're sinners.

It's terrible getting people to the place where they recognize their life to be a counter offensive against the encroachments of God in Christ by the Holy Spirit seeking to be your counselor and enabler.

[18 : 51] Very hard. But that's what's to come. And once that happens you begin to suffer because you are exposed to the hatred of those who reject the ministry of God the Holy Spirit.

It's not that they're mad at you. It's they're mad at the one whom you're representing. They're angry with the one whom you acknowledge. You remember the churches and this is that lovely verse in Acts.

Remember the churches that were being persecuted and put to death and Saul was going after them and seeking to put them in prison and to put them to death. And Saul was met on the road to Damascus and he said to Paul, Paul, why are you persecuting the churches?

No, he didn't say that. He said, why are you persecuting me? So it's the great honor of those who in obedience to the counselor, in relationship to the counselor, fall heir to the persecution the world has for Jesus Christ.

Well, those who, what he says is that the enabler helps us that we don't fall away. He sustains us by his word.

[20 : 17] He convicts us of sin in such a way as to lead us to faith. He convicts us of righteousness and our own lack of it in order to lead us to Christ's righteousness.

He convicts us of judgment so that we will recognize that all our worldly fantasies are under the judgment and just condemnation of God.

So, he makes account of our limited resources and we acknowledge his authority and see God's glory through the work and ministry of the counselor whom he sends.

So, you see, what Pentecost means is that the church is the community that is seeking to respond positively to the person of the Holy Spirit, the counselor, and the enabler.

I've got to quit. But I want you to recognize, I wish I could spend at least a week sharing with you and getting some feedback from you on this because it seems to me terribly important.

[21 : 43] When I started to make it out, I said to myself, Harry Robinson, you are a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant. You vote conservative too much at the time. You're, you know, and I could classify myself in all those ways.

And sometimes I feel I'm trapped by all those. People know that about me. They know the pattern of my behavior. They know who I am. They know who I think. And I'm just, they can pigeonhole me so fast that it may make your head spin.

I want to be known as someone who has encountered Christ in the person of the counselor, the Holy Spirit. And that I am able to respond, not out of who I am in the past, but out of the reality of the presence of God, the Holy Spirit, right here and right now.

And I want us as a congregation to be able to do that. And I know we can't do it by ourselves. And I know that wherever the Holy Spirit is, what is said of him is true.

That some people profoundly reject every possibility of his encroachment on their personal territory. God grant us grace to hear and to respond to that Holy Spirit whom Christ has sent to our great advantage so that we may live in our world, but acknowledging his kingdom.

[23 : 12] Amen. Will you kneel and turn in your green service book to page 123? Let us pray to God, the Holy Spirit, the Counselor, saying, Come Holy Spirit, come.

Come Holy Spirit, creator, and renew the face of the earth. Come Holy Spirit, come. Come Holy Spirit, counselor, and touch our lips that we may proclaim your word.

Come Holy Spirit, power from on high. Make us agents of peace and ministers of wholeness.

Come Holy Spirit, breath of God. Give life to the dry bones of this exiled age and make us a living people, holy and free.

Come Holy Spirit, wisdom and truth. And strengthen us in this risk of faith.

[24 : 45] Come Holy Spirit, come. We pray this morning for the universal church. We pray especially for the United Church of Canada.

We pray for the church in Africa. We pray for the United Church of Canada. We pray for the church in Africa. And for the church in Northern Ireland.

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light, look favorably upon thy whole church, that wonderful and sacred mystery.

And by the tranquil operation of thy perpetual providence, carry out the work of men's salvation. That things which were cast down may be raised up.

And that all things may return into unity through him by whom all things were made. Even thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

[25 : 47] Lord, in thy mercy, hear our prayer. We pray, O God, for all human hearts that this morning are lifted up to thee in earnest desire.

And we pray for every group of men and women who are met together to praise and for prayer and praise and to magnify thy name.

Whatever be their mode of worship, be graciously pleased to accept their humble offices and lead them unto life eternal.

Lord, in thy mercy, hear our prayer. Lord, in thy mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord, in thy peace. God, in thy mercy, hear our prayer. Lord, in thy mercy, hear my honest lib. Lord, in thy mercy, hear our prayer. Lord, in thy recovery, hear our prayer. Lord, Lord, in thy mercy... Lord, in thy mercy, hear our prayer.

[27 : 22] Lord, in thy mercy... Lord, in thy mercy, hear our prayer. Lord, in thy mercy... Lord, with thy mercy... Lord, in thy mercy, hear our prayer. Lord, in thy mercy... Lord, in thy mercy, creptown comes thy.

Lord, who are faithfulness, Lord, life will aven the damn Lord. Left ■■■ is orden. We lift up everyone who is traveling on this holiday weekend.

We pray for blessing on the canonical committee of this parish meeting this week to begin the process of the selection of a curate to come and serve here at St. John's.

We need to pray for all those who have responsibility for the environment, and we need to have a real deep concern for our environment, for this world in which God has placed us.

We remember David Short and his series of teaching on seven important questions about Christianity. We pray for people who are getting married this week.

[28 : 37] Our God who has been the refuge of our fathers through many generations, we lift up all these people in these situations, and we pray that you would be their refuge today in every time and circumstance of need.

Be their guide through all that is dark and doubtful. Be their guard against all that threatens their spirit's welfare. Be their strength in this time of testing.

Gladden their heart with thy peace. Lord, in thy mercy, hear our prayer. Finally, this prayer written by William Barclay, particularly for Pentecost.

Eternal and ever-blessed God, who upon this day did send thy spirit with power upon thy people, let thy spirit be upon us.

Let thy spirit be in our minds to guide our thoughts towards the truth. Let thy spirit be in our hearts to cleanse them from every evil and unclean desire.

[29 : 56] Let thy spirit be upon our lips to preserve us from all wrong speaking, to help us by our words, to commend thee to other people. Let thy spirit be upon our eyes, that they may find no delight in looking on forbidden things, but that they may be fixed on Jesus Christ.

Let thy spirit be on our hands, that they may be faithful in work and eager in service. Father, let thy spirit be on our whole eyes, that they may be strong with thy power, wise with thy wisdom and beautiful with thy love.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord, we pray. Amen.