

The Holy Spirit Teaches Gods Purpose

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[0 : 00] Our God, grant that we may now, as we turn to your word, having been partakers of this holy communion, may our communion continue as we feed on your word.

We ask this in your holy name. Amen. Amen. John chapter 16 and verse 12 to 15, and it's found beginning on page 105 of the New Testament section of your pew Bible.

John chapter 15, sorry, John chapter 16, verse 12, where Jesus turns to his disciples and says, I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

When the spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. And so Jesus was speaking to them for the fifth time about the coming of the paraclete.

The coming of the Holy Spirit. And if you were to do what I did this morning and look at all the translations I had on my desk, you would find that the paraclete, which is just one of those words which is really belonging to another language but has been adopted into English and doesn't mean very much to us in English.

[1 : 38] That word is translated counselor, comforter, spirit of truth, the one who is coming to stand by you, your advocate, the helper, the divine helper.

Now this is the fifth of a series of references to the paraclete.

And if you were to look at them all, and I recommend that you do look at them all by turning in your Bible to the references to that Christ makes to this in this Last Supper discourse with his disciples. In chapter 14 and verse 17, if you look there, you will read these words. The spirit of truth, the spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him.

You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. So that this one whom the world cannot receive, you can receive.

[3 : 04] This one whom the world cannot receive, we can receive. The world doesn't see him.

The world doesn't know him. So when you are engrossed in conversation with the world, you will find that that is not a factor that is taken into consideration because the counselor is neither seen nor known by the world.

In contrast, it says that he will dwell in you and will be in you. So that the Holy Spirit is perhaps the, he is the main dimension of your life and an absent dimension of the lives of those who are in the world.

So you have that wonderful contrast. I don't know whether it's wonderful or not, but it certainly is a contrast laid down for you in chapter 14, verse 17.

If you look in chapter 14 and verse 26, The counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

[4 : 23] So the one who dwells with you and will be in you is the one who will teach you and will bring to your remembrance.

So that that is the function of the paraclete, the counselor. If you look in 15, verse 26, you will see that the peculiar ministry of the counselor, in addition, is to bear witness to Jesus Christ.

When the counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me.

And so this is the function of the counselor, to bear witness to the person of Jesus Christ. Like a witness in a court of law bears witness to the truth that he has seen and observed.

So the Spirit of truth bears witness to the truth as God has revealed it of himself in the person of Jesus Christ. Then if you look at chapter 16 and verse 7, you will see a further function of the counselor.

[5 : 43] Nevertheless, I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away. For if I do not go away, the counselor will not come.

But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, This one who dwells in you and is with you and who teaches you and who brings to your remembrance and who witnesses to Jesus Christ. Three more things this counselor does in our world. He will convince the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment.

So that in that sense, the counselor is in the world and he is bringing conviction to the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment.

How will he do this? Jesus describes how he will do it in verse 9. Concerning sin, because they do not believe in me.

[6 : 43] The world does not believe, and yet the world has the problem of sin. The world understands sin a lot better than the church does, because we tend to think we're above it.

And the world is immersed in it, and knows it and understands it. And the Holy Spirit convinces them of that reality in order that they may turn to another reality.

And that is from sin to the Savior, Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit in the world will convince them of righteousness, because this right relationship to the Father is the deepest longing of the human heart.

And the Holy Spirit makes people aware in their hearts of an unfulfilled longing. A longing which they haven't been able to realize.

And the Holy Spirit will, in a sense, rub their faces in it, that they might recognize that there is something missing in their lives.

[7 : 48] The third thing that the Holy Spirit, the comforter, the counselor does, is to convince the world of judgment, that they are under the judgment of God.

And the world, I think, knows this. The world knows they're going to hell in a handbasket, to quote an old-fashioned phrase. They're aware of that.

They're aware of the kind of sense of doom. And they fight very strongly against it. The CBC produced a man the other day who's building a whole community around laughing, so that they can laugh the way the realities of life and not have to face them.

And the world is very much aware of sin, of righteousness, of sin which they do have, of righteousness which they don't have, and of judgment which they will have.

And we, of course, share that with our world, because we are in the world and we know the Holy Spirit. And then you come to this last reference to the counselor who is the Holy Spirit, and it says that he will guide you into all truth.

[9 : 05] That is, he will be your instructor, and he will be the one who guides you in the way. You know, like, if you're going through an unknown, tortuous mountain path, he will be your guide.

In the world of knowledge and of understanding, he will be your instructor and your teacher. In the world of revelation, where God has revealed himself in Christ, he will be the one who teaches and instructs you about God.

Well, let me go back to the first verse, and I hope this will be to your profound relief, because you're looking very worried and upset. And I don't want you to be worried and upset.

But I think you need to know these things. I think we all need to know them and understand them.

But the problem is what Jesus expresses in verse 12 when he says, I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

The tolerance threshold for what Jesus has to say to you. That's the great question that he had with the apostles.

[10 : 22] How much could they take? How much could he give them? He believed, because he was a good preacher, not like me, he believed, he understood how much they could handle.

Sometimes other preachers don't understand how much people can handle. And I would love it if we knew how much we could handle. I would love it if you became aware of what your threshold is. I become aware very often of going way beyond people's toleration, people's ability to hear what Jesus has to say.

And it's not very often. You don't have to go very far before you have exceeded their threshold.

They can't take it. They can't take the reality of the gospel.

You remember that these apostles, they were sitting with Jesus at the Last Supper, and they did not know anything yet about the crucifixion.

[11 : 26] They did not know anything about the trial of Christ. They did not know anything about his resurrection. They did not know anything about his ascension. All those things had to be made clear

to them.

And you can talk to people, and you will find that their religious threshold is very low indeed. I know that there is a God out there somewhere is about the limit of their understanding.

I'm not sure there's a God, except on Sundays I like to think there is. All these things happen to us because in our society, trained and conditioned as we are in our society, by the media, by our educational system, we have a very limited capacity to bear what Jesus has to say.

Jesus has a great deal to say to us. Far more than all of us could begin to comprehend were we to devote every hour of the rest of our lives to learning it, we would only begin to comprehend all that God has to say to us in Christ.

Scholars have worked through the centuries. The scriptures have been poured over. The experience of the Holy Spirit has been diarized and categorized. But still we know very little about God because we haven't much tolerance to hear.

[12:50] And we live our lives in such a way that we don't tolerate much of what God has to say to us in Christ. And there's a great deal more for us to learn.

There's a great deal more for us to understand. But as soon as we get on to the subject, the barriers go up and we find that our tolerance is very limited because much of what we think and much of what we experience every day is such that we can't take anymore.

And if God turns out to be other than I already think that he is, if there are dimensions to life and realities to life which I've not even yet considered, I'm not in a condition to bear them.

You can stand at the side of the bed of somebody who is dying within the week and you measure the tolerance of what will be a comfort to them, what will be an encouragement to them, what tiny teaspoonful of gospel truth they might be able to swallow because they haven't much tolerance.

Having lived their lives in a certain way, they have become intolerant to much of the gospel. And that's what happens to us. We live our lives in a certain way, in a certain pattern of disobedience, and we become intolerant to the very medicine for the soul which can heal our hearts and bring to us the salvation which God intends should belong to us, but we can't tolerate it.

[14:25] And that was the condition the disciples were in. Their tolerance level was very low compared to what Christ had to tell them.

And because their tolerance was low, Jesus let them in the secret of how he was going to get around that. The way he was going to get around that was to give them the counselor who was the Holy Spirit.

That invisible presence of the personal and living God with us, the one whom we know to be, the Holy Spirit.

The one who, without drawing attention to himself, without, in a sense, terrifying us by appearing to us, works in the innermost sanctuary of our hearts and minds, works in all the experience of the days of our life, works in such a way that we can become aware as the apostles did, that he is the one that dwells in us.

He is the one who is with us. He is the one who teaches us. He's the one who brings things to our remembrance. He's the one that makes us look at Jesus Christ.

[15:41] He's the one that works in our world convincing us of sin and of righteousness, of judgment. He is the one who is our guide along the way and he is the one who is our teacher.

And we, for the most part, say, well, I don't know whether I believe in the Holy Spirit. You don't even draw a breath apart from God, the Holy Spirit. You want to be concerned about whether God believes in you because this person of the Holy Spirit is there, even though our tolerance is low.

And he's working with us that we may have an increased tolerance because he indeed is the spirit of truth. And all truth is ultimately one.

And that he will lead us into all truth. He is the one who will speak with the very authority of God.

He won't speak on his own, John tells us, or Jesus tells us in this Gospel of John. He won't speak on his authority, his own authority. He will be expressing the sovereign will of the Creator God who made himself known to us in Jesus Christ.

[17:04] And if you look at this passage, chapter 16, verses 12 to 15, you will see that he declares three things. If you read the passage over, you see three times it says, he will declare to you, and in verse 14, and declare to you, and in verse 15, and declare it to you.

So the function of this Holy Spirit, this counselor, is to declare to us. And the three things that this passage says he's going to declare to us, to declare to the apostles particularly, these three things

are, he's going to declare to them the things that are to come.

And remember, much of our Christian gospel is based for them as they hear these words on the things that are to come. He's going to declare to them, the apostles, he's going to declare to them what is mine, Christ says.

What belongs to me, what belongs to my life, he will declare to you. And in declaring that to you, he will glorify me. They are about to see Jesus humiliated by the scourging, and the mockery, and the contempt, and the crucifixion.

He will be humiliated before their very eyes, but the ministry of God the Holy Spirit is to glorify Jesus who is about to be humiliated.

[18 : 43] And you captured all of what that means in singing together when I survey the humiliating cross on which the Prince of Glory died. He is glorified by the person of the Holy Spirit.

And then it says, but what is mine doesn't include just that which is relevant to my earthly life. He says, all that belongs to your Heavenly Father is mine.

And he who declares to you what is mine will declare to you all that belongs to God the Father. So you are to live your life subject to the instruction, subject to the guidance, subject to the presence, subject to the convicting power of God the Holy Spirit whom Jesus gives to us to make us aware of him.

Jesus gives to us to declare to us the things that are to come, the things that belong to Jesus, including all that belongs to the Father because that too belongs to Jesus.

Well, this is spoken to the apostles. And the apostles go out that night and witness the arrest, the humiliation, the crucifixion.

[20 : 05] and then the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. And the counselor who was given to them makes it possible that within their lifetime those whose threshold was so low that they couldn't receive very much, they then made statements which were the result of the instruction of God the Holy Spirit.

They made statements like this. St. Paul, he who knew no sin, he made to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

That's the Holy Spirit taking the life of Jesus and all that belonged to him and making it known to the apostles and the apostles then making it known to us and making such a declaration before us as that.

That he who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in him. Or again from the epistle to the Hebrews one of the statements that God the Holy Spirit the counselor led the apostles to understand about the person of Jesus is expressed in these words when the writer says having therefore brethren boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus by the way which he dedicated for us a new and living way through the veil that is to say his flesh.

You see that's the result of the work of the counselor which Christ said he would give them so that they would begin to understand the drama of the cross the death the resurrection of Jesus and they would begin to know what it meant.

[22 : 05] That's how it worked. Now let me just conclude by saying this who are we? We are the people who are the heirs the recipients of that testimony which God the Holy Spirit made to the apostles which the apostles recorded for us in the New Testament and it is the testimony by which the church must live.

When we stand and say the Nicene Creed as we did this morning in the service we are in effect bearing witness by that confession of faith to that which God the Holy Spirit the counselor revealed to the apostles.

This is what we believe. this is the work of the Holy Spirit who did not speak on his own authority who did not speak of himself but bore witness to Jesus and in Jesus he bore witness to all that the Father had given us has given us in Jesus and we confess our faith in that.

That's what the church is about. it is the community that lives under the testimony of the apostles who have been taught and instructed by the Holy Spirit and as the Holy Spirit was given to them to understand Jesus and make it known to us so the Holy Spirit is given to us to make us understand their testimony the apostolic testimony which is the new which is the scriptures the New Testament scriptures that's what the church is the community that lives under that work of God the Holy Spirit in making it known to us this week our synod is assembling and we will see deacons and archdeacons and regional deans and banners and choirs and processions and we will hear

innumerable words but there is a solemn reminder in this passage concerning God's purpose and the New Testament scholar has said this any church that fails to conform to the truth of the apostolic scriptures which refuses to be reformed and cleansed and purged by the word of truth mediated through the apostles thereby declares that it is not the one holy catholic church that is you see we are only the church as it is our business to receive this apostolic witness and to receive it not just in the formulation of it in words on a page but to receive it as God the Holy Spirit the counselor the one who is sent to stand beside us makes us aware of Jesus Christ that's what the church is that's what we need to be as a church and we may get involved in many great causes and we may stand up with great boldness to speak to our generation but the essential thing is that we bear witness to that which God the Holy Spirit has borne witness to us the gospel of Jesus [25 : 54] Christ and though they are solemn words for our day we as a church are not a church except for that process by which God the Holy Spirit interprets to us the apostolic witness of the New Testament to the person of Jesus Christ Amen Shall we pray Let's just begin with a moment of silence and ask the Lord to apply his word to our heart this word that we've just heard O heavenly father in whom we live and move and have our being we humbly pray thee so to guide and govern us by thy holy spirit that in all the cares and occupations of our daily life we may never forget thee but remember that we are ever walking in thy sight through

Jesus Christ our Lord Lord in your mercy hear our prayer thee thee thee o god the father unbegotten thee o only begotten son thee o holy spirit the paraclete holy and undivided trinity with our whole heart and mouth we confess thee we praise thee and bless thee to thee be glory forever and ever Lord in your mercy give us grace father this morning almighty father to address you with all our hearts as well as with our lips you are everywhere present from you no secrets can be hidden teach us to fix our thoughts on you reverently and with love so that our prayers are not in vain but are acceptable to you now and always

Lord in your mercy could you take the lilac service booklet and turn to page three and the outline for our prayers this morning are found there page three in peace let us pray to the Lord for peace from on high and for our salvation let us pray to the Lord thinking especially this morning of the situation in Beijing we pray for the peace of the whole world thinking of the synod synod meetings coming up this week and our own diocese we pray for the welfare of the holy church of God and for the unity of all let us pray to the Lord the Lord have mercy we pray for our bishops all the clergy and people of this diocese and of the church in Canada and throughout the world let us pray to the Lord give thanks to God for the gift of government so we pray for

Elizabeth our queen and for the leaders of the nations and for all in authority let us pray to the Lord hour anól people go to what an river ee ee hee the