

Our Helper

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[0 : 00] I think it's fair to say that sometimes as Christians we just need to be reassured. We need to be reassured who we are. We need to reset our thinking a little bit and reset our minds based on what we know about God and what we know about Jesus.

We just need to remind it. So this evening I'm just going to remind you of what it is to be a Christian. What a great thing it is to be a Christian.

And the good thing about something like that is that God knows that as the case as well. He knows that we are quite often troubled. He recognizes that sometimes we feel very alone and distant and far from God.

And we know that because Jesus is speaking exactly into that situation here with the disciples. He speaks incredible truth into these disciples' fear-filled lives.

There was a sense in these chapters of impending doom for the disciples. Things weren't great. Jesus was going up to Jerusalem. They knew that he would probably die there.

[1 : 07] He spoke about leaving them and they were confused and things were very difficult. There was this kind of heaviness in the air, gloomy sense of what was about to happen.

And he at this point reveals one of the great realities of our faith is that he's going to send in time, he's going to send the Holy Spirit to be as we are reminded in these verses, our helper.

The Holy Spirit is going to come. Now, we're looking in the evening, I have done for the last number of weeks and will continue to do for the next number of weeks looking at the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

You've seen him as the breath of God in creation, the giver of life, the one who reveals Scripture to us and helps us to understand it, and who is the author of New Life when we become Christians.

And there's a lot of interactions and there's a lot of things that dovetail together. And this evening we're looking at this role, this really specific role we have of being our helper when Jesus returns to the Father.

[2 : 19] Now as worshipers, Christians, as worshipers, I think we share similar experiences in some ways to the disciples.

Obviously the situation isn't the same for us, but we can identify with a lot of what was going on in the disciples' minds and hearts.

There's times where we don't sense God's comfort, where we don't feel any different as Christians if we were not Christians.

We hear His words, we may become a church, we read the Bible, and we know the words, but they're not really finding a home in our hearts. They're not really making any difference. It's a bit like these disciples who had previously heard three times from Jesus at different points.

They're going up to Jerusalem, I'm going to die, and on the third day I'm going to rise again. I mean, that's depressing news, but it's also incredible news.

[3 : 18] It wasn't just bleak. There was this amazing resurrection truth that He taught them several times before His crucifixion, but it was like they just simply couldn't hear it.

It wasn't going in, and they didn't sense any kind of assurance or comfort from His word. They were confused by Jesus' teaching, even in these chapters 14, 15, and 16.

We didn't read all of the chapter 14, but Jesus says that I'm going to prepare a place for you, and you can feel the frustration in Thomas who says, Lord, we don't know where you're going.

How can we know the way? There's a real frustration because they can't understand His teaching. It doesn't seem to be making sense. So they're troubled, and their anxious Jesus says, don't let your hearts be troubled in verse 1.

But there's this fear of abandonment, of being left alone, of being orphaned. Jesus again speaks to them in verse 18 about that, I'm not going to leave you as orphans with all the terror of that image for them.

[4 : 29] Don't sense God at all. And we can associate, I think, with some of these feelings, lack of comfort, confused by God's word and how difficult sometimes it seems to be, troubled and anxious.

Heaven seemed to be like brass as if nothing is getting through, and our circumstances can bring within us a great trouble in our faith.

So I'm going to just introduce it by saying something just to set the scene, and then I'm going to mention two things that are so good about the Holy Spirit being our helper.

I think it's important to remember as Christians, worshipers, as people who worship the living God through Jesus Christ, that as we worship Him, we worship Him in spirit and in truth.

So that's the relationship we have with Jesus. Alistair, one of our elders on Friday, read to us the story of Jesus with the woman at the well in Samaria.

[5 : 36] And it was on that occasion that Jesus spoke about these amazing words that true worship is worship and spirit and in truth.

I want to say that as kind of a preamble this evening for us to remember that our relationship with Jesus Christ is a spiritual one. His presence in our lives is spiritual.

In other words, it's not material. And I know you know that. But it's by faith. We have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ by faith. God is spiritual.

We've been seeing that in our study of God as where God is a spirit. We can't see Him. And that means that there's immediately a problem for us as human beings, as Christians, because we're called into a relationship with someone we can't see.

Someone who is God, someone who is not like us. He's eternal. He comes as we saw earlier from another kingdom and another domain. And we enter a different kingdom when we follow Jesus Christ as Lord, a spiritual kingdom.

[6 : 35] So as Christians, our relationship with Jesus Christ is real. And His presence in our lives is real. But it's not going to be like holding hands with your dad or smelling your mom's perfume or the physical security that you get from someone's hug.

It's never going to be like that. And sometimes we need to rethink and retune ourselves to remind ourselves that the relationship we have is by faith and it's spiritual.

When we say God isn't listening, God doesn't hear. I can't sense Him in my life. What do we mean by that? Are we thinking in purely kind of human terms and are we forgetting that it's a relationship that is spiritual that we know by faith?

Are we expecting too much to be tangible that doesn't require the walk of faith? So His presence in our lives is spiritual, but it's grounded in revelation.

So it's in spirit and in truth. So His truth is grounded in the Word, in His communication to us.

[7 : 48] And that is a realignment for us as well. We're moving from what is temporal in our lives, in our relationship with Christ to what is eternal.

And we are listening to His Word. And yet within that there's the incredible paradox that Jesus, the Word, becomes flesh, becomes one of us so that in condescending to our need and in His redemptive power, He becomes one of us and therefore we can see God at that level.

And He speaks about that in verse 9 where He says, you know, Thomas, don't you know if you've seen me, you've seen the Father, a great mysterious truth about the reality of Jesus being God in the flesh.

So I just wanted to bed what I'm going to say in that truth that we worship in spirit and in truth, and the relationship we have with God is one by faith that is not the same as any other relationship we have.

And sometimes I think we blame God for His distance from being far away because we're looking for something much more as it were tangible that is not by faith. Anyway, moving on, the Holy Spirit, we're told that the Holy Spirit in verse 16 is our helper.

[9 : 11] If you love me and keep my commandments, I will ask the Father, He will give you another helper to be with you forever. So what we find here is Jesus is reminding us that the Holy Spirit has a specific work.

He's a specific work to come into the hearts and lives of believers. And Jesus has ascended, this is His great work.

And I want to say two things about that. It means that as Christians, and I think they're very important truths, the first is that we are not alone if only we could grasp that. That we're not, and we're never alone as believers, that we have the presence of God in our hearts, in our lives.

It means as Christians, we're embraced by divine society, by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, specifically in the person of the Holy Spirit.

[10:08] It's in verses 15 to 18, he says, I will send you another helper to be with you, even a spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him for He dwells in you and will be with you.

Whatever if we feel valued, if we feel loved in our lives, we should because we have been reconciled as Christians through the work of Jesus Christ to God the Father.

And everything that happens in this world revolves around us as believers. God is working out His purposes through His people.

And we have this brand new closeness with the Father. Verse 23, he says, Jesus answered, if anyone loves me, he will keep my word, my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him.

There's this astonishing reality that the Spirit is sent to be our helper, but in reality we have trinitarian fellowship, we have the Father and the Son as well, so that God comes into our lives and into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

[11:24] Now there's an interesting, there's an angle to that I think because the word Comforter and I'll say a little bit more about this later is, can also be translated Advocate. And if you go to 1 John chapter 1, which is what we've been looking at in the morning, that letter that the Apostle John wrote, and 1 John chapter 2 and verse 1 says, my little children I'm writing these things to you so that you may not sin, but if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, the same word paraclete as the Advocate or the Comforter.

Now I think there's a very clear way in which that has a legal implication as it were. He is advocating on our behalf before the Father.

Now what I have in mind there is there's this great trinitarian celebration of you and me in our Christian lives as we live them in his shadow.

I can imagine as the accuser of the saints, the evil one, goes into the presence of the Father and says, see that, see that, that Lament, he gets up there and he spouts away and he preaches and reads the Bible and everyone thinks he's holy and godly, but yeah, do you see his heart?

Do you see what he's like normally? Do you see what he thought the other day? Or is he what he said the other day? He can't possibly be one of yours. He's a hypocrite. He's a fraud. And I can imagine the Advocate, Jesus, speaking to the Father and says, no, he's mine.

[13:06] He's one of mine. And the Father smiling at that and saying, I know, I know he's one of yours. And the Holy Spirit at the same level is coming into my heart and saying, it's fine, Derek, you're one of God's, you're one of ours because of what Jesus has done.

And there's this almost sense of divine celebration each time the accuser of the saints comes and accuses a follower of Jesus of being not a follower of Jesus, that Christ is there reminding the Father who has a smile on His face that it's been paid in full.

And the Holy Spirit reminds us that it's been paid in full. That's part of His comforting, advocating work in our lives, that we hear Him resisting the accusation that we are not Christ's.

So we're embraced in that divine society. We have no idea how much the Trinity, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is advocating working on our behalf, even as we live our lives.

So we're embraced in that great society. We also recognize Him here as Jesus calls Him another helper. He's the another helper. What does that suggest?

[14:23] Well it suggests that there's already been a helper. And that of course is Jesus Himself. I'm sending you another helper because I'm going.

You will have the Holy Spirit. And He's really reminding us that the work of the Holy Spirit is to continue what Jesus was doing on earth with His disciples.

And in other words, He's saying, I'm not really leaving you. In verse 19 He says, look, I'm not going to leave you as orphans. I will come to you. Yet in a little while the world will not see me no more. But you will see me because I live, you also will live. I will come to you. So He's sending the Spirit, but it's the Spirit of Jesus Christ that He's sending in the divine reality, the Spirit of God.

And this, this paraclete, as the word is translated variously, we've mentioned the fact that it can be translated advocate, comforter, encourager, counselor, one who comes alongside.

[15:28] It's the whole idea of this, I think actually the best translation is helper is the one we have here because it kind of covers, in many ways it covers all of these things.

And He comes and He fulfills the role that Christ fulfilled with His disciples and more. So you know what it was like for the disciples, don't you?

Because surely at some point in your life as a Christian you said, I really wish, I would say, I wish I'd been one of the disciples. I wish I could have seen Jesus in the flesh. It would have been so much more easy.

And you know, it would have been great for them, wouldn't it? To have the boss there, really, to have Jesus there with them. And you know how you can almost sense the security generally, they felt when He was there to listen to Him, to watch Him, the miracles that He did for Him to get them out of a fix when they couldn't do things properly, to see who He really was, to respect Him, to worship Him, to be befriended by Him, to be encouraged by Him.

And you know, we saw what they were like when, how they struggled when He wasn't around them and hence their fear and trouble and anxiety when He says that He's going to be leaving them.

[16:42] And so what He's saying is, look, it's okay, because while I'm going, I'm coming back.

And it's going to be much better, because I'm not just going to be walking alongside you physically, I'm actually going to be inside you, in your heart and your soul, with the new life of rebirth that Corey was kind of mentioning this morning.

So that we're always in the presence of Jesus in that remarkable way. We're never alone. He's always in our hearts and our minds and our conscience.

He's never absent from us as He was physically absent from the disciples. He's never far away.

He's never disengaged. He's never unresponsive and He will never be leaving His people.

You might feel that that is not the case, it might seem for you, thinking in human relational terms that Jesus is far away.

But we're called to remember that we worship in spirit and in truth, and His promises will not and cannot be broken. We're called to have faith and to trust that He is this Christ who has come into our hearts and lives, and we're to believe that and live accordingly.

[18:02] And sometimes we might have to look at our lives and ask, is it me who's absent from Him far away, disengaged, unresponsive, leaving?

Why is it that I blame Jesus for that when He has made clear that He will always be with us as another helper, as the one who reminds us we're embraced in divine society, and as the helper to us is the one who we're told here will also teach us in verse 26, we're told that, 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.

So He's going to teach us, if you go on to Jesus' carriage on speaking, chapters 15 and 16, and in verse 16, verses 13 to 15, we have the same thing. When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth for He will speak on His own.

He will not speak in His own authority, but whatever He hears, He will speak. He will declare to you the things that are to come. This is a great oneness of purpose between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and He comes and reveals and speaks to us and teaches us truth, reminds us of the promises of God, points us to this living word, not a dead kind of dry word, but the living word of God and opens our hearts to that truth.

And we're to ask Him for His help. We're to ask Him before we come to church, maybe, Lord, speak into my heart, reveal your truth to my life today, so we open the word in our own devotions.

[19:50] Lord, Holy Spirit, speak through your word, teach me what I need to know and learn and understand. He's willing to do that, that even ask Him, Lord, teach me not just your word, but teach me your truth in my life, in my circumstances, how you want me to respond, how you want me to act in this situation.

And we're called to just listen and be responsive to Him, recognizing that He helps us understand the truth, to grant us the wisdom to live our lives.

It's not an intellectual pursuit as much as a spiritual pursuit. Understanding is not primarily intellectual, it's primarily spiritual, although it does involve our intellect, of course.

But the open Bible then for us is a relational reality for us. It's kind of like, it's not like, but it's kind of like maybe the privilege, can you imagine the privilege of maybe you're in this world, your greatest hero, whoever that might be.

Like, okay, say for me it'd be someone like Johnny Cash or Alex Ferguson or someone like that. Or someone like me reading their autobiography with them sitting right beside me so I could ask them, oh, that's like, what happened here?

[21 : 14] What was it like? So that you have the living author beside you as you read the book. Now, that's not a great analogy in some ways, but I hope it maybe points us towards the reality of reading the Word in that way, that we have the living God and the person of the Holy Spirit with us.

So he's our teacher, he's our another helper, and he's the one who enables us to be embraced by the divine society. Now, briefly, in conclusion, not only is the truth of the Holy Spirit being our helper, mean that we're not alone if only we grasped it.

It means also, secondly, we are strong if only we realized. We're strong. Now, we didn't read this little section, but I'm going to mention it here.

It's the same chapter, chapter 14, but verse 12, amazing little section. Jesus says, truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do, and greater works than these will he do because I am going to the Father.

Greater works than these. That's assuming the whole section is the giving of the Holy Spirit because he's going to the Father, and he says that the believers in Jesus will do, initially speaking to the disciples, and then speaking to all of Christendom since it will do greater works than Jesus.

[22 : 39] What does that mean? What can that possibly mean? Did the disciples do greater works than Jesus? I mean, Jesus walked in water. Jesus turned loaves and fishes to feed 5,000.

Jesus raised the dead. They did parallel works to that, but they didn't do greater works than that. The church of Christ generally, since then, hasn't done these amazing things.

What does it mean? It surely has to do with the mission of the church, the worldwide spread of the gospel, that because we have the Holy Spirit in us, we also have the privilege of passing on the gospel and seeing amazing results of that gospel happening, which of course was first fulfilled at Pentecost.

When Jesus died, how many were there at the cross? Oh, just a handful. He had hardly any followers at the end of his life, but in one sermon, 3,000 people were converted when Peter preached.

Jesus never had that kind of fruitfulness, never had that kind of harvest, because that wasn't his calling. His calling was to come to be crucified and to be raised on the third day and ascended, but he's handed that privilege through the indwelling of God's Spirit in us, the privilege of seeing his kingdom come.

[24 : 09] He empowers us to do that great kingdom work, to fulfill the great commission that he has gone to heaven, to enable the Spirit to come into our lives that we cooperate in.

I do think, and I'm very guilty of not doing this, I do think we need to pray for conversions and live in the recognition that we have this calling far, far more.

We've been lulled into thinking that this is the Christian Ice Age. I don't know why. Why have we been lulled into thinking that? That's bad theology, and it's therefore bad practice, because bad practice always follows bad theology.

It's vital for us to realize that we are empowered to do this great work, greater works even than Jesus to see people coming into the kingdom. It's not for us to decide that, well, it's not for this generation, we're going to do lesser works.

Now, this city and the people we rub shoulders with every day are living in a spiritual desert. We have the water of life, and He calls us to pour our lives into their lives, because we have had the Holy Spirit pouring our lives, Spirit of truth and of power.

[25 : 25] So He empowers us to be those who spread the gospel and see fruit for that. He also empowers us to obey, verses 20 and 21 says, in that day you will know that I am in the Father, you are in me, I am in you, whoever has my commandments and keeps them.

He is who loves me, and He who loves me will be loved by the Father, and I will love Him and manifest myself to Him. And there's this whole emphasis of being empowered to keep His commands, to... the law of God is written on our hearts, and our hearts are changed.

Again, we were reminded this morning, and He enables us, He helps us to obey with a thankful heart, not a desperate one, but it's impossible to obey the living God without Him. It's impossible. He empowers us to do that. He helps this Holy Spirit, helps us. He helps us to fight legalism. He helps us to fight drudgery and cold obedience.

He enables us to have a heart that is responsive through a recognition that to obey God or to love God is to obey Him, and to obey Him is the outworking of love in our hearts.

[26 : 48] And He also empowers us, we are strong if only we realize that He empowers us to know peace. Verse 27, He says that I give you peace not as the world gives, let your hearts neither be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

So He empowers us to live with an unusual peace. It's not anything we would look for naturally. It's not anything we would find naturally.

It's a peace that transcends our material reality, and it's a peace that's inexplicable in the popular culture in which we live.

But it's a realistic peace because we recognize that we have this great reconciliation with the Father again as we were reminded of this morning, and much of what I say is dovetailing that our completeness, our wholeness is when we are facing and looking at the Father, and that will be ultimately complete when He returns.

Fearful yes, troubled yes, anxious yes, with all the multitude of life's challenges, but as we take them to Him and as we leave them at the foot of the cross, He gives us a peace, the peace and power of the living God as our helper, the victory through whom is promised.

[28 : 22] So the Holy Spirit as our helper is great because it reminds us that we are never alone, and it reminds us that we are strong. And we need to remind ourselves of these truths because they don't come naturally for us.

I wonder what is your God mindset? It's really good to be reminded that He's your helper, that as God the Holy Spirit, with the mystery as it were, He's leading the way for the Trinity to be in your heart and to be in my heart.

We have Him gifted to us this resurrection life ever being our helper, knowing His truth, His promises. Repeat them, memorize them, speak them into your doubts every day, and remember that we grasp them with the eye of faith that faith is required in this.

Don't expect God to be in our lives the same way as even the best friend that you have on this earth in His fallen humanity can be, live by faith and not by sight, which is why we encourage one another in this way.

And can I just ask who is your helper? Who is the person that you depend on for life and for eternity? There's only one person that you can call on that will never let you go, both in life and on into death, so that even through the valley of the shadow of death, we're not alone.

[30 : 02] And that is the great hope, and that is the great help we all need in our lives. Let's pray. Father God, we ask and pray that you would teach us just to be assured by your truth.

We know what it's like in our lives when we close the Bible so often and leave it closed, when we don't have that spiritual discipline of going to your Word, praying for the Spirit to open your Word and teach us and lead us.

And that is closed when we have turned our backs, then things do become silent. It does become such a battle. Remind us that that is not you who have turned your back.

That's not you who are disinterested or far away. But Lord, help us to live by faith and persevere in that. Buy your spirit and in your strength.

You've promised us your Holy Spirit as our helper. It's such an amazing truth that the King of Kings, that the sovereign, eternal, infinite, glorious God is so committed to little people like us in this remarkable way.

[31 : 15] He will not let us go. And there's this trinitarian smile of advocacy on our behalf when the accuser of the saints falsely tries to bring us down.

Lord, help us to doubt our doubts and believe our beliefs. Buy your grace and in your spirit. May we see things more clearly as every day goes by.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.