

John 16:1-15 “The Spirit’s Hour Will Come”
Ezekiel 11
Psalm 68

September 20, 2020

Our Old Testament lesson comes from Ezekiel chapter 11 –
but I want you first to turn to Ezekiel chapter 8.

In Ezekiel 8-11, Ezekiel sees a vision of Jerusalem.

Ezekiel had been taken captive to Babylon before the destruction of Jerusalem.
But in Ezekiel 8, the Spirit lifted him up between earth and heaven
and took him in a vision to Jerusalem – to the temple of the LORD –
in order to see what was really happening “back home.”

And what he saw filled him with dismay –
because he saw the remnant of Judah living in rebellion against the LORD.
He saw idolatry – the elders of the house of Israel each worshiping false gods –
trusting in the powers of this age to save them –
rather than trusting in the LORD.

And so in chapters 9-10 Ezekiel sees the glory of the LORD departing from the temple.
The glory of the LORD had led Israel out of Egypt – the glory-cloud –
the presence of the Holy Spirit with the people of God.
At Mt. Sinai, the glory of the LORD was revealed at the top of the mountain –
and when they finished building the tabernacle,
the glory of the LORD *left* the mountain top, and filled the tabernacle.

When Solomon built the temple, the glory of the LORD filled the temple –
the presence of God the Holy Spirit filled the Holy of Holies.

But now – Israel’s rebellion – Jerusalem’s sin – has exiled God from the temple.
God will not dwell in the midst of a rebellious people!

And so we come to Ezekiel chapter 11
Hear now the word of the LORD from Ezekiel chapter 11:

[read].

In Ezekiel 11, the Spirit of the LORD falls upon Ezekiel (v5),
and the word of the LORD comes upon him (v14).
And the LORD promises that when he restores his people from exile,
he will give them one heart, and a new spirit –
with the result that “they shall be my people, and I will be their God.”

That’s where the story is going.

But in Ezekiel the problem is that the glory of the LORD is departing from the temple.
The glory of the LORD – the presence of God’s Spirit –
will no longer be with God’s people.

The reason for this is that God’s people have failed to live like God’s people.
As long as the presence of God with us is dependent on our own obedience,
we have no confidence that God will remain with us!
We need God himself to act in order to change our hearts and make us like himself.

Our Psalm of Response is Psalm 68.

Psalm 68 is a song of the Exodus –
but a song that connects the Exodus with the Temple.
The first part of Psalm 68 retells the story of the Exodus –
and yet also weaves in other images from Israel’s history.

I am particularly glad that the sixth stanza sits out the music,
because that will enable you to focus on the words more!
The mountains of Bashan are portrayed as envying Mount Zion.
Why?
Because (as the seventh stanza points out)
Sinai is now in the sanctuary in Zion.

The image is of the glory of the LORD moving from Mt. Sinai to Mt. Zion.

Sing Psalm 68
Read John 16:1-15

The Point: Because Jesus’ Hour Results in Sending the Holy Spirit, Therefore *Your Hour* Becomes the Holy Spirit’s Hour

“I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. ² They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. ³ And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. ⁴ But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.

Jesus has told his disciples that his hour has come.

They were expecting him to enter his glory as the son of David –
the glorious king who would triumph over all their enemies.

And that is exactly what is going to happen.

But not in the way that they had thought.

Jesus gloriously triumphs over his enemies through his death.

It is only if he is lifted up on the cross that he will draw all peoples to himself.
There is a glory in the cross for those who have eyes to see.

In John 15 Jesus told his disciples that their hour is also coming.
A servant is not greater than his master.
If the world persecuted Jesus, then the world will persecute you.

This doesn't sound very comforting.
You are going to suffer!
The world will hate you!
"The hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God."

Does that sound comforting?

By itself?
No.
That is not very comforting.

But Jesus does not stop there.
Because even as your hour will come, so also the Holy Spirit will come.
Your hour of trial and temptation is also the Spirit's hour
to help and assist you by speaking the word of Christ.

We saw last time that the Spirit proceeds from the Father –
and because of the mutual indwelling of Father, Son, and Spirit,
it is right to say that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.
In the incarnation the Word became flesh and dwelt among us –
God became man –
he became all that we are by nature,
so that we might become all that he is by grace –
so that we might be joined to the life of God!

How? – because the Spirit has been poured out upon the church!
Jesus has sent the Spirit from the Father – the Spirit of truth –
who proceeds from the Father.

Spirit and truth are inseparable – because the Holy Spirit *is* the Spirit of truth.
In John 4:23-24, Jesus had said that
"true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth,
for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.
God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth."

Likewise, in John 14:17, Jesus said that the world cannot receive the Spirit of truth,
the Helper whom Jesus will give to his disciples.
And in John 15:26, Jesus speaks again of the Spirit as the Spirit of truth –
explaining that the Spirit will bear witness about Jesus –

and in 16:13, he says that the Spirit of truth will guide the disciples into all truth.

So the Spirit is the Spirit of Truth who bears witness to Jesus –
and Jesus is the Word who became flesh.

I think sometimes in the modern church, we can forget that the Spirit is the Spirit of truth.
We sometimes talk as though the Spirit is about *feelings*.

Jesus does speak of the Spirit as the Comforter – the Helper –
but the word he uses refers to an *Advocate* – a legal term –
one who *speaks* on our behalf.

The Helper whom Jesus sends is none other than *the Spirit of truth*,
who guides you into all the truth – who speaks what he hears from the Father.

Indeed, chapter 16 is all about truth/words/speech.

Verses 1-15 are about Jesus speech to us,
and verses 16-33 (as we'll see next time) are about our speech to the Father.

Jesus is talking about talking.

“I have said all these things to you” (v1)

“I have said these things to you” (v4)

“I did not say these things to you from the beginning” (v4)

“But because I have said these things to you” (v6)

“I tell you the truth” (v7)

“I still have many things to say to you” (v12)

“The Spirit...will not speak on his own authority,
but whatever he hears he will speak” (v13)

Jesus has said certain things—but he has more to say.

But once Jesus goes to the Father,
how will he communicate with his church?

And I should point out
that the primary focus here is how will Jesus communicate with the eleven.

After all, it is the eleven who have been with Jesus “from the beginning” (15:27).
They have been with him from the beginning,
and because they will be the source of all Christian teaching,
it is crucial that they bear witness to the truth.

Because if the apostles get it wrong,
then the whole church will get it wrong!

Therefore, in these last hours before his death,

Jesus speaks to the eleven of their foundational role in bearing witness to him.
Jesus is saying that the coming of the Holy Spirit has a special meaning for the apostles—
those who had been with Jesus since the beginning.

This is how the kingdom can come even though the King is in heaven—
because the Spirit of truth will bear witness through the apostles.

We often think of this in the writing of Scripture,
and that is certainly important.
But only a handful of the apostles actually wrote the New Testament,
and even those who wrote spent relatively little time writing.
The central purpose of the coming of the Helper— the Spirit of truth—
was to bear witness to Christ,
through the apostolic *preaching*.

The first generation of Christians didn't have the NT.
How could they know what to believe?
They knew from Jesus that they could rely upon the teaching of the apostles.
That's why they started collecting the books of the NT.
They knew that the apostolic teaching had a unique status,
and so they looked for those writings that contained
what they had heard from the apostles.
That's why a book like Hebrews was included,
even though they weren't sure who wrote it.
It so obviously contained the apostolic teaching, that they had to include it.

So in John 13-17 Jesus is speaking primarily to the eleven.
But that doesn't mean that it is irrelevant for us.
Jesus wants you to know that you can trust the apostles' teaching!

Jesus himself promised that he would send the Holy Spirit to teach them all things.
And because Jesus has taught his apostles by his Spirit,
therefore he also teaches us through them.

In the hour of persecution—
in the hour when the eleven are thrown out of the synagogue and attacked—
in that hour, they will remember what Jesus said.

When you look at the book of Acts,
you can see how this came true.
In Acts 4, when Peter and John were arrested for preaching the resurrection,
the chief priests and scribes inquired of them by what authority they were teaching.
“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them...” (Acts 4:8)
When the hour came for Peter to be put on trial like Jesus had been,
the Holy Spirit bore witness to Christ through him.

And Acts 4:31 says that after they had prayed,
asking God to “grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with boldness,”

“The place in which they were gathered together was shaken,
and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit
and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.”

Likewise, Stephen was said to be “full of the Holy Spirit” as he bore witness to Christ,
just before his martyrdom (Acts 7:55),

The work of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts is overwhelmingly connected
to the central task of the church in bearing witness to Christ—
just as Jesus said in John 15:26:

“But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father,
the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father,
he will bear witness about me.”

This was first and foremost true for the apostles –
but then it is also true for all who bear witness through the apostles’ preaching.

In John 16 Jesus says three things about the Spirit’s coming:

- 1) when the Spirit will come
- 2) what the Spirit will do for the world
- 3) what the Spirit will do for the church

1. When the Spirit Will Come (v4-7)

“I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. ⁵ But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ ⁶ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. ⁷ Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

First, the Spirit will come when Jesus goes to the Father.

The disciples are sorrowful, because they finally understand that Jesus is going away.

And Jesus says that he hadn’t talked about this before, because he was with them.

But now “I am going to him who sent me...”

I am going to the Father.

And Jesus says that it is “for your advantage that I go away,
for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you.”

Why is it a good thing for Jesus to go away?

Wouldn’t it be better for Jesus to stay here with us?!

If Jesus had stayed on earth,

he would have been ruling for the last 2,000 years in Jerusalem.

Wouldn’t that be great?!!!

No.

Really – it wouldn't.

He'd be an amazing king!

But how would his kingdom expand?

If he was ruling an earthly kingdom –

then he would never have ascended to the Father –

Satan would never have been cast down –

and Jesus would have never sent the Holy Spirit.

In other words, there would be one righteous man living on earth and doing amazing things.

And those privileged few who had the chance to live near him –

would have it great!

But the rest of us – the 99% – would hate him and call him a freak!

Because what we *need* is for the Holy Spirit to come upon us!

In the Old Testament,

the Holy Spirit dwelt in the midst of the people of God.

The glory-cloud that led Israel to Mt. Sinai

descended upon the tabernacle—and later the temple—

and so the Spirit dwelt *in the midst* of the people...

but not yet *in* the people of God.

The tabernacle and the temple were designed to protect God's people

from the presence of the Holy Spirit –

because the Spirit was *Holy* – and we were *not*.

The Holy Spirit still worked salvation in the hearts of the people of God,

but he could not yet dwell in them as the presence of the living God with us,

because the Word had not yet come in the flesh.

As Jesus puts it, the Helper could not come because Jesus had not yet gone to the Father.

Hebrews 7-10 explains that there had to be a perfect sacrifice offered to the Father,

so that we could enter his presence.

So until Jesus brings the sacrifice of himself to the Father,

the Spirit of God could not be poured out upon all flesh.

The coming of the Holy Spirit must await the exaltation of Jesus.

But when the incarnate Word ascends to the right hand of the Father,

then there will be a true man sitting at the right hand of God!

The Second Adam repaired the fault of the first Adam –

but he could only do that because he had the power of a divine life.

Only then could the Holy Spirit be poured out upon the people of God.
If the Holy Spirit had been poured out on humanity *before* the incarnation –
then humanity would have been destroyed!
The fire of God’s holiness would have consumed our flesh!
But because Jesus bore the fire of God’s wrath –
because the eternal Son of God became man and bore our death –
therefore now the Spirit of God can be poured out upon all of God’s people!

And that’s why Jesus says what he does about what the Spirit will do for the world:

2. What the Spirit Will Do for the World (v8-11)

⁸ *And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:*

But what happens when the Spirit comes?

What happens to the world?

Remember that Jesus has been speaking of the world
as that realm that is hostile to God.

When the Spirit comes “he will convict the world
concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.”

Jesus goes on to spell out each of these:

a. Concerning Sin (v9)

⁹ *concerning sin, because they do not believe in me;*

Just as Jesus has forced a division in the world “by showing that what it does is evil (7:7; 15:22),
so the Paraclete [Spirit] continues this work.” (Carson, 537).

When the Spirit comes, he convicts the world of sin because they do not believe in Jesus.

The point here is that you need to stop being “the world”!

Believe in Jesus!

Turn to him in faith.

So long as you remain in unbelief, you will remain under this conviction.

But then second, the Spirit will convict the world

b. Concerning Righteousness (v10)

¹⁰ *concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer;*

It might seem strange to say that the Spirit convicts the world of *righteousness*.

You might think it better to say “unrighteousness”!

But Jesus is not saying that the Spirit will convict the world of “being righteous”!

Rather, the Spirit convicts the world *concerning righteousness*.

Look at the reason – the ground for the conviction: “because I go to the Father.”
Jesus will be ruling in righteousness at the right hand of God.
Jesus will no longer be preaching that the kingdom of God is “at hand.”
Now the kingdom of God *is here*.
Because the King is sitting on his heavenly throne.

And thirdly, the Spirit will convict the world

c. Concerning Judgment (v11)

¹¹ *concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.*

You can see a progression in this sequence:

the sin of the world,
the righteousness of the judge,
and the judgment of the devil and all that belong to him.

The world will hate you,
but the Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment.

This will then either result in the conversion or the destruction of the wicked.

The world will be saved,
and all who refuse the convicting call of the Holy Spirit will be condemned,
because they do not believe in the name of Jesus.

You may have noticed that I am incredibly optimistic about what is going to happen to the world.

Perhaps now you can see why!
It’s not because the world is such a wonderful place!
The world hates me!
The world is opposed to my Savior!

But my Savior is the Savior of the world!
It is *his* world.
First, he made it – so it’s his!
And Second, God loved the world in this way –
that he gave his only-begotten Son that whosoever believes in him
might not perish, but have eternal life.

The world will be saved!
But just remember – *how* did Jesus save the world?
By the cross.

But don’t think for a moment that Jesus endured the cross so that we don’t have to!
No, Jesus said that a servant is not greater than his master.

Jesus saves the world through the cross.

And that's why I don't worry about persecution and trouble.
Of course it will come!
It's the way of Jesus!
It's the way of the cross!

We will not see the triumph of the gospel through political maneuvering!
We will only see the triumph of the gospel through the cross.

And that's why Jesus concludes by saying:

3. What the Spirit Will Do for the Church (v12-15)

¹² "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, 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. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

The Spirit is not only going to speak to the world,
the Spirit will especially speak to the church—and even more particularly, to the apostles.

What will the Spirit will do for the Church:

He will guide you into all the truth –
and he will declare to you the things that are to come –
and he will glorify the Son, because he will take what belongs to Jesus
and he will declare it to you.

This is a very Trinitarian understanding of salvation.

How do we have access to the Father?

Through Jesus – who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

How do we know Jesus?

Through the Spirit of truth who takes what belongs to the Son
(which the Son has through the Father),
and declares it to us.

Why is Jesus saying this?

Because Jesus still has many things to say to them.

They do not yet understand fully all that God is doing in Jesus.

He cannot explain everything to them

The Holy Spirit must come and guide them into the truth.

Earlier, in John 5, Jesus said that he did all that he heard from his Father.

Now he says that the Spirit will do the same.
“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.”
The Spirit will bring to completion the work of the Son.

All through the central chapters of John’s gospel,
Jesus was explaining the relationship between the Father and the Son.
The Father has given the Son to have life in himself (5:26)
The Son speaks with the authority of the Father (8:28)
I and the Father are one (10:30)
The Father is in me and I am in the Father (10:38)

Now Jesus explains how the Holy Spirit is related to the Son and the Father.
The Spirit takes all that belongs to the Son and declares it to the church.
“All that the Father has is mine;
therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

All that is Christ’s is ours.
But how is it ours?
How do we partake of the benefits of Christ?
Through the Holy Spirit.

And while Jesus is speaking first to the eleven here,
he speaks through them to us.
After all, it is John—the beloved disciple—who wrote these words to us.
Why did the Holy Spirit declare the things of Christ to the apostles?
Was it not for our sakes?
So that we might know the truth?

We have a tendency to want to be the center of the universe.
It’s easy to see in our children.
All that matters is what I want!!!
But you are just as selfish.
You may know theoretically that the world does not revolve around you,
but you still act like it.

We want the Holy Spirit to revolve around us too.
Even our Bible study can become focused on “what does the Bible say to me?”

Don’t get me wrong!
The Bible *does* speak to you!
But its central message tells you that *you* are not the center of the story!
Jesus is!

And because Jesus is – therefore you matter!

John's gospel does this to us pretty relentlessly!
John's gospel is not about you.
It's about Jesus.

You need to hear this!
The Word of God is so powerful that it reorients us.
The Word of God moves us.

It reminds us, "Oh, that's right! My life is not about me!"

After all, look at the Holy Spirit.
The Holy Spirit is God.
The third person of the Holy Trinity.
And yet Jesus that when he comes, "he will not speak on his own authority."
Even the Holy Spirit is not focused on himself!

(And remember—neither was Jesus,
for he insisted that he did not speak on his own authority,
but spoke simply what he heard from His Father)

The Spirit glorifies the Son.
The Spirit takes the things of the Son and declares them to us.

You have been drawn into the life of the Holy Trinity.
The three Persons of the Trinity who mutually indwell one another
have now come to abide with you.

This must reorient you around Jesus –
because he *is* your life!