

Sunday, February 27, 2022

This is the thirteenth in a series of sermons on John 13-17 (“The Farewell Discourse”).

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jesus Loves His own (13:1) [7/5/2020] 2. Foot Washing (13:2-17) [8/30/2020] 3. Identifying the Traitor (13:18-30) [10/18/2020] 4. Christ’s Glory and How We Are To Live In His Temporary Absence (13:31-38) [12/6/2020] 5. Preparing a Place (14:1-4) [1/31/2021] 6. The Only Way to the Father (14:5-7) [3/21/2021] 7. Seeing God (14:8-14) [5/9/2021] 8. Peace and Comfort (14:15-27) [6/27/2021] 9. Loving God (14:28-31) [8/15/2021] 10. Abiding in Christ, the True Vine (15:1-11)[10/3/2021] | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Friends of Christ (15:12-17) [11/21/2021] 12. The Hatred of the World (15:18- 16:4a) [1/9/2022] 13. The Work of the Holy Spirit (16:4b-15) 14. Your Sorrow Shall Be Turned Into Joy (16:16-24) 15. Prayer in His Name (16:25-32) 16. He’s Spoken That You Might Have Peace (16:33)
<i>The High Priestly Prayer (Intercessory Prayer)</i> 17. Jesus Prays For Himself (17:1-5) 18. Jesus Prays For His Present People (17:6-19) 19. Jesus Prays For His Future People (17:20-26) |
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We’ve been working our way through the Farewell Discourse in John 13-17, and today we will be entering a new major section. To summarize in very broad strokes:

- Chapter 13 - Jesus sets the stage and introduces a lot of topics that He will talk more about later (e.g., His departure, loving one another, the hatred of the world which we see in the person of Judas Iscariot, our union with Christ, the union of the Father and the Son, the glory of the Father and the Son, being forsaken by His own disciples).
- Chapter 14 – He understands that the events of chapter 13 would result in a troubled heart, so He gives the antidote to that: believe in Him, love Him, obey Him. He also introduces us to the Comforter.
- Chapter 15 through 16:4a – these people who believe in, love and obey Him will be involved in certain relationships: with Jesus Christ (which is how they can believe in, love and obey Him in the first place), with one another (love one another), with the world (the world hates us).
- Chapter 16, beginning with 16:4b – He fleshes out the benefits of His departure.
- Chapter 17 – the so-called “High Priestly Prayer.”

So, as they continue on their short walk from the Upper Room to the brook Cedron, while Judas Iscariot is off finalizing the details of his treachery, Jesus begins to flesh out the benefits of His departure, and the first part of that involves the Comforter – that is, the Holy Spirit:

“And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you. But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the

world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.” (John 16:4b-16:15)

Dividing this into three sections: “Jesus Must Depart Before The Comforter Will Come,” “The Work Of The Comforter In The World,” and “The Work Of The Comforter In The Church.”

Jesus Must Depart Before The Comforter Will Come

“And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you. But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.” (John 16:4b-7)

He ties this section to the previous section by saying “and these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you. But now I go...” What are the things He didn’t say to them before? Well, the context is the hatred of the world, and the Spirit’s and our testimony of Christ to that hateful world. He had, in fact, addressed the subject before and had even sent His disciples out two by two to experience some of it (see Matthew 10), but He never expounded it to the degree that He does here. “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” (Matthew 6:34). His point is that for the most part, He had been with them, and He personally had taken the brunt of the world’s hatred, so it hadn’t been necessary to go into such detail on the subject before. But now He’s leaving, and their lives are about to change in a big way.

He’s going to return to the Father (“to him that sent me”), and at this point, they don’t seem to care why or where He’s going. Earlier in the evening, Peter had asked where He was going (“Lord, whither goest thou?” – 13:36); Thomas had expressed that they didn’t know where He was going (“Lord, we know not whither thou goest.” – 14:5). But now, nobody asks. I think it’s starting to sink in (anybody with any experience living knows that the normal way that you come to understand something is that it sinks in little by little). And all they care about is how it impacts them. Jesus had told them earlier, “If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.” (14:28). They’re not rejoicing, though. Instead, they are full of sorrow – “sorrow hath filled your heart.”

Jesus understands their selfish sorrow, and what He says here is a mild rebuke for it. But He doesn't leave it at that – he offers up help and comfort for them. He says, “I tell you the truth” – in other words, “snap out of it – look at me – I'm about to tell you something very important.” It shouldn't be a sorrowful thing for them – it's an expedient thing (helpful, profitable, beneficial, advantageous). Lots of times, we run into a situation that we think is very sorrowful, but the Lord means it to be very profitable for us. There are great benefits to His departure, and the first benefit is that the Comforter will come. Now when I hear that, it raises two questions in my mind: first, wasn't the Holy Ghost already there; if so, how is it that He can't come until Jesus departs? And second, why is it that He can't come until Jesus departs?

Wasn't the Holy Ghost already there? Of course He was. When I started preparing for this sermon, I had great dreams of giving an overview of the work of the Holy Spirit through the Bible. I quickly realized that the topic is way too big. He's there through the entire Bible. We first meet Him in the first chapter of the Bible (“The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” - Genesis 1:2) and the last time we hear of Him is in the last chapter of the Bible (“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.” - Revelation 22:17). He appears all throughout the Old Testament (nearly 100 times), and He appears during the ministry of Jesus and then throughout the rest of the New Testament (over 200 times). So certainly, He has always been there, doing His work. What does this mean, then, that the Comforter can't come until Jesus departs? It means that He's going to come in some powerful and new way, with a special ministry (which Jesus is going to describe shortly). We see this, for example, at the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) – just look at the transformation of Peter into a bold preacher. And may I add that when Jesus was on earth, He had restricted Himself to a human body, with all the limitations that come along with that. The Holy Ghost doesn't have such restrictions – He can indwell all believers at all times in all places. Spurgeon puts it well: *“It is a better thing for us in this world to have the Holy Spirit in us than to have the bodily presence of Christ with us. We are better helped by the Holy Spirit than we would have been if Jesus had remained on earth.”*

And why is it that the Holy Ghost can't come until Jesus departs? In John 7, after Jesus speaks of the rivers of living water, John tells us that “this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.” (v. 39). But why? There is a lot of mystery here, but here are a few ideas:

- It was in the eternal covenant of grace that this is how things were going to happen. Jesus would come and do His work of redemption, and then the Spirit would come and apply it. They each have their unique function.

- Part of the Spirit's coming would be to give testimony about Jesus (John 15:26) and reprove the world of righteousness (John 16:10). But He couldn't do that properly until Jesus was actually done with His work.
- The coming of the Spirit is one of the fruits of Christ's labor.
- The Spirit was going to be sent as a result of the intercession of Christ (John 14:16), and it's not until Jesus was glorified at the right hand of God that He would make this intercession (Romans 8:34, Hebrews 7:25).

So, He tells them that He's leaving, and the Holy Spirit is coming, and we ought to put all the more value on His coming because it happens as a result of Christ's work and prayer. But what is the Holy Spirit going to do once He's here? That is answered in the next couple of sections.

The Work Of The Comforter In The World

**“And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.”
(John 16:8-11)**

This is talking about the unbelieving world – the world who hates Him and who hates us - the same world that He introduced back in chapter 15. And the key to understanding this passage is to understand what the word “reprove” means in this context. That is no small task, because the word has a wide range of meanings. It's used in John 3:20, for example, with the idea of shining a light on and exposing something to be sinful: “For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.” It's used in John 8:9 to refer to the conscience being convicted of sin: “And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one...” It's used in John 8:46 to mean being convicted of sin: “Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?” So, here, I take it to mean that one of the works of the Holy Spirit is to shine the light of God's truth on a sinful world, declare them to be guilty and summon them to repentance. He presents the evidence, and He makes the declaration. This will have one of two results – their hearts will be hardened, they will remain as part of a God-hating world, and they will be rendered inexcusable; or they will be called out of the world, convinced that they are guilty, hell-bound sinners, and will cry out, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30).

And what is it that He is reprov'ing the world of? Three fundamental things: sin, righteousness and judgment. Without the Holy Ghost, the world is absolutely clueless about these three things. I intend to talk about each one separately, but first, I want to lay a few things down as a backdrop.

1. This little passage here explicates something I talked about in the previous sermon:

**“But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.”
(John 15:26-27)**

2. The Holy Ghost operates in and through the church. He indwells the church, and each individual member thereof.

“If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” (1 Corinthians 3:17)

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?” (1 Corinthians 6:19)

So how does the Holy Ghost reprove the world? I will not shorten the hand of the Holy Ghost by limiting His means, but He primarily does this through the preaching of the church! Gospel preaching to the world consists of preaching about sin, righteousness and judgment. If that’s not the kind of preaching coming out of the church to the world, then that preaching isn’t being directed by the Holy Spirit.

3. The reproof of the world relates directly to Christ, which we will see in a moment. This is how the Holy Spirit testifies of Christ. And really, the very fact that God has provided a Savior is testimony that the world is guilty.
4. This is the Holy Ghost’s business. He initiates it. He guides it. He directs it. He determines how it will be done, as He deems appropriate across times and circumstances. He determines the audience. He determines how it will land on their hearts. He does all those things and more, with the point being that He does it – we don’t do it.
5. This is said in the context of Him being the Comforter (i.e., Paraclete). Really, He is acting as the prosecuting attorney against the world, using the church as His instrument. So it is a great comfort to His people to know that we’re not in this alone and helpless. We operate by the power of the Spirit of God! He does those things that we can’t do (e.g., changing hearts), so we don’t need to fret. In relation to those He saves out of the world, Matthew Henry says this: *“it is the method the Spirit takes, first to convince, and then to comfort; first to lay open the wound, and then to apply healing medicines.”*

Sin

He reproves the world of sin. Sin is any deviation from the standards of God. John defines it for us over in 1 John 3:4 – “Sin is the transgression of the law.” The Holy Ghost reproves the world concerning sin. He makes it very clear that they are depraved sons and daughters of Adam who fritter their lives away in sin – every thought, every word, every action. “From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.” (Isaiah 1:6). They stand guilty before a holy God. And why does He reprove the world of sin? “Because they believe not on me.” I said last time that not believing on Jesus Christ is the worst possible sin, and the reason for that is because they have rejected the remedy. The reason that sin reigns supreme in their lives is because they’ve rejected Him. The world looks at it as some kind of a badge of honor to reject Jesus Christ – to reject His teachings, reject His claims, reject His assessment of sinners, reject their need of Him. But it’s a sin to do that, and while that sin remains, all other sin remains. However, when a soul believes on the Lord Jesus, all other sin is remitted.

Righteousness

He reproves the world of righteousness. He exposes what the righteousness of the world really is: “we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” (Isaiah 64:6). The world thinks it’s righteous – it’s baked into our corrupt genes. “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” (Proverbs 14:12). Here’s a reality check: “There is none righteous, no, not one...there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” (Romans 3:10,12). The world must be convicted of its inadequate, filthy righteousness and its desperate need of the righteousness of God. And why does He reprove the world concerning righteousness? “Because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more.” Jesus reproved the world of sin and righteousness when He was here (see John 15:22,24), and now that He has returned to the Father, the Holy Spirit has taken over that ministry.

Further, Jesus died, was buried, resurrected, and ascended to His Father – and this testifies to His righteousness. When He says “ye see me no more,” He means that we will never see Him again in His frail robe of flesh. He finished the work of redemption that He came to do, and the Father received Him, glorified, back into heaven. His presence at the right hand of God vindicates His righteousness. If there was any deficiency in what He had accomplished, the Father wouldn’t have received Him; if there was any spot of unrighteousness in Him, the Father wouldn’t have received Him. The world declared Him guilty, but the Father received Him. It is only the spotless Lamb who can appear in His presence – and this is the only way anyone can appear in His presence. “Take away the filthy garments from him...Behold, I have

caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.” (Zechariah 3:4). So, He reproveth the world and tells them that they are filthy – they need a new set of clothes! And because Jesus returned to His Father, He can give you those clothes! They will either revel in their filthy garments, or they will get a change of raiment: “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.” (Is. 61:10).

Judgment

He reproveth the world of judgment. The world’s judgment is wrong. If it’s evil, they call it good; if it’s darkness, they call it light; if it’s bitter, they call it sweet. (Isaiah 5:20). In John 7:24, Jesus had commanded them to “judge righteous judgment.” Why was it necessary for Him to say that? Because their judgment had been wrong! Unrighteous! Unjust! His judgment, on the contrary, was just and true (John 5:30, 8:16). The world’s judgment, on all important spiritual matters, is the exact opposite of what God’s judgment is. And if you don’t come to terms with that fact, you will never be saved. And why does He reprove the world concerning judgment? “Because the prince of this world is judged.” The prince of this world is Satan, and he’s the prince of this world because the world wants him to be their prince. They willingly and gleefully live under his rule and power. Because he judges falsely about every spiritual thing, they will judge falsely about every spiritual thing. And because he is judged, they will be judged. In fact, even now they live under the condemnation and wrath of God (“He that believeth not is condemned already...The wrath of God abideth on him.” - John 3:18, 36), and that judgment will be consummated at the return of Christ. If you are part of the unbelieving world – if you are an enemy of Christ – understand this: you have aligned yourself with Satan, and if your prince can’t escape the judgment of God, you don’t have a chance.

There’s an important thing here that you may not give a lot of thought to, and when you don’t consider this, I think you’re missing out on a lot of what it means to be redeemed. And that is, that when Christ died on the cross, He defeated Satan. The first prophecy of the Messiah in the scripture is given in terms of Satan being bruised under foot: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” (Genesis 3:15). “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.” (John 12:31). “And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.” (Colossians 2:15). “...through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” (Hebrews 2:14-15). Sin is part of the kingdom of Satan – all the subtlety, deceitfulness, power, and

rebellion of it. When Christ defeated and condemned the prince of this world, this is the only way that we are freed from the dominion and power and condemnation of sin.

So, to conclude this section, the Holy Ghost reproves the world about their sin and tells them to believe on the Lord Jesus, He reproves the world about their perceived righteousness and tells them they need the righteousness of the ascended Christ, and He reproves the world about their faulty, evil judgment and declares them to be under the same judgment as Satan.

The Work Of The Comforter In The Church

“I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.” (John 16:12-15)

So, the Holy Ghost has a work that He does in the world (unbelievers). But He also has a work that He does in the church (believers). What Jesus is telling his disciples here is that there’s still a lot of stuff left for them to learn, but they’re just not able to handle it now...but the Holy Ghost is coming to teach them. This is a great example of kindness and patience here - people simply cannot bear to know everything at once. We can’t handle it intellectually, emotionally, spiritually. He reveals what they’re able to handle, when they’re able to handle it.

And what is the work that the Holy Ghost will do in the church? Jesus names three things here:

1. He will guide us into all truth.
2. He will show us things to come.
3. He will glorify Jesus.

Of course, all these things have a direct application to the apostles living in those early days. This is a promise for the New Testament to be written, for example. But it goes way beyond that, and the Holy Spirit is working up to this very day. He’s the Spirit of truth, and He will guide us into all truth – like a father guides a little child by holding his hand. To **guide** someone into all truth implies that there’s a destination that you haven’t reached yet – there’s still more truth to learn! And to guide someone **into** all truth doesn’t just mean that they’ve learned some stuff – it means that they’ve embraced it, they love it, they live by it. And to guide someone into **all** truth means He will guide us into all the truth that we need to know.

He does this work silently and mysteriously as you read the Bible, listen to a sermon, talk to one another, and sometimes by what they call “impulses on the heart.” Jesus is the way, the truth and the life – and the Spirit is the guide. And He isn’t some independent, maverick guide – “he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak.” Everything He teaches is perfectly consistent with the Father and the Son. (This sounds very similar to the ministry of Jesus – “I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.” – John 8:28).

He will show us things to come. The Holy Ghost inspired the prophecy in scripture, and the Holy Ghost gives light on interpreting those prophecies. The key is that whatever the Holy Spirit reveals will be consistent with the Word of God, and He’ll give us understanding of prophecy when, and to what degree, we need it. Until He shows it, we won’t see it.

He will glorify Christ. The Holy Spirit doesn’t come to glorify Himself – He’s here to shine a bright spotlight on Christ. Likewise, our aim must not be to glorify ourselves – it’s to glorify Christ. If Christ isn’t being glorified, the Spirit is not there. If we are glorifying ourselves, we are an empty, arrogant shell. Jesus says, “He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.” This includes everything that the Father has, and everything that the Son has. Can you begin to fathom the depths of those riches? “He shall receive of (or, from) mine.” That is, He hasn’t revealed all there is to know about the glories of Christ – He has taken from the vast, infinite store of His riches, and shown us a few jewels that we’ve needed to know about. He’s illuminated some things. He’s caused us to internalize and love this or that truth. He’s taken the blinders off us and given us some understanding. There may even be some souls here today that have seen something of the glories of Christ that they haven’t seen before. But there’s a lot more where that came from. I believe this will be a function of the Spirit through eternity, to continue to glorify Christ by showing us of His riches, because His riches are inexhaustible.

Now, I like to use the metaphor of “guardrails.” I like to think of the narrow way as having a guardrail on the left, and a guardrail on the right, and our job is to stay between those two guardrails. When we’re dealing with the Holy Spirit, one of those guardrails is to keep you from thinking that every time you have indigestion, that is the Holy Spirit talking to you. Oftentimes when you hear someone saying that the Spirit led them to do this or that thing, that is just their flesh talking. We see it often when people say that after much prayer and guidance by the Spirit, He led them to the conclusion that it is OK for them to commit some sin. Just because you think it doesn’t mean that it’s the Spirit. The other guardrail is to keep you from neglecting to give the Holy Spirit the credit that He is due. Oftentimes, we might forget that the Holy Spirit is there. We might do or say some profitable thing but forget that it was the Spirit that guided us there. Some of us may tend toward the former, and some of us

may tend toward the latter. But we need to stay in the middle. How do we do that? Know what the Bible says – He guides you, but He will never guide you contrary to the Bible. Talk to more experienced saints. Know about the devices of Satan.

So, Christ has ascended to His Father, and the first benefit of that is that the Holy Ghost is here. He indwells us. He directs us. He comforts us. He teaches us. He brings things to our remembrance. He puts words in our mouths. He is a trustworthy guide. “And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.” (Isaiah 30:21). Lord willing, next time, we will continue on the benefits of Christ’s departure.

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.” (2 Corinthians 13:14)