

John 16:4-15 “Personal Power”

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Date: 29 September 2024

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[0 : 0 0] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

The morning of January 3rd, 2023, Southwood's three pastors met in the lodge to pray for the new year. Rain fell steadily outside and all of the sudden rain fell steadily inside as well.

Water poured through everywhere, pouring through ceiling tiles, down walls. There was standing water in restrooms. It was all through the hallway, running into the main room. Later, we would learn that a clogged drain on the roof of the lodge had caused the standing water to back up and get higher and higher to the point that it began pouring in through the AC vents. That's never, you don't want water in your AC vents like that. And it just kept coming and coming. I wish I had taken pictures sooner in the process. Here's a brief video of the aftermath.

It's not supposed to rain in the bathroom. This continued for quite some time. It was much worse earlier.

But what you would have seen had you been there that morning was three pastors totally overwhelmed, utterly powerless to do anything to stop this water. We were running around with towels and trash cans. That'll do it. That's going to fix it. Towels and trash cans, filling quickly. We were texting. That's why I was on my phone there. Texting every deacon we knew. Calling our facility's contractor, help! Somebody, somebody please come help. They gave us instructions. They told us where to look on the roof. We got to the roof. But when they showed up, we were no drier than when it started.

[2 : 1 4] We used all the towels, collected all the trash cans, found every mop we owned, but we could not fix the problem. Thankfully, some people are less overwhelmed and more helpful in a flood than pastors.

Call someone else. The deacons helped us. Helped us fix the drain immediately and in time then repair the ceiling and the walls and dry out the whole building and be able to carry on.

Maybe you can relate to feeling overwhelmed and powerless like us that day. Just think spiritually.

For a minute. We've been called to be ambassadors for Jesus, his witnesses in this world. To reflect his perfect image. To see our city flourish. To teach our kids of him. To love our enemies like him. To experience and express his grace in relationships that impact eternity. That your life and my life should be so soaked in the glory of God that eternity is transformed. Anybody feeling overwhelmed yet? You got that?

Just imagine Jesus' disciples here in the upper room. He's sending them out to love one another. To wash each other's feet just as he has done for them even though they're presently arguing.

[3 : 5 4] They are to testify about him so that the world will know that the Father sent him to earth. In fact, they are supposed to so abide in Christ, to abide in Christ so deeply that they will bear fruit that lasts forever even though the world will hate them and try to kill them.

Oh, and by the way, I'm out, Jesus says. I'm leaving you. How do you think they're feeling? Powerless?

Y'all, Jesus has been the power of this ragtag bunch, right? He is the leader. He is the teacher. He is the healer.

They are fishermen and tax collectors. They don't do that kind of stuff. They're like pastors trying to stop a water leak. But while he understands their sorrow, their overwhelmedness, their feeling powerless, Jesus wants to fill them with confidence and hope.

How in the world is that possible if he's leaving? He must have something astonishing to say. Perhaps, I think, the most startling statement he ever makes to them is here the night before the cross.

[5 : 21] John chapter 16, middle of verse 4. Jesus says to them, Just stop there for a second.

Put yourself in their shoes. It is to your advantage that I go away, Jesus says. Really? Is that possible? What are you saying, Jesus?

He'll explain. For if I do not go away, the helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. Concerning sin because they do not believe in me. Concerning righteousness because I go to the Father and you will see me no longer.

Concerning judgment because the ruler of this world is judged. I still have 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.

[6 : 45] For he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears, he will speak. And he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me.

For he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. Therefore, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Don't miss the power of a personal presence. We are going to unpack this morning a bit the person of the Holy Spirit Jesus is promising.

But notice in this passage, Jesus doesn't give his powerless followers a long list of instructions, things to do, follow these and fix the leak.

He doesn't give them a promise either that the circumstances will improve. You know, people will stop hating you. No. The water will stop eventually.

[7 : 52] No. He gives them the power of a personal presence. A helper who, like those Southwood deacons, would show up and do it with us and for us.

Information wasn't enough. Change of circumstances was false hope. But the incredible, I mean, really unbelievable promise is a person with us.

A helper, the word is. Not a drill sergeant to yell orders at you. Not on the other end, a complainer merely to bemoan with you how hard things are.

A helper, paraclete, directing, exhorting, calling you from alongside.

Tough and tender. Calling you forward and crawling through the mess with you. We need to take Jesus seriously even when he startles us.

[9 : 08] He is repeating this idea enough now that we ought to know it's not hyperbole, okay? He means something. He's told his disciples that they will do even greater things than they have seen him do.

Really? Is that possible? He's telling them here it'll be better for them if he leaves and sends the helper. Are you sure, Jesus?

Are we going to trust you on this one? He will tell them that they'll receive power. Where is their power going to come from? When Holy Spirit comes upon them to be his witnesses around the world.

In fact, when Jesus identifies the good gift that his father will give to them, he tells them he doesn't even name himself. What does he say?

The Spirit. Maybe like me, you've thought since you were a kid that if you just lived when Jesus lived and when he was walking around here on the earth, that would do it for you.

[10 : 14] You would have strong faith, right? I would live passionately. I would share the good news with everyone if I would just had Jesus here with me.

Jesus disagrees. Look at the evidence of his disciples. When Jesus is around with them, a few people believe, but many reject him.

His followers have little faith. Jesus has to do most all of the miracles. But then Jesus leaves.

The Holy Spirit shows up and bam! 3,000 trust Jesus after the first sermon and the numbers keep growing every day.

Peter, who just denied Jesus before a servant girl, now stands before the leaders of the community with the authority to take his life. And he says, do what you have to do to me, but I will not and cannot stop speaking about Jesus.

[11 : 15] The gospel goes to the Gentiles. Demons are cast out. And so many come to trust Jesus that churches are planted around the known world by the power of the Spirit.

Y'all, if we are going to be and to do what God has for Southwood, I believe he's telling us he's going to have to put some Pentecostal into some Presbyterians.

Okay? And some of you aren't going to be very comfortable with that. Not to mention your pastor. Actually, it is very Presbyterian.

Or it used to be, and it should be, to say that our power is from Holy Spirit. A person, right? We set God in three persons.

Did we forget that there are more than two? A real person, not a mere force. Him, not it. Fully God.

[12 : 13] The third person of the Trinity. We professed that earlier, right? I believe in God the Father. God the Son. God the Holy Spirit. We're going to see more of that here.

And Holy Spirit is not just telling us what to do. He's not just sending us on mission. He is joining us, paraclete, helper for us.

Let's see what Jesus tells us about this incredible power. How could we possibly be better off now, Jesus, than we would have been then? Well, if Jesus' physical presence was localized here, his whole life in an area smaller than Alabama, the Spirit's presence is universalized everywhere.

I'll send him to y'all so you can bring my glory not merely to Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria, but to the uttermost parts of the earth, Alabama included, but so much bigger.

The Spirit blows where he pleases like the wind. Secondly, this powerful person is really present inside you.

[13 : 29] Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you? He's going to be so powerfully connected within you that you'll know Jesus in ways the disciples didn't know him to this point.

They saw him, heard him, walked around with him, but now he's going to live in them all the time. How was it, remember, that he told them they would experience full joy just in this last chapter, just a couple hours ago perhaps?

It would be his joy in them. And they've heard that and now Jesus is leaving, so it would be understandable that they would be sorrowful.

In fact, without an awareness of and reality of Holy Spirit, without finding true life in him, what hope is there of ever tasting this full joy?

But Holy Spirit is bringing the joy and love and peace and more of Jesus into your heart to overflowing, so that you will bear fruit that will last, fruit of the Spirit.

[14 : 45] And you thought you'd never change. Not if that fruit-bearing Spirit lives within you. You are full of power, child of God. Full of power by his Spirit.

That joy from Jesus is just one example of the other thing you have to notice about this incredible power. Holy Spirit is Christ-centered.

Always focused on Jesus. Always shining the spotlight on Jesus. We as a church are committed to being Christ-centered.

Good news. So is Holy Spirit. He's into that. Jesus has already been telling us this about the Spirit that he promises to send. He said it several times in this one conversation with his disciples.

There are more in this passage. But look back to chapter 14. He's going to ask the Father who will give you another helper to be with you forever.

[15 : 47] This Spirit of truth. He dwells with you and will be in you. Notice verse 18. Jesus says, I will not leave you as orphans.

I will come to you. He's also leaving, but I will. This is his Spirit in a real way. And then down a few more verses in verse 26.

The helper, the Holy Spirit, will teach you and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Chapter 15.

When the helper comes, he will bear witness about me. Me. Jesus says. You see what he's doing? He's bearing witness about Jesus.

Life with his Spirit will be life abiding in Jesus. It is beautiful how the Trinity works together. We're going to see that more.

[16 : 46] But he's starting to see how this personal power could incredibly position us even better than Jesus himself being in the room this morning.

Have you thought about that before? That Jesus actually decided this was better for you, for us. Do you live with that kind of confidence?

Like you would if Jesus was standing right here next to you? I might preach without notes if I believed that was true. Crazy. You might share about Jesus with your neighbor.

You might serve the poor during fall break. You might confess your sin to your grace group or stay around for all of my long sermon that I preach without notes. We might all be in it together.

If we really believed the power that Jesus says we have. Why do we need this incredible power?

[17 : 50] Hopefully some of that answer is apparent already as we feel powerless toward the glorious tasks that we've been given. But what I want us to think specifically here is how Jesus tells us exactly how Christ-centered the Spirit is.

Verse 14, he says it very plainly. He will glorify me. Come back to the rest of the verse. But y'all, what we all need is for Jesus to be glorified in our hearts and lives.

Okay, that's at the core level. That's what we need. That word for glory that we've talked about as having weight. Not that what we need so much is new information about Jesus or that what we really need is our circumstances to change.

No. We need Jesus and his words and his realities to be as significant to us as they really are, to carry that kind of weight.

And this is the work of the Spirit in the hearts of people, those who don't trust Jesus at all and those who do. So back to verse 8.

[19 : 07] People need Holy Spirit because we have missed Jesus at a fundamental level. Holy Spirit comes to help us see him the way we ought to.

When he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. The way we often say this is that the Father in his eternal love plans salvation and he sends the Son who accomplishes salvation in his life and death and resurrection and then the Father and the Son send the Spirit who applies that salvation to our hearts, to you and to me.

Because without him, we are blind to the reality of Jesus. And so Holy Spirit comes to convict us concerning sin because we don't believe in Jesus.

That's actually our greatest sin. Trusting ourselves rather than him. So a huge role of Holy Spirit is showing us how desperately we all need Jesus.

He's always doing that. Secondly, the helper convicts the world concerning righteousness because Jesus is going to the Father and not being seen any longer.

[20 : 36] This is Jesus' vindication in his triumphant resurrection and ascension so that true righteousness, our righteousness, if we believe in him, as John Bunyan reminds us, is where?

In heaven. Before God. We stand right with God because of Jesus. Jesus has been the one as the righteous light of the world exposing its darkness because his glory is brilliant in its purity.

It's one of the ways Jesus has been helper. But now he calls, as we saw a minute ago, the Spirit, another helper, meaning like him.

Holy Spirit will show the world our insufficient righteousness and the glory of Jesus' perfection. Finally, we need the helper to convict us concerning judgment because the ruler of this world is truly judged.

Look, actually, what he's doing is shining the spotlight on Jesus again. It's not Jesus who was judged and defeated on the cross as it may have seemed, but the ruler of this world who was defeated in the triumph of Jesus.

[21 : 54] And when we look around and we see the world hating us, when we feel that the forces of darkness are stronger than the forces of light in the world, Holy Spirit reminds us, no, the light is always stronger than the dark.

You have power in you. Greater is he in you than he that is in the world. Don't you give up or give in. Holy Spirit is with you. That's been happening since he came in Pentecost in power.

These untrained, ordinary followers of Jesus by the power of the Spirit preached sermons and shared meals and suffered martyrdom and saw people in generation after generation, nation after nation, bow the knee to King Jesus and find his joy and love and peace to be true life, to abide in him personally, so that recent estimates are that around 3 million people are converting to Christianity every year so that we're rushing towards worldwide numbers nearing 3 billion Christians.

You may see your need of Jesus, the glory of Jesus right now for the first time and you can trust him to save you by the power of his Spirit and you're one among billions where he's doing that incredible, powerful work.

All very exciting. I hope you're excited. But how do we plug in to that incredible power? Well, the beginning of that is that Jesus sends his Spirit to us, doesn't he?

[23 : 55] So we are on the receiving end, palms up, dependent posture. We're receiving the Spirit, but what actually happens?

How? How does that happen, Pastor? Listen, as Jesus makes a massive statement, we can hardly comprehend this, but look back at verse 14.

Holy Spirit will take what is mine and declare it to you. Jesus, to be clear, verse 15 says, listen, all the Father has is mine.

That's what I mean, Jesus says, by mine, that the Holy Spirit will declare to you. Let me try to unpack that. That's a lot. John has told us repeatedly that Jesus came in the flesh to reveal God to us.

The very glory of God, all that we need to know about God himself is shown to us in Jesus, right? That's good news. And this, this takes it further.

[25 : 01] Holy Spirit comes to help us get it and keep it, all of it. There is the power, all that the Father has in Jesus and when we remember then and shape our lives around the glorious reality, the true weight, the utter primacy of God so that nothing even comes close to competing with him, we have power that changes everything.

The Father has, everything is his, all that is his is in Jesus and the Holy Spirit declares to us everything that Jesus needs for us to know.

Maybe you've heard that to live this way we must preach the gospel to ourselves every day and that is so vital. How needy we are and how gloriously our needs are met in Jesus.

This verse is the closest thing I know in the whole Bible to expressing that heart. Holy Spirit takes the full gospel goodness.

All the grace of Jesus is what you need in every moment, every situation, every struggle, every opportunity, every heartache, every joy and what does he do with it?

[26 : 21] He declares it to you over and over. Not new information per se. Things from the Father that Jesus has said and that he will say through his apostles, notice all the truth from Jesus.

That means a specific body of truth. I am strongly suspect referring to the New Testament that these followers of Jesus will write. Okay?

That's what he's declaring to us. Jesus has been calling him the Spirit of Truth. So who's he going to tell you about? Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life.

He speaks all that truth into your heart. See, he's not just a spotlight on Jesus, as wonderful as that is. He is a megaphone, clearly, for Jesus.

A megaphone, child of God, from the inside of your heart, declaring above the shouts of the world and the cries of your pain the truth about Jesus.

[27 : 29] So you hear it. so that when you look around and conclude that your efforts with your child or your friend are hopeless, he declares to you that greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.

That faith is being certain of what we do not see. That he who calls you is faithful and he will keep his promises. And he's saying, that's real power.

When you're tempted to behave inappropriately with your girlfriend, to look at images on the screen that seem to offer life and significance to you, he declares to you the truth of Jesus, that she is to be treated as though she is your sister until she is your wife.

That if you look at someone lustfully, you're committing adultery. And at the end of the pathway that the adulterous woman calls you to walk down is death while wisdom offers true life and he declares that to you and that's real power.

When you deal with sadness and darkness and depression and you begin to believe it's never going to end, he declares that the light of Jesus shines into the world and will not be overcome by darkness.

[29 : 00] That even in the moments when darkness seems to be your closest friend, God is working for your good and nothing separates you from his love.

And as a result, that one day he will wipe away every tear from your eyes and you will know his full joy. And he says, that's real power.

When you're afraid of sharing with your neighbor or your family member about Jesus, he declares to you that God has given you not a spirit of fear but a spirit of power and of love and of sound mind that the spirit that cries Abba, Father, that you're accepted already, that boldness is the right thing to pray for because Jesus is not ashamed to call you brother or sister so you need not be ashamed of him and of his gospel but to be full of the spirit and of power.

That's real power, he says. By the way, those of you ruthlessly eliminating hurry, raise your hand, you know who you are.

Yep, okay, some of you are about to go to a class about it. this is why you're doing that. It's not so you can feel better. It's so you can plug in to this power so you can open this word and hear this spirit declare this truth and see the glory of Jesus take its proper place in your life, carry the weight it deserves in your heart.

[30 : 44] He promises power, y'all and we rush through our scripture reading without stopping to listen so that we can go about our days improving our lives on our own as though we have that power in ourselves.

So God gives us a day every week to reset our hearts, to recharge our batteries, to plug into true power and we give him half of it mornings, sometimes, a bit late, a lot preoccupied, but we gotta get there to hear a couple tips, you know, some practical how-tos that will be powerful enough to change my life this week and make me instantly a better parent and a more patient spouse and a more successful person and all the time we are missing the true power.

We wonder why we're feeling so frantic and so self-focused and so powerless some days. Listen, I wanna tell you something that is really good news but it won't sound like that at first.

This mission Jesus gives his followers to see his glory fill the earth, to testify to him, in case you didn't notice earlier, not only does the spirit testify about Jesus, we do.

It's not getting any easier in our day, in our culture. The water won't stop flooding in but you're not going under.

[32 : 14] He promises the helper is not leaving us. We're not fighting on our own. Did you get that?

You're not on your own. Southwood, we know a lot and we have a lot but what we most need is Holy Spirit power.

Holy Spirit is showing us and our neighbors the truth about Jesus whether it looks like it or feels like it to you or not. He is powerfully drawing us to God so that his glory will fill the earth so you receive that power to abide in Jesus as you meet Jesus in his word and meditate on it.

As you meet Jesus by his spirit in the Lord's supper to empower you for life with him. as you meet Jesus in his people as you go to your grace group where he's present by his spirit living in them right?

And you think there's power there's hope there's joy for us because the spirit is here. But in all those places you get this incredible power by asking by asking by asking your good father you ask him for a good gift how much more will he give you the Holy Spirit the best gift because he has the power to point you to the son who shows you the father so that you live in relationship with God and the fullness of his power.

[34 : 02] You can ask anytime. You can ask this afternoon you can ask tomorrow morning maybe you want to start every day waking up Holy Spirit I need you thank you that you're with me I need you more and more come fresh we're gonna we're gonna ask right now if you'd like as our worship team helps you so that I don't lead you in singing.

Whether the spirit lives in you already or not you can ask the father to send him to you right now to guide you into all truth to help you see the glory of the father in the grace of his son.

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