

The Helper

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Preacher: Taylor Hollingsworth

[0 : 00] The following message was given at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! John chapter 14, and we're going to begin reading in verse 15. If you love me, you will keep my commandments, and I will ask you to keep my commandments.

Trust 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 dwells 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.

[1 : 07] And 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?

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. These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you.

But the Helper, 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.

[2 : 10] Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled.

Neither let them be afraid. You heard me say to you, I'm going away, and I will come to you. If you loved me, you would have rejoiced because I'm going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. And now I've told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place, you may believe. I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming.

He has no claim on me, but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.

This is the word of the Lord. I am a Thomas Christian.

[3 : 12] This was the reply of one of the Indian Christians I met in southern India, in a town, a city, called Shania, when I asked him how he came to faith in Jesus.

I am a Thomas Christian. What does that mean? I asked him. This brother went on to tell me that he came from a long spiritual heritage of faith, being embraced from generation to generation.

That could be traced back all the way to the Apostle Thomas. I said, what was that? He said, the Apostle Thomas came to India and preached the gospel 2,000 years ago.

My distant relatives became Christians, and that's how I know Jesus today. I could not believe that. I don't know if you could believe that. I could not believe that.

He was talking about Thomas. Thomas, as in doubting Thomas. That's who we're talking about here. Tradition has it that after the resurrection of Jesus, Thomas made his way into the Indian subcontinent and was killed for his faith preaching the gospel.

[4 : 29] So what happened? How, in the world, did Thomas go from pessimistic doubter to preaching martyr?

And he wasn't the only one. Several of these other apostles experienced also a radical shift. Peter, who denied Jesus in his most crucial hour, moved from cowardice to boldness as he preached the

gospel in Jerusalem.

He famously opposed the religious leaders to stop preaching the gospel, saying, we cannot help but speak about what we have seen and heard. Tradition has it that he was killed for preaching the gospel by being hung upside down on a cross because he wasn't considering himself worthy to be crucified the same way his master was.

How did Peter change from a cowardly Christ denier to a bold Christ proclaimer? And even John, the very gospel that we're in, was referred to as a son of thunder, if you remember.

In his earlier days, he was brash and impulsive. At one point, he even asked Jesus if they could get God to call down fire on some people. It's intense.

[5 : 47] And as abrasive as he may sound, this is the same John who comes to refer to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved. He became known as a church father.

And even after he was exiled and boiled in oil, he spent his remaining days writing letters of encouragement to his disciples in the local church, referring to them as my little children.

So how did John change from a son of thunder to a selfless spiritual father? Thomas, Peter, John, were all there when Jesus spoke these words we just read.

What happened to these boys who were in the upper room with Jesus? Well, in our passage, the disciples are coming to grips with Jesus' departure.

They are feeling more and more, as you can imagine, disoriented and afraid. What's going to happen when Jesus is gone? What do you mean you're leaving? Fear is mounting.

[6 : 58] And they are, in a sense, kind of tightening their grip on Jesus' legs. They're concerned about being left alone. And we're not much different. Fears and anxieties often plow their way into our hearts, don't they?

Maybe you feel disoriented, afraid, or alone this morning. Maybe you're wondering where Jesus is. Wouldn't it be better if he were here? How are we supposed to live between his departure and his return?

Well, Jesus is speaking directly into this gap for us this morning. He has not abandoned us or left us alone. Quite the opposite.

In fact, he insists that his departure means help is now available in a new and radical way. For those who love him, he promises to send the helper, the Holy Spirit, to grant us peace, boldness, understanding, power, comfort, joy, and so much more.

No matter what circumstances or trials come our way. The same spirit that empowered Thomas, Peter, and John is with us right now.

[8 : 15] And he dwells in all of those who call on the name of the Lord. So I believe that the main point for us this morning is that in light of Christ's love, live courageously in the peace of Christ through the empowering help of the Holy Spirit.

We're going to look at this in three sections. The foundation of Christ's love, the help, Christ's spirit, and the courage, Christ's peace.

So let's look briefly first at the foundation, Christ's love. Verse 15 begins with, So right out of the gate, we see this massive theme that emerges in our passage.

The word love is used 10 times if you scan, and it's often connected to keeping commandments. Well, our culture has developed an allergy to authority.

Just think through the storyline in basically any movie you can think of. The authority figure is usually portrayed as someone holding back the main character from being truly free.

[9 : 38] The system is always meant to be bucked so that they can break free and be their truest self. So often, love in our culture is seen as a lack of restraint.

Love is shown by affirming whatever the person feels is best and not standing in the way. So how could love be connected to obedience?

Keep my commandments. Well, Jesus does not shirk at this thought at all. In fact, Jesus himself demonstrates this submission, a glad submission, in his own obedience to the Father.

Just look at verse 31 in the same passage. I do as the Father has commanded me. Why? So that the world may know that I love the Father.

There it is, connected. So do you see what he's showing us? Authority is not inherently evil and opposed to your flourishing.

[10 : 46] Whether authority is good or bad depends on the character of the one who is over you. And Jesus is demonstrating his glad submission to the Father as a display of his love before a

watching world.

The Father, this Father, is good. And he's worthy to be trusted and obeyed. And his love, Jesus' love, is expressed in trusting obedience.

In our early days with our kids, we'd always tell them to hold our hand in the parking lot when going into a store. We'd repeat that command over and over again.

Hold on, buddy. Grab dad's hand. And we'd walk across. So our kids began to develop a sense that they really did not understand all the ins and outs of what was happening around them in that parking lot.

The traffic patterns or the idea of blind spots or watching out for reckless drivers or confused and distracted drivers. They didn't have these categories. Eventually, it became second nature for our younger kids to hop out of the car and just kind of stick their hand up and wait.

[12:03] And then they grab our hand and then we kind of cross across the parking lot. Why? Over time, they came to trust that our commands as parents were actually for their good.

Their obedience was anchored in their trust of the ones over them. So in our passage, the disciples would have certainly been connecting what Jesus was saying to the familiar commandment in Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 10. One version of this commandment. And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him.

There it is. To serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and to keep the commandments and the statutes of the Lord, which I am commanding you today for your good.

All of it's packaged up there. Do you see it? Jesus was displaying this willing obedience to the Father as a demonstration of his love.

[13:12] He was pointing to himself as the picture of what it looks like to fulfill the greatest commandment in the Bible. But what is especially shocking here is that Jesus is telling the disciples that if they love him, they will obey his commandments.

Well, who does Jesus think he is? Jesus is placing himself in the position of authority over the disciples. The result of loving Jesus will be obeying what Jesus commands.

Now, that's an audacious statement. If you think about that, Jesus is assuming the position reserved for God. But he's not replacing God.

We already saw that he was living out the great commandment in relation to the Father in verse 31. So what is this that we're seeing? Well, what we're seeing is not Jesus replacing God, but revealing that he is God.

John 1 says that Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us. God wrapped himself in flesh to live the perfect life in full obedience to the Father.

[14:34] Jesus just said that he is the way, the truth, and the life in our previous week. No one comes to the Father except through me. So how is it that we gain access to the Father?

Jesus is making it clear that we have been unable to love and to obey God appropriately. We need a bridge to get to God. So God the Son has come to be the bridge to God the Father.

The way to the Father is through the Son. Verse 21, he who loves me will be loved by my Father.

The bridge is completed. And in verse 23, if anyone loves me, he will keep my word and my Father will love him. Do you see the connection? Where does the ability to love God come from?

It is bound up in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Just look throughout this passage.

[15:43] Even though the word commandment is used in verse 15 and in verse 21, other words are used as well. Look at verse 23. Verse 24, whoever does not love me does not keep my words.

So it's not just commands being kept. It's his word as well. This is broader than a list of do's and don'ts.

The emphasis is first and foremost on the person of Jesus himself. Receiving him for all that he's revealed himself to be.

The way to the Father is not found in identifying commandments and obeying them like just a new list of do's and don'ts from the Old Testament. Obedience is an overflow of our love for the person of Jesus.

So how is it that we come to love Jesus? John, the former son of thunder, clarifies that our love is first and foremost a response to God's love for us in the person of Jesus Christ.

[17:00] Look at this glorious passage in 1 John 4. And this is love. And this is love. Not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins.

We love because he first loved us. Believing Jesus is the Christ changes us. When we trust that he came to do for us what we could not do for ourselves to make us right before a holy God by taking our sin upon himself, we are changed from the inside out. We begin to love God, to love his people, to actually love his commands even. 1 John 5. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God. And everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. By this we know that we love the children of God. When we love God and obey his commandments. [18 : 14] For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments. And listen to this. Believing that Jesus is the Christ changes our lives.

We begin to see the change in our hearts in the way that we relate to his people and to his commands. Gathering with his people is no longer a chore, but a glorious honor. It's a joy to be together with his people. His commandments are no longer a painful burden just pressing you down so you can't indulge in the passions of your flesh. Instead, his commandments are not burdensome. Because in them you see life and the goodness of the God who is for you. So when we see the love of God for us in Christ, we put our trust in him. We love him. We want to walk with him. We're like the children who gladly, willingly clasp the nail-scarred hand of Jesus to guide us across the road of life. [19 : 21] The result is that love for Jesus begins to show itself in trusting obedience to Jesus. And the foundation is laid in the love of Christ.

This is the foundation. So let's look at our second point. The help. Christ's spirit. He goes on to say in verse 16, And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another helper to be with you forever.

Jesus promises that the Father will give them another helper. We have one word in English for another. In Greek, there are two words. There can be another of a different kind. Like, I don't like okra. Can I have another side? And then there can be another of the same kind. [20 : 26] I like this cheeseburger. I'd like another cheeseburger. The word that we're looking at here for helper is another of the same kind.

The first helper in mind is Jesus himself. The new helper is of the same kind as Jesus. Now, helper has been translated in many different ways because it's really hard to nail down one word that carries the exact parallel in English.

It literally means one who is called alongside. In most places outside the Bible, the Greek world used the word to describe a legal representative. Someone who helps a person in court, whether as an advocate or a witness. Sometimes the word is translated as counselor or comforter.

And in this case, helper. But this should not be thought of as just some kind of assistant that walks around with you. And it's like an inferior that's just there to make your day easier.

[21 : 33] Instead, this helper comes to make possible to do what is impossible to do otherwise. So maybe the closest parallel I could think of is the role of a CASA volunteer.

Maybe you've heard of CASA. It stands for Court Appointed Special Advocate. This is a volunteer and essentially becomes the legal advocate for children who have experienced abuse or neglect. They make home visits and they delve into a child's situation in order to speak on their behalf before the judge. So when a child is caught in the crossfire of an impossible situation in which they have no power on their own to resolve, this advocate steps in to effectively navigate through the impossible.

So the advocate is a helper, but is doing what the child is helpless to do on their own. And what's more, the advocate is not paid by the child. Instead, the advocate is essentially the one who pays with time and resources and attention.

So this is the case that we're looking at with the helper that Jesus promises here. He's the one who will help Christ's followers navigate through the impossibilities of life after Christ's death.

[22 : 59] And how long will he be available? When will his contract lapse? Well, verse 16 says that he will be with us forever.

Forever. You may say, I can't afford that kind of help. I don't have the resources to pay for help like that. Well, to you, Jesus Christ would say, you do not have to pay.

I love you so much that I have paid the cost for all eternity for this help. That means true help is perpetually available, not only in your best moments, but also in your crushing need in every moment in between the two.

We will not be left alone. Just look at verse 18. I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you. Well, Jesus is confirming that he understands his departure is like a child losing the one on whom their whole world revolves around.

They're utterly dependent. And so he makes the promise. I will come to you. Well, the smart guys, they've wrestled with what Jesus meant about when and how he was going to come.

[24 : 18] But the passage really seems to be talking about the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost that will last until Christ's return.

Help is on the way. Help is on the way. Since this is another helper, where is it that the first helper is going? Well, the passage that Ben read earlier from 1 John 2 said that if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

And now our passage is saying that the Father will send another helper of the same kind as Jesus. One who would strengthen and help his disciples in the world.

So, we have two helpers. Two. One pleading our case before the Father in the heavenly court. And another strengthening and empowering us as we walk through this world.

Oh, just let that truth grip your soul for a moment. For every sin and failure we commit, we have an advocate in Jesus Christ.

[25 : 28] The righteous one. And he's standing before God the judge and he's pleading for us. He holds his hands up in our defense and he says, My wounds have paid his ransom.

Her guilt is laid on my shoulders. All of his failures have been nailed to my cross. And at the same time, we have a helper with us on earth as we walk through the complexities and the brokenness on our journey home.

So, in times of suffering, he comforts us and soothes our hearts with the balm of his truth. When fear surfaces, he anchors our hearts in the goodness and the power of God.

When we don't have the words to say, he intercedes for us with words that bring life. When we lack wisdom, he guides us to the fountainhead of wisdom.

We have help from above and from below. It's incredible. Who is it that is eligible to receive the Holy Spirit?

[26 : 38] There is a distinction made between those who can and cannot receive the Holy Spirit. We're told in verse 17 that the world cannot receive the Spirit, but the disciples can.

So, what's the distinction between the world and the disciples? Well, throughout the Bible, the word world primarily has a negative meaning.

It's this symbol for all that's in rebellion against God. So, in this verse, the world cannot receive the Spirit because it neither sees him nor knows him.

But on the other hand, Jesus promises to send the Spirit to the disciples. This is a contrast of two communities, the community of the world and the community of Christ.

There are only two options. In the watershed, which side, which community you're in, is the person of Jesus Christ. Again, in verse 26, the Holy Spirit will be sent by the Father in the name of Jesus.

[27 : 49] The person who rejects Jesus cannot be made right with God and cannot receive the Spirit. They are all interconnected. This is why he says in verse 20, in that day, you will know that I am in my Father and you in me and I in you.

So, what he's showing us is that we can be connected in relationship with the triune God by receiving Christ. Some will reject Jesus and others will receive him.

Some will hate him and others will love him. For those who love him, who receive him as the Messiah, listen to this shocking statement. My Father will love him and we, Jesus speaking, will come to him and make our home with him.

Jesus is going to the Father to prepare a place, but simultaneously says that he and the Father will make their home, their dwelling place within the believer.

presumably through the Holy Spirit. So, just try to imagine the magnitude of this statement for the disciples that are listening in the upper room. The Son and the Father will make their home, their dwelling place, with the believer.

[29 : 15] The theme of the divine dwelling runs throughout the Bible. Ever since their relationship was broken in the garden by sin, it has been the desire of God's people to be reunited in the

presence of their creator.

Just look at Ezekiel 37, the prophet, looking ahead, my dwelling place shall be with them and I will be their God and they shall be my people.

Then we see in the New Testament, John, in spectacular language, says the word, referring to Jesus, became flesh and dwelt among us.

But now, in our passage, Jesus is saying something even more magnificent. Not only will he dwell among us, but the triune God will dwell within us by the Spirit.

It's an amazing reality. When we believe in Christ by faith, we are brought into relationship with the triune God through the Holy Spirit. He takes up residence in our hearts and he's committed to changing us from the inside out.

[30 : 28] A wonderful, vivid picture is given to us by C.S. Lewis. He says this, imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house.

At first, perhaps, you can understand what he's doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on. You knew that those jobs needed doing and so you're not surprised. But presently, he starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is he up to? The explanation is that he is building quite a different house from the one you had thought of.

Throwing a wing in here and putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage, but he is building a palace and he intends to come and live in it himself.

What has he done in your life? Can you recall those initial renovations when you first came to Christ? Are there areas now that he's remodeling that are unexpected and painful?

[31 : 47] Oh, take heart, friends. Take heart because he's doing something marvelous. Even when it seems to be some demolition and some remodeling in your life, God himself is dwelling in you by his spirit and he is committed to doing you good.

So, if we love Christ and we trust in him, the triune God dwells in our hearts through the spirit, helping us, changing us, teaching us, but God himself promises us something more.

Let's take a look at the third point, the courage, Christ's peace. Wonderfully, in verse 27, he says, peace I leave with you.

My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. Why does he say, let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid?

It's because he knows the direction our hearts want to go when hard things come. That's why he says it. It's what's on the horizon.

[33 : 05] Difficulty, accusation, confusion, loss, persecution, upheaval, betrayal, all of this and more.

And what does he say? Peace I leave with you. Not the world's peace, but my peace. peace. You know, the world is ultimately powerless to give true peace because it only views peace in terms of good circumstances.

The absence of conflict. At the time this was spoken, the known world was in the midst of what was called the Pax Romana, the Roman peace.

It was a worldly peace, both won and maintained by a brutal sword. Many Jews thought the messianic peace would have to be secured by an even mightier sword.

But Jesus is not giving this kind of peace. His peace is not dependent on good circumstances. It's peace in spite of bad circumstances.

[34 : 24] This is a supernatural peace. This supernatural peace was longed for in the Old Testament. In fact, a little further in that, Ezekiel 37, it says this, I will make a covenant of peace with them.

It shall be an everlasting covenant with them. I will set them in the land and multiply them and I will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore.

God promises to give them peace and notice that it involves God himself dwelling in their presence. God's peace is available where God dwells.

So now in our passage, we see Jesus pointing us to a divine peace right after promising that the triune God would dwell in their hearts by the Spirit.

this is where Jesus is heading. He's going to purchase this peace predicted long ago for his people. God's peace did not come through the might of a Roman sword.

[35 : 29] It came through the weakness of a Roman cross. There, the great paradox unfolded before us. By his death, Christ triumphed over death by death and won for us peace with God.

A peace that transcends understanding. The ultimate war going on was our war against God. We were on the wrong side.

We were his enemies. He owed us nothing but judgment and yet he wrapped himself in flesh and crossed over enemy lines in order to lay down his life and give his enemies amnesty.

For all who turn from their sin and place their trust in Jesus Christ, you are no longer his enemy.

God gives us a new citizenship and puts us into a new family.

Romans 5.1 A wonderful display of this peace. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[36 : 35] So if the ultimate war has been won, if our name has been cleared by the God who was our judge, if the sting of death has been drained of its poison, if we've been set free from slavery to sin, if we are secured in the family of God as his beloved children, if our trials are only temporary and bring opportunity to honor God, if our end on earth only means the beginning of eternal joy, then we are beginning to taste the sweetness of Christ's peace that he's promising year.

This peace is not contingent on our circumstances. It is an unshakable peace anchored in the finished work of Christ on the cross and the sure return of Christ on the last day and the presence of Christ is with us by the Spirit on the journey between.

That's what he's guaranteed us. D.A. Carson wonderfully said, the peace Jesus promises does not avoid trouble, it triumphs over it. This peace is no escape from reality but a courageous serenity even in the midst of troubles.

This is the peace that secures composure in the midst of trouble and dissolves fear. This is how Thomas changed from pessimistic doubter to preaching martyr.

This is how Peter changed from cowardly Christ denier to a bold Christ proclaimer. This is how John changed from a son of thunder to a selfless spiritual father.

[38 : 10] Friends, I wonder if we are a community that realizes the power of the Spirit that gives us this kind of peace, a courageous peace.

As I was preparing this message, a picture came to my mind of people swimming in the ocean. These people had scuba gear on, but they remained on the surface of the water and a storm was rolling in.

And the worse the storm got, the more choppy the water became. Well, the swimmers had the gear they needed in order to go under the water, but they kept trying to breathe on their own and keep their head above the waves.

They were becoming increasingly exhausted and petrified at the onslaught of these waves. All they needed to do was go under the water, but they did not think that they could hold their breath.

They were depending on their own strength, and they were becoming depleted, tired, and anxious. Brothers and sisters, I believe Jesus would have us know that he is calling us to go deeper.

[39 : 37] He's calling us to go deeper. Too often we attempt to face the trials of this life with the peace of this world, but he's calling us away from self-reliance and into his peace.

He knows that we are unable to breathe underwater. He's well aware of that. He has called us into a life that is humanly impossible to live.

He's called us to die to ourselves and to go deeper. He's given us his spirit. He's calling us into a life of dependence. He wants us to have a knowledgeable dependence on him.

When was the last time you recognized your need for the spirit? Amen. God to God dwells in the hearts of every believer to give you Christ's peace.

The same spirit that transformed Thomas and Peter and John is with and in you. Turn to him. Depend on him.

[40 : 54] Experience the riches of his sustaining presence. I want to encourage you by the power of the spirit to take risks for the gospel.

Cast your anxieties to the Lord. Ask for help to crucify your fears. Turn from the secret sin in your life.

Reconcile with your brother or sister. Ask for boldness that you don't have. Speak words of encouragement freely, liberally. Love those who don't deserve it.

Pray for your enemies. Give generously without expecting anything back. Ask God to bless you so that you can bless others in return.

God loves to answer these prayers. He loves to do that and so many more. So in light of Christ's love, let's live courageously in the peace of Christ through the empowering help of the Spirit.

[41 : 55] May God help us. Oh Father, we praise you that you dwell in us by the power of the Spirit and Lord, we want to go deeper away from self-reliance and the peace this world has to offer.

Lord, we cling to you. Help us to do that as we walk from this place. May we wrap ourselves up in the truth that you are very present even now with us and you're changing us from the inside out.

We thank you for this mercy, this grace available to us today. We give you all the praise in the name of Jesus our Savior. Amen. You've been listening to a message at a Sunday celebration at Trinity Grace Church in Athens.

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