

## The Presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

John 14:15-24

We all face fears and anxieties about the future. Sometimes we can dismiss our fears and anxieties rather easily. But sometimes they dominate the way we think and feel and act. We wonder:

- Will I have what it takes to fulfill my responsibilities in my family and in my career?
- What hardships will I face in relation to my health, my finances, and my key relationships?
- Will my faith remain strong in the face of opposition and disappointment?
- Will the temptations and sins that I face eventually win? Will they destroy everything that I hold dear in this world?

During the last week of Jesus' life, His disciples were filled with fear and anxiety because Jesus had made it increasingly clear that He was leaving them and going somewhere that they could not follow. They had left their careers and families to follow Jesus. Their confidence came from Jesus being **physically with them**. He always had the wisdom to say and do what was needed in every situation - whether He encountered someone who was demon possessed, when He faced angry crowds, when He was challenged theologically/biblically, when He talked with broken, hurting, shame-filled people. He not only knew **what** to do; He also had the **power** to do it.

When He told them that He was going away, they were understandably shaken and confused. They couldn't imagine a good future without Jesus being with them. His presence was the key to their security and their well-being. Jesus fully understood this. In John 14-16 He addresses their fears very directly. In 14:1 He tells them, "Do not let your heart be troubled." In 14:27 He tells them, "Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful." What He explains in these chapters will allow them to do this (avoid having troubled, fearful hearts).

Between now and Easter we are going to notice how Jesus addressed the fears and anxieties of His disciples because Jesus makes the same assurances to us that He made to them.

It's important to notice what Jesus **didn't do** to alleviate their fears: He didn't assure them that everything will be fine in this life. To the contrary, He tried to convince them that they would suffer just as He had suffered. He basically told them, "The world is going to treat you exactly as they have treated Me. . . they will kick you out of the synagogue and will kill you" (John 15:18ff, 16:2). Jesus never said, "Stay positive and I'm sure everything will be fine." Of course Jesus doesn't say that to us either.

What **did** Jesus do to address their fears? Basically He promised them His very presence. They could face the future with confidence and peace because they would never be alone. Even though He wouldn't be with them physically, He would be **with them** through the person of the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of truth). When the Spirit of truth comes, He will do the very same things Jesus had done: abide with them, teach them

everything they need to know, give them peace and joy, guide them, convict people of sin (preparing them for the gospel).

Today we are going to begin this series by considering John 14:15-24. We will notice how Jesus promises His presence in a variety of interesting and nuanced ways. He really gives His followers (including us) assurances that can change the way we think about our future, especially the fears and anxieties associated with the unknown.

One more note: In this passage Jesus toggles back and forth between statements about loving/obeying Him and statements about His personal presence in the lives of His followers. This dual focus is intentional. Jesus is telling us that through the indwelling Holy Spirit (the personal presence of the Father and of Jesus), we will have the capacity to love and obey Him. Here's the "big idea" that can change the way we view the future:

***The triune God indwells us and empowers us to love Jesus.*** (John 14:15-24) In the previous paragraph Jesus tells the disciples that those who believe in Him will do the same types of works that He did (and even greater works) because He is going to the Father. We know from reading the rest of the book of John that Jesus will be crucified and raised from the dead on His way to the Father. Jesus promises that every prayer prayed in His name will be answered. Then He says in verse 15:

15 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

If you were to ask Jesus, "What is Your love language? What is it that really communicates love to You?" this is what He'd say: "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." Jesus wants us to know His love language.

When you think about it, Jesus is the only Person who can say this. I could never tell my wife, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." You wouldn't say that to a friend; human friendships are based on give-and-take and deferring to the other person. Your employer wouldn't say this to you. An employer would say, "If you value your job, you will keep my commands." Similarly, a government would say, "If you want to avoid a hefty fine or avoid being thrown in jail, you will keep my commandments." Only Jesus can say, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments," because only He is Lord. Only Jesus commands what is always good and right.

Jesus isn't saying that we earn or merit God's favor by keeping His commandments. But He is saying that the way we say, "Jesus, I love You," is by doing the things He commanded. If you want an honest assessment of your love for Jesus, evaluate how you're doing in various areas of obedience.

If you're like me, your mind immediately gravitates toward areas of disobedience, as if Jesus is mainly wanting us to feel crummy about ourselves. But there's no evidence Jesus is doing that here. Surely we **can** each think of areas in which we aren't obedient and therefore areas in which our love for Jesus is lacking. But if you're a believer in

Jesus, you should also be able to identify areas of obedience - ways in which you really express your love for Jesus.

For example, I've got a friend who's a real "peacemaker." He never growls or snarls or bites; he's able to bring peace to situations in which others tend to take sides and get upset. Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Mt. 5:9). I believe that Jesus feels loved by the way this friend lives out what Jesus taught. You should be able to identify ways in which you love Jesus. Don't be too afraid of being puffed up with pride by noticing your own obedience.

The disciples had to wonder whether or not they would be able to keep Jesus' commandments once He had "gone away." They had a terribly hard time obeying Him while He was physically present with them. How could they obey Him when He was gone? He addresses this issue beginning in verse 16.

16 "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever;

Jesus tells His disciples, "I will pray and ask the Father, and He will send you a **another** Helper." The implication is that Jesus was the first "Helper"; once He is gone, the Father would send a **replacement**, another Helper.

The term used here is translated in a variety of ways in different translations: Helper (NASB), Counselor (NIV), Comforter (KJV), Advocate (NRSV - as the NASB translates the term in 1 John 2:1). Sometimes the term is transliterated as "paraclete." This variety of translations suggests that the term has a variety of connotations, depending on the context. The term literally means "one who is called alongside" another. This Helper is called alongside the believer to provide tangible help in following/obeying Christ.

This Helper will be with them "forever." He will be a permanent presence in their lives. That should affect the way they think about the future. In verse 17 Jesus explains the identity of this Helper:

17 *that is* the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

The "Spirit of truth" is the Spirit who communicates truth. In the gospel of John, truth is closely associated with Jesus: Jesus was "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14) and Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). It would have been especially important for the disciples to understand that this Helper they would receive would be the Spirit who communicates to them the truth of Jesus. In other words, they would continue to learn of Jesus.

Jesus draws a sharp contrast between the experience of "the world" and His disciples. The world is "the moral order living in rebellion against God" (Carson, p. 500). Being in

rebellion against God, the world **cannot** receive this Spirit “because it does not see Him or know Him.” In John 1 John said this about the world’s response to Jesus:

10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. 11 He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

We see continuity between the way that the world responded to Jesus and the way the world would respond to the Spirit; the world could not and did not receive either.

By contrast, the disciples **did** know the Spirit of truth because they knew Jesus. This Spirit abides “with” them and will be “in” them. The Spirit (after the resurrection) will actually indwell them. In 1 Corinthians 6:19 Paul wrote, that “your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit” - the place where the Spirit of God dwells. Now that should change the way the disciples thought about the future.

Beginning in verse 18 Jesus stresses that He Himself would be with them after the resurrection:

18 “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

The disciples’ fear was being abandoned in this world - like children without the protection and provision that parents and a family normally provide. Jesus explicitly says, “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”

In February several of us met a couple from southeast Kansas who is going to move to Romania to help reach orphans who are living on the streets of Bucharest. Many of these kids end up being exploited by sex traffickers. Can you imagine being a ten-year old kid wandering around a large city trying to find food each day, a place to sleep each night, and a way to avoid predators? This couple is basically saying to such children, “We will not leave you as orphans; we will come to you. You will be part of our family. We will teach you and lead you into maturity.”

That’s basically what Jesus says to each of us. He hasn’t abandoned us to fend for our own and take care of ourselves. He wants us to know that He will never abandon us or forsake us. In Him we have a spiritual family - a Father, brothers and sisters, etc.

Verse 19 suggests that He would “come to them” after the resurrection.

19 “After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you *will* see Me; because I live, you will live also. 20 “In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.

After the resurrection Jesus didn’t appear to the world (“the world will no longer see Me”) but He did appear to the disciples on numerous occasions. Jesus adds, “because I live, you will live also.” This is a common theme in the New Testament: whatever

happened to Jesus happens to those who are “in Jesus/Christ.” Since Jesus would be resurrected, His disciples would live also.

Verse 20 picks up a theme developed earlier in the chapter. When Philip said to Jesus, “Show us the Father, and it is enough for us,” Jesus responded rather sharply, “Have I been so long with you and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?” Here in verse 20 Jesus is letting them know that after the resurrection all doubt about His unity with the Father would be erased. (If someone is raised from the dead, surely what He said is true.)

In verse 21 Jesus returns to the topic of obedience and love.

21 “He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.”

1 John 4:10 tell us that God loved us before we loved Him. Here Jesus says that God’s love not only precedes ours; it also follows our love. He loves us before and after we love Him. Furthermore, Jesus says, “. . .and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.” As we obey and love Him, Jesus gives us a fuller understanding of Himself.

In verse 22 Judas (a different person than the Judas who had already left to betray Jesus) asked a question about Jesus’ disclosure to His disciples:

22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, “Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?”

The disciples still thought of the Messiah’s disclosure as an apocalyptic event that got the attention of the entire world - both believers and unbelievers. Judas was probably voicing a question they all had: How is it that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world? Jesus replies that this disclosure would involve the personal indwelling of the triune God:

23 Jesus answered and said to 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 abode with him.

This term translated “abode” is the same word found earlier in the chapter (in 14:2). There Jesus said that in His Father’s house are many “dwelling places” and that some of those places were reserved for them. Here Jesus says that just as the disciple would one day be at home in the Father’s house, the Father and the Son would come and be at home with the disciple. The Father and the Son will dwell with the believer through the Holy Spirit. This is a staggering thought: the TRINITY is at home with me! That changes everything when I think about doing what Jesus commands and showing Him

my love. I'm not trying to please some far-off deity; I'm letting the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit manifest their wisdom and power through me.

In verse 24 Jesus restates what He's already said, this time in negative terms ("he who does **not** love Me. . .").

24 "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.

Jesus stresses that He and the Father are fully united in purpose; they speak with one voice. Next week we'll consider the next paragraph in which Jesus promises that the Spirit will continue to reveal and remind them what Jesus has said.

In your bulletin we have a list of truths taught in this passage that reinforce the truth that ***the triune God indwells us and empowers us to love Jesus***. I realize that something is lost when we reduce the statements of Jesus to propositions. But these statements are listed as suggested ways of receiving what Jesus teaches in this passage. These are truths we need to understand, believe, and experience.

I'd encourage you to take one or two of them and apply them to your own life, especially any fears you have right now.

For example, maybe you're experiencing loneliness or even feeling abandoned in some way. Memorize John 14:8 where "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." Let this word of Christ dwell richly within you. Receive this word as a promise from Jesus Himself. Pray in faith, "Jesus, You said that You wouldn't leave me as an orphan. Show me how You are going to take care of me. Show me Your provision and Your protection. Show me what it means to have a spiritual family. . . ." I can't predict how He will answer that type of prayer, but the faith behind that prayer is precious to Him. You can walk into your day or your night looking for the presence of Jesus.

Or perhaps your fear involves some sin or addictive behavior that's gone on for a long time. You can memorize verse 16 where Jesus said, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever." Believe that the Helper will give you the same type of help/encouragement that Jesus gave people while on earth. Read the gospels for insight into how Jesus came alongside people. For example, in John 5 Jesus asked a man who'd been in a desperate condition for 38 years, "Do you wish to get well?" If you enter into the narrative of John 5, Jesus will show you that He asks you that very same question. Let Him give you the assurance that He wants to come alongside you and heal the deep places of your soul.

Easter is three weeks from today. Between now and then, let's seek to experience the presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in new and deep ways. This is possible because Jesus died and rose again on our behalf.