

The Holy Spirit and You - Kevin Miller, 30 minutes, **John 16:4-15** (#502)

Introduction: How can Christ's departure be a good thing for the disciples? That is the question we'll address in our passage today, but before we get there, I wanted to take this moment, here at the start, to make it personal: how is it a good thing that Jesus is in heaven while we remain here on earth? Wouldn't it be better if He were here with us? Wouldn't our lives be different? Our hopes? Our dreams? Our trials and troubles? And, what's more, how can we honestly say that being here when He is in heaven is somehow a good thing?

I'm starting off with these questions because I want you to feel the weight of this passage – Christ leaving the disciples is no small matter. We shouldn't simply act as if things are just fine, as if we can hold the fort until Christ returns. I suspect that deep down, many of us struggle with what Jesus says here, at least to some extent, because how could it not be better for Him to be with us?

Thankfully, as Christ has so lovingly cared for His disciples – and for us – all throughout these chapters, He'll continue that work with His words and teachings today. My Bible is open to **John 16**, and I'd ask you to join me there. We left off with **verse 4** last week, but since it provides a necessary transition between then and now, I'll start there again today...

16:4-7 *Part one: the Spirit's good arrival.* When Jesus tells the disciples that He has been teaching them "these things," because "their hour" is coming, what is He referring to? Briefly, we are talking about everything from following His servant example and Judas' betrayal in **John 13**, to His coming departure and the arrival of the Holy Spirit in **John 14**; from the absolute priority to remain in Christ and live according to His teachings in **chapter 15**, to – now – the truth that all who follow Jesus shall be persecuted at the end of **chapter 15 and into chapter 16**. These are the things that Jesus has in mind – these are the things that the disciples need to remember.

Specifically, they'll need to remember because Jesus won't be there personally to remind them; not for much longer, anyway. Instead, the truth is that He will soon go to the Father. You can sense the disciples' disappointment – maybe even disillusionment – reflected in Christ's words of **verses 5-6**. How could they not be? Isn't this true elsewhere in our own lives? A loved one goes to be with the Lord – we know that it is good and best and according to His plan, but it's still difficult in every way imaginable. Or, on a lighter note, perhaps you have traveled far to see a friend or family member. How do you feel on the last night before you are to head home? Isn't it some variant of what Shakespeare wrote in *Romeo and Juliet*: “parting is such sweet sorrow”? Don't we feel both happy and miserable at the same time? On a much deeper and more important level, I think that is what we have with the disciples here: they love Jesus. They follow Him. By no means do they want Him to leave them!

This, then, is why Christ sets about teaching on the Holy Spirit once more: His intention is to show them, to convince them even, that it is actually a good thing that their Lord and Master will go. Why? How? **Verse 7 tells us:** if Jesus doesn't go, then the Holy Spirit will not come. Yet if Christ does go, then He will send the Holy Spirit. Don't misunderstand: the issue isn't that Jesus and the Holy Spirit can't be in the same place at the same time. Instead, by “going” Jesus means all that He will accomplish on the cross. If the work of the Holy Spirit – as we will soon read – is about applying Christ's work and message of the cross to people's hearts, then there is no work to be applied, no promises to be kept, until Jesus actually goes through the crucifixion and resurrection. Truly, it is best for Jesus to do these things for the disciples and for us!

This brings before us a challenge: you and I – just like the disciples – must trust Christ's evaluation of our needs more than our own. That is to say, Jesus knows what we need even better than we do ourselves. To recognize that is counter-cultural. To believe it is a massive act of faith. If there's one thing our fractured world loves to say it is that we each know what is best for ourselves. But I've noticed personally, when it comes to the deep things of life, I rarely know what I truly need. And even when I do, I certainly do not have the power to actually

provide it. The reality is that our Creator knows us even better than we know ourselves. Your task, your application, is to go to His Word and to go to Him in prayer and ask that He would give you the faith to believe this. The faith to trust Him more than yourself. What is needed most? It is Christ's sacrifice. It is the Spirit's coming in a unique way to apply Christ's sacrifice and resurrection and teachings to our lives and to the world around us. But what will that look like? Christ answers in two parts. Here's the first: *the Spirit's work in the world...*

16:8-11 The arrival of the Holy Spirit in this particular way will accomplish three purposes. He will convict the world in three areas: sin, righteousness, and judgment.

Sin might be the most obvious of these: the Holy Spirit will convict the world of not believing in Jesus. That might sound odd or particularly judgmental, but it is actually loving. If what Christ has been teaching all along is that people need to repent – that they need to hold to His view of human sinfulness, that every person everywhere needs to turn to Christ as their Savior, that He alone can forgive their sins – then the best possible news, the most loving reality, is to show the world this need, to expose and highlight this truth.

We live in a time that doesn't value loving, specific feedback. After all, if everyone gets to determine their own truth and their own reality, how can anybody correct anybody else? That would be judgmental, after all. Yet this sort of thinking is ludicrous: it results only in shared ignorance, not wisdom. Each of us needs to know what is true, and we need good friends who are willing to lovingly yet firmly point it out when we refuse to see it. How much more, then, that the Holy Spirit would convict the world that we are all desperately sinful and in need of a Savior? Isn't this why so many people who claim to not believe in sin or truth seem to wrestle with it and talk about it an awful lot?

Second: the Holy Spirit will convict the world regarding righteousness – specifically, the righteousness of Jesus. This argument might seem foreign to us, but remember Christ's audience: Jewish disciples living in a Jewish nation. Think

back to Christ's teaching of the Beatitudes: those who thirst for righteousness shall be satisfied. What's more, these same folks shall see God. And the righteous shall be persecuted, but will receive the kingdom of heaven. So, Christ going to be with God means that He is righteous. It also means that those who have – and would soon again – persecute Him are the unrighteous, those who will not see or be with the Lord. Don't miss the irony here: it is the religious leaders – the very ones who think themselves quite righteous – who put Jesus to death. Theirs is a "righteousness" that is badly in need of conviction and correction.

And third: the Holy Spirit convicts the world with judgment. The way that the world judges is completely backwards. To hear it told, believing what Jesus taught regarding homosexuality is intolerant. To speak in absolute terms about anything of consequence, is thought of as being "violent" against anybody who disagrees. The world around us thinks that the rights of one person matter more than the very life of another. Or, another example: that what is natural is absolutely best when it comes to food or medicine. Yet what is scientifically natural about people – male and female – is somehow bad, a social construct that we need to get rid of. Make no mistake: the world's judgments are foolish and wrong. Christ's judgments – and His coming judgment – will not change with the seasons or political winds. What Jesus said is true and will hold true. And so, the ruler of this world – the father of lies – is judged. Not only shall someday be judged – but by the Spirit's arrival, the judgment has been made sure and certain and clear. This is what Jesus has spoken about for awhile now – we find the same phrase in **John 12 and 14**. The death of Christ, His resurrection and ascension, the arrival of the Holy Spirit – these are good things for those who follow Jesus, but these are also judgment for the devil and all who follow his ways.

What are you and I to make of all this? First, that there is a very real role of the Holy Spirit in accomplishing God's eternal plans for this world. Don't confine His work to just being in you. But also second: earlier in John's Gospel, Jesus taught that the Holy Spirit would help God's people to remember Christ's teachings. Do you pray for the Spirit's help with how to live as Christ has taught? Do you pray and ask the Spirit for the right words to say to that friend, family member, or

neighbor who needs the Lord? Do you pray that the Spirit would give you the wisdom and discernment to believe what is right and true rather than being deceived by this world? Might it be that discipleship is so hard because we don't seek the Lord to remind us of what we need to know and believe?

So: *the Spirit's good arrival. The Spirit's work in the world. We close with part three: the Spirit's work in the disciples...*

16:12-15 We've just read about the work of the Holy Spirit in the world – now, let's read about the Spirit's work in the disciples personally. Christ has more that He wants to teach, but like the loving and careful teacher that He is, He knows that the disciples couldn't rightly handle those teachings then and there, in the moment. Instead, here's the hope: when the Spirit comes (the Spirit *of truth*, notice), He'll guide the disciples in every way that is in accordance with Christ's teaching, will, and commands. The point is not "new" revelation, but instead "deeper" understand of what Jesus has taught. Thus, the Spirit isn't the new boss with different ideas and methods, but rather He comes to continue the same work that Christ has been about all this time. Part of that work? Declaring the "things that are to come." Not in the sense of the future, but instead in a "you will have the wisdom and knowledge available when you need it" sense.

Not only this, but the second thing that the Spirit will do personally is glorify Jesus. He will declare Christ's truth to these believers. What will that look like? Amongst other things, I know it will look like Him changing and transforming every believer indwelt by the Spirit. Have you ever thought of that? That the Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus by changing we Christians from the inside out?

Which brings us to our final application for today: how can you glorify Christ? If you have the Spirit within you – and you do, if you are a Christian – then what do you need to do this very week to bring glory to Jesus? What's the attitude, conversation, or decision that you need to have or make this very week so that Christ will be honored through your actions? Whatever that is – however you fill in that blank – it's time to pray and ask for the Spirit's help. Let's do that now...