

Two Helpers For Our Comfort

Pray

Intro - Open to John 14

We are jumping back into Jesus' comforting farewell to his disciples in the upper room. He will be leaving soon, so he comforts them as only God can, with sure plans of what the future will hold.

When I would comfort you, I will point back to God's faithfulness in the past with expectation that in his unchanging nature, and his truthful words he will not abandon you. We find comfort not with confidence of the exact events up ahead, but with the God we know who ordains and directs those events. Jesus however, comforts with certainty of WHO is coming next.

Since the start of John 14, Jesus is comforting them with the truth about who he is. There is a trinitarian nature to his teaching. He first shows what his job as the Son will be as he leaves, to die for their sins and prepare their place with the Father. He then discusses the unity of himself and the Father, they are inseparable in both person and work. Now we are finding Jesus discussing the Spirit, the mysterious person who he will describe as a helper like himself to come alongside the disciples in all that they need.

Jesus knows he is leaving but he is not leaving them without hope and without the help they need. They have much to learn about their God and especially the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, alongside Christ will be the new means of God's presence with them.

God the Father has sent two helpers for our comfort. God the Son and God the Spirit. Jesus is in heaven, still our helper. The Spirit is here with us, our current helper. So, as we go through what Jesus says this morning, we will discover that...

The Holy Spirit and Jesus help his disciples love, obey and remember the Truth.

Verses 15-24 (I break this up into a few chunks so you can track with me.)

Jesus and the Holy Spirit help us have love for and obedience to God.

Verses 25-26 will show how they help the disciples remember the truth.

15 "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 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.

Jesus showed love to his disciples in washing their feet, and the work he will do for them on the cross. Now he discusses the love they have for him. He states "If you love me." It's not a statement either way of the status of their love, but stating if you do love him, "you will keep my commandments." The word commandment or precepts here will show up throughout this passage as the same concept as Jesus' word, or words. Jesus was described at the beginning of the Gospel of John as the Word became flesh. God's creative power in Genesis 1, speaking into existence creation itself, now stands before them. Everything he says is true and powerful. He is the same cosmos creating word as the Father. Now he states, if you have deep, affectionate, agape love for him, you will know and live according to the fullness of God's revelation in Christ!

Jesus then says in verse 16, that when he is in heaven he will ask the Father, knowing that it will be granted, to send another helper. This word "another" means "of the same kind". So when Jesus references another helper, it is here that we discover that Jesus' sacrificial serving life to help teach and save his disciples, will be matched with another who is also God, a Spirit who will be truth in essence and with them forever. So now it's not just Jesus claiming to be in unity with the Father, it is now this trinity extended to the Helper, the Spirit who will work on Jesus' behalf alongside and within the disciples. This is our triune God showing how he works together.

Every time I leave for a day at the church office or with time away from Lexi and the kids, I am reminded that a lot will happen while I am gone. There is this longing that we have that when we are away from our loved ones, they will be safe, that my care for them will be remembered. I don't leave for work because I don't want to be with them, I leave so that I will serve them better, provide for them, and desire for their best. Jesus longs for his loved disciples to not feel like he is abandoning them either. He is revealing here, and will explain further in the next few chapters that the Holy Spirit's coming is a good thing! The Holy Spirit is not a subpar replacement, he is an improvement upon a physically present God with an indwelling God. One who will be a helper just like Jesus.

Next in verse 17, we see a contrast between true disciples and the unbelieving world. Jesus sets up this contrast multiple times in his ministry. The world cannot receive the Spirit but the disciples can. The difference is the same as during Jesus' earthly ministry. Do they recognize God when they see him? For the disciples, knowledge of Jesus will mean they have a knowledge of the Spirit. They see Jesus and recognize him as God, the world does not. In the same way, when the Spirit comes, the same lines in the sand will be drawn.

This leads Jesus to say with confidence:

18 "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. 20 In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. 21 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."

I almost entitled my message, No Spiritual Orphans, because the imagery is so good. We all have this Oliver Twist, soot smeared child in our mind as a spiritual orphan that we are grateful we won't become. But, like all of scripture, I am reminded that this gospel is not about us, it is about God. Jesus is saying that HE will act to not leave us as orphans, HE will come to us through this Helper and Spirit. The beautiful truth is the continuity of God's presence with us, his people. He has been with them, and he will not leave them, he will come to them through the Spirit.

As we continue in verse 19 you find again this contrast between the world and the disciples. They will see and recognize Jesus. Even greater than that, they will live with him. They will see Jesus resurrected and then through the Helper of the Spirit of Truth, they will have confidence and understanding that because Jesus was raised from the dead, they too will live. This leads to a further statement in verse 20 of the confidence they should have in Christ because of God's dwelling in the Son and the Son's dwelling in us through the Spirit.

Verse 21 ends this section as Jesus restates his expectation of their new life with the spirit. This restatement is meant to break the pharisaical and transactional view that these Jewish disciples had of the heavenly Father.

Transactional means that if you do something for God, he will do something

for you. It is the Romans or Greek God's need for sacrifices. Or a pitiful view of God as revealed in the Old Testament. It is not a heavenly father of love, it is an unstable father who only loves those who love him first.

Until they met Jesus, they thought that their law keeping and sacrifices would earn God's love and therefore the best thing they can do for their selfish gain is to set up rules and laws to keep up the ritual of purification and sacrifice. Jesus reverses this. Teaching that love and its tangible action of obedience is what he desires. It is a willing heart that God desires, not obligation or self-satisfaction or self-gain. **I don't want Grace and Jude to think they have to buy my love, neither does God. He simply wants us to demonstrate our love as true. True love will be according to the Spirit of Truth. It will not be according to what I think is best, but according to the perfect standard of God's perfect commands.**

If you remember back to verse 5, Thomas asks a question just like Judas here. Thomas was thinking Jesus is talking about a physical place he is going, not his death and ascension into heaven. Judas, like Thomas, is in the wrong plane of thinking. The disciples are again trying to ask for the answer to their math question here on earth when God has just shown him a work of art meant for spiritual growth. So let's continue:

22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" 23 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. 24 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."

Jesus' answer doesn't get distracted by the misunderstanding; he essentially just continues his train of thought. Jesus is speaking to the spiritual blindness of the world compared to the disciples whose eyes will be opened by the Spirit. Judas in essence models what life without the Spirit is like. We are not even in the ballpark.

Jesus wants his disciples to know that if anyone (thinking of all the disciples who would come to know Jesus through the centuries) loves Jesus, if they love the Father, they will keep his word, his commandments. The opposite is true of the world, whoever does not love God, will not keep his words. All of this Jesus affirms is his continuation of the Father's word, not an invention by himself.

We have to remember that when Jesus teaches, he is the authority not because he said so but because he and God the Father are one. Remember just the passage before he says in verse 10, “the words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority.” This is a crucial place to understand that Jesus did not come and teach something new and novel which had no precedent. No, he actually spoke of the true fulfillment and accurate teaching that the Father has always revealed. He is making plain what generations of scribes had obscured or had yet to comprehend. You are a sinner and need a savior. You need a messiah who will deal with your sin. He claims, “I am that fulfillment, I am that messiah, I am God who has come to save you.” Then he backs up those claims with his sacrificial death and resurrection.

I began by saying that the Holy Spirit and Jesus help his disciples love, obey and remember the truth. We will get to remember in the next section but love and obey are critical to what Jesus just said. Verses 15-24 show the connection between Jesus’ commands, the Spirit’s work and our love and obedience.

Lexi and I are at the cusp of real parenting. You parents know what I mean. Jude is 2 and is about at the age where he doesn’t just need us to coddle his baby frustrations, he needs real correction and needs to start making the connection to obedience. It’s not like a light switch but it’s getting there.

Now a famous management professional Michael Scott once said “*Would I rather be feared or loved? Both, I want them to be afraid of how much they love me.*” I do not want Jude or Grace to only fear the punishment they will receive when they disobey. The nature of discipline means they will fear time out or a denial of screen time, but much deeper to my desire as a parent is for them to love me enough to listen and obey me. There is a deep joy to be had when I do things for Jude’s benefit and he listens for his benefit. The parent gets the joy of love through obedience, the child gets the joy of love through obedience. My main problem in my parenting is I am a sinner. I am just as prone to ask Jude to do something for my benefit as I am for his. Even with my best intentions I am limited in knowledge and wisdom.

It is not so with our heavenly Father. My friends, God’s love and our love for him should be filled with obedience. It is not as if we cannot trust whether God’s commands are good. He is God. By definition his commands are good. Jesus invites us into expressing our love like his children, in loving obedience. Not coercion, not fear of punishment, but out of love alone.

Love and obedience with our God go together. We love God so we want to obey him. We obey God because he love him. We receive more gifts and joy with God through obedience which makes us love him all the more. It is a deepening spiral of love and obedience. All of this facilitated and necessitated by our two Helpers, the Son and the Spirit.

Jesus’ time with them is about to be done, but the Holy Spirit will carry on the work and will provide an invaluable part of what we, 21st century believers will need.

25 “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. 26 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.

Jesus, the helper for the present time has spoken to them and taught them and helped them understand who God is during his earthly ministry. But another person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, will be the one who will teach them according to the words they have already received just as Jesus did of the Father. This passage is partly where we get our understanding of the doctrine of Inspiration. How does God inspire the Bible? In this case, why are the writings of the Apostles holy scripture? The disciples in that upper room who saw Jesus through his ministry and would see him raised from the dead will be brought along by the Spirit, like the prophets before them, to be taught all they needed to know and to remember perfectly what Jesus said to them.

Some have misunderstood inspiration and narrowed the Bible to think that the only words binding on us today are the so called “red letters” or words of Jesus in the Bible. This invention of the red letters, first published in 1899, has led many to a misunderstanding of scripture’s inspiration. God has spoken, as Jesus made clear in our passage this morning. Jesus was only speaking as the Father has done, and now as the Spirit would inspire in the apostles what Jesus has spoken. Father, son and spirit work together to bring us the full revelation of himself.

The apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 3:15-16 says “*and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,*”

From childhood, the sacred writings are the Old Testament. Then he says ALL Scripture is God breathed. It is not just the verbatim “red letters” of Jesus that are inspired, it is all of scripture. So, we can consider Genesis to Revelation as the words of God, the words of Jesus, all delivered by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The scripture includes the OT and the NT. The narrative, the history, the poetry, and the letters. Moses, Matthew, Jesus and Paul all speak the words breathed out by God. They are not in conflict, they are in alignment. 2 Peter 1:21 *“For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”*

The Holy Spirit and Jesus help his disciples love, obey and remember the Truth.

My friends, Jesus was concerned for his disciples. He had proven that he loved them. He invited them to be his disciples, he even invited his betrayer to be with him. He has loved every person he has created. The catch will be, who will love him? **Those who obey his commandments.**

You cannot love Jesus and then ignore everything he spoke about. You cannot love Jesus and ignore his teaching on marriage or tithing or anger or love for your neighbor. Our love implies our obedience.

This is not a standard that you are unable to attain. Any gap between your self and perfection is covered by the blood of Jesus and is being worked out in your sanctification by the Spirit.

Your obedience is directly tied to the work of Jesus. Without being born again in Christ, you will not love him, you will not desire to obey. After that, your obedience is tied to the power of the Spirit. He will work in you to teach you and remind you of what Jesus taught and how you are to live, growing in Sanctification!

Your obedience starts with a profession of faith. Is that the act of love you are to take today? Have you been baptized after your conversion? Are you hiding sin? Are you behind on your tithe? Be forgiven based on the blood of Christ, and begin to be obedient in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Do you love Jesus? Do you keep his commandments? You are more than equipped with two helpers. That is comforting.