

The Holy Spirit

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- [0 : 0 0] We're starting a new series tonight, like we did this morning on 1 John, tonight's on the Holy Spirit, and we're going to be looking this semester at the identity of the Spirit, the activity of the Spirit, and how we walk in the Spirit.
- So we'll look at three or four sermons actually on each of those. So we're going to get very specific. Now when I was in seminary, in our preaching class, the professor who's from Wales, he said that you can preach one topical series a year, and then you have to repent.
- Normally here we like to preach just through books of the Bible, but we get one a year, one topical series, and here it is, the Holy Spirit. We're going to look at it from September through November, and tonight we begin with John 14.
- We were with the Apostle John this morning, we're with the Apostle John tonight in John 14. It's a very helpful introductory text to look at who the Holy Spirit is, and we're going to camp out on who the Holy Spirit is over the next three to four weeks, but tonight we're going to give an overview on that.
- This is John 14 as part of the farewell speech of Jesus Christ. This is actually the longest section in the whole Bible of the continuous words of Jesus in all the Gospels that we have, and it's got a very clear central theme.
- [1 : 2 0] It's really twofold. One, Jesus is saying farewell, which is why we call it the farewell speech. He's saying, the very famous word that John uses over and over again, that Jesus uses, is my hour has come.
- An hour in the book of John always means the same thing, the hour. It's a reference to the cross, the hour of the cross, whenever Jesus was to die. And so Jesus here says, it's time for me to go and leave you, and that brings you to the second theme of the farewell discourse, which is exemplified in chapter 13 when Jesus says, my hour has come, I'm going to leave you, and Peter says, anywhere you go, I'll go with you.
- I'm not letting you go, Lord. And Jesus says, where I'm going, you cannot come, but if you love me, keep my commandments. And so the second big theme of the farewell discourse is a commission.
- Jesus says, I'm leaving you, but then he says, but I'm also commissioning you. And the commission is, if you love me, if you want to follow me, keep my commandments, tell the story, love me and obey me.
- And you see it right here in the text that we read tonight. Now the question may be the question of the book of John. It's bookended with this question, how can a person like Peter, who's going to run from Jesus shortly, who's going to betray Jesus, how can he obey such a grand commission?
- [2 : 5 3] To love, if you love me, Jesus says, keep the commands that I've given you. How could he obey? It's the same question that Nicodemus faced in John chapter three.
- Jesus said, you want to be a child of God, you've got to be born of God. And the question then becomes, how can I, how can a sinner, how can somebody like me be born of God, and the answer that Jesus gave there becomes the answer that Jesus gives here.

And that's, you need the wind. That's how he puts it in John three. You need the spirit. And so the spirit, the Holy spirit, the spirit of God becomes the answer to really what is the oldest problem.

And that's the problem of the great divorce, as Lewis put it, the divorce that has taken place, the separation between God and humanity. How could I be born of God?

How could I obey the commands of God? And the answer is that the spirit comes to fill the rupture, to fix the rupture of the great divorce, of the separation that we've experienced from Genesis three forward.

[3 : 59] And so let's ask tonight, we're going to get very detailed in this series about the Holy spirit, very detailed. But tonight, let's ask, who is the spirit and what does the spirit do according to John 14?

All right, so first, who is the spirit? Now the very first thing you can see here is that if you noticed the way Jesus talks about the Holy spirit, he keeps saying, he keeps using a pronoun.

He says, he, he will come. I'm leaving, but he will come and he will be with you. And that's enough to make the first point.

The very first thing we have to say about the Holy spirit is that the spirit is a person. The spirit's a person. In our Westminster Confession, larger catechism, the question is what is God?

And that's a good question. But I think John Calvin helps us out when he says, whenever we're talking about God, we ought to, we probably ought to say who, not what.

[5 : 04] And that's exactly it. Jesus says, when you're talking about the Holy spirit, the question's not what is the spirit, but who is the spirit? He is, he's not impersonal, but he's personal.

And when you look across the New Testament text, we have, well, from verse 17, he will be with you. But listen to these verbs that we have about the Holy spirit. The spirit searches, first Corinthians 2, judges X 15.

Here's John 16 speaks X 13, Revelation 2, bunch more. Will's, first Corinthians 12, teaches John 14, intercedes Romans 8, witnesses John 15.

He can be grieved, he can comfort, he's personal, he's a person. He's not impersonal. He's not a force. He's a person. Now the second thing, who is the Holy spirit?

Secondly, we learn here, Jesus says very early in the passage that he is also the spirit of truth. And I'm going to send to you, Jesus tells us the spirit of truth.

[6 : 01] Now I'm going to come back to something if you were here this morning that we talked about this morning. We said this morning that in the contemporary world, I mentioned it to the children that it's very, very normal for a person to say, I'm a spiritual person, but I'm not religious.

I'm spiritual, but I don't need historic religion to give me a happy life. I'm a spiritual person. And I've talked a lot about that this morning. I won't say everything again, but let me say this, let me just say this.

We very quickly learn from John 14 that being spiritual in the language of the contemporary world is completely different from Christian spirituality.

Those are two different things. Being spiritual today is different from, it's not the same as Christian spirituality. One author I was looking at defines modern spirituality like this.

This is what he says, he says, it's quote, feeling a connection to everything, an emotional existential oneness with the cosmos. First, second, it's specifically feeling a connection with an unnamed higher power, the same as what has been called the world force or the fate that guides us all.

[7 : 14] Third, it's having experiences that transcend the mind and the body. It takes one beyond the mind through meditation into deep realms of imagination.

So the mindfulness movement, the literature surrounding it, it emphasizes that to be spiritual today is to have an experience, a spiritual experience with an unnamed spirituality, an unnamed spirit where you move beyond mind, beyond body.

You have a great spiritual experience. And look, Christianity comes and says, yes, we believe in spiritual experience. We believe in deep spiritual experience, but the difference, the difference, Jesus here comes and says, the spirit is the spirit of truth, of truth.

Now let me give you one more just brief example of this. This modern spirituality comes in all sorts of degrees. One that is extremely popular right now has been made popular by Sam Harris.

Sam Harris is one of the four or five most famous atheists that was a part of the New Atheist Movement in the early 2000. He's a brilliant man, a great thinker, a philosopher, and a scientist both.

[8 : 35] And he has popularized a specific spiritual movement in the mindfulness tradition. And I won't say much about it, but that's just a simply note. Sam says, there is nothing but matter in motion.

There's nothing but, what is the spiritual? It's nothing but your mind in motion on the one hand. And he says, so you can be spiritual, but you need to know that there is no spirit at the same time.

But on the other hand, there are plenty of people in the modern world who are spiritual who would say exactly the opposite. They would say, look, I am spiritual because I believe in some form of divinity, some form of deity.

And I don't know what it is, I can't name it, and that's exactly the point. I can't ever know it. It's just to be spiritual is to be connected with the spirit, the fate, the thing that guides the world.

I don't know what it is. And you see, you can be atheistic and spiritual, you can be agnostic and spiritual. But in all of these cases, this is something completely other than Christian spirituality.

[9 : 34] Because Jesus tells us that the spirit that he introduces here is the spirit of truth. Now, truth, the spirit of truth.

If you were to go down to George Square and speak with the philosophers at the philosophy department, some of them, when you ask, what is truth? That's a big question.

But one of the ways that we've always talked about truth is very simple. Truth is whenever whatever you think or understand in your mind actually corresponds with the reality outside of you.

So if I say that this podium here is wooden, that's my sentence, that's the experience I've had of it. The podium is wooden. And all of you come up here and check it out and hit it with a hammer, try to drive a nail through it, and then you come to me and you say, the podium is wooden.

And what we have there is a correspondent theory of truth established. And that's that my subjective experience of this podium corresponds with the objective reality of the podium.

[10 : 42] And that's the truth. And look, you might say, okay, look, why are we talking about philosophy? Don't pass over this. Don't pass over that. Because when Jesus says that the Holy Spirit is the spirit of truth, yes, yes, if you've been in the church for any time, you know He's saying more than that.

But He's also not saying less than that. Do you know that? That Christians, the Bible, we believe that every single time you have a real experience with the world that it's because the Holy Spirit has given you that.

Did you know that? John Calvin speaks of the common operation of the Holy Spirit, that He's so the spirit of truth, that He so gives us life and breath and knowledge, that the gifts of God to you, the common gifts that we all share, that if the Holy Spirit were to pull away from the world that we couldn't know anything, that we couldn't speak, that we couldn't breathe, that we couldn't have food to eat, that the spirit of truth is the spirit who upholds all the common things that we share as human beings, that the spirit is underneath all of it.

He gives us all of it, so we can't. He is the spirit of truth as knowledge, but of course there's more than that. When Jesus says here that He's the spirit of truth, it's not just a common reference to what we all share, but there's something special as well as we might put it.

Now, if you've read the Gospel of John, you probably can pick up very quickly what Jesus is doing. Here on in John 18, there's a very famous moment where Pilate is going to ask the question, Pontius Pilate, Jesus is going to stand and Pontius Pilate is going to say, what is truth?

[12 : 33] What is the truth? And Jesus is silent in that moment. And if you've read through the Gospel of John and you've gotten all the way to John 18, when Jesus says not a word before Pontius Pilate, you as the reader say, Jesus, tell Him, tell Him.

He just asked you, what is the truth? Tell Him, because you read John 14. And in John 14, he very famously, just before he tells us that he's giving to us the spirit of truth, he says, I am the truth.

And so just before this, Jesus has said, I'm the truth and now I'm sending to you the spirit of truth. Do you see what he's saying? He's saying what John said about Jesus, the Son of God and God the Father in John chapter one.

In John chapter one, he said, the Jesus Christ that I saw, that I touched, that I looked at, He was in the beginning with God. He is so in the beginning with God that He was the Creator.

He's so the Creator that the Son of God has come down. He is God. And now Jesus is saying, I'm sending to you the spirit of truth who shares the same identity with me.

[13 : 52] I am the truth and He is the truth. He is the spirit of truth. And you see, he's saying, the spirit is God. The spirit is God.

That's why we call Him not the spirit, but the Holy Spirit. He is more than other spirits. He is the spirit. He is God. And look, you say, I know that, I just read it in the Catechism number 36.

The spirit that is near you, Christian, He is God. He is God. He's God with you. He's God near you.

He's God beside you. He's God in you. He's the God who comes alongside your heart. And so what we have here is a pronouncement of the unity of the Godhead, that God is one in essence, three in person, Father, Son, and Spirit, the great mystery of the Trinity.

That's what Jesus is saying when He says the spirit of truth. Now modern religious mysticism, spirituality in general, it says, leave your mind, leave your body, and have a spiritual experience.

[15 : 04] When Jesus comes and says, have a spiritual experience by knowing personally the triune God Himself, the spirit of truth.

Know that the spirit of God is near you and with you. He is the life-giving, renewing person of the Godhead that proceeds from the Father and the Son.

That's what Jesus Christ is saying here. Now, secondly, secondly, what does the spirit do? What does the spirit do?

He does two things here in this passage. You can see it in verse 17 and verse 26. The spirit of truth whom the world cannot see, cannot receive because it neither sees him or knows him.

You know him for he dwells with you and will be in you. So the first thing we're told, what does the spirit do? The spirit dwells with you and is in you. And then verse 26, the spirit teaches you, speaks to you, communicates to you.

[16 : 03] Jesus tells us. All right, let's think about that. First, the spirit dwells with you. Now remember John, Texas in his gospel and in his letter of first John back to the beginning of human history, Genesis one.

Genesis one and two, when you read that, you immediately realize that the Garden of Eden is God's temple on earth. And the reason that it's both a garden and God's temple is because gardens are where humans are supposed to live and the temple is where God lives.

But in Eden, you have both come together. You've got the garden temple. And what that means, what that means is that from the very beginning of human history, God made the world to dwell with his people.

God made the world to dwell with humankind. And Emmanuel has always been the message that even from the beginning from the Garden of Eden, God wants to be with us, with you.

That's always been the point. And in John's gospel, in John's gospel at the end, when Jesus Christ is crucified, the temple of God himself come down, is crucified.

[17 : 15] He is buried where he's buried in a garden that was next to Mount Moriah, the place where he was crucified. And the temple itself goes into the garden, you see?

And it goes under, it's buried in the grave, in the garden. And then when he rises to new life, the angels that guarded the way to the garden, they're dismissed, they're gone.

And at that moment, the temple curtain tears in half. And that's not to say that now you're invited into God's presence, no. It's to say that now because of Jesus, God's presence has gone out.

It's gone into the world. It's gone to fill the world, to make the world his temple. The issue of our sin, the issue of your sin, are shaking our fists at God, are saying no to God from the very beginning, has always been about us saying that we want to be separate from God and God saying, I want to be with you.

I want to come and dwell with you. And so right here, Jesus says, as I go, as I leave, I came to be with you. I came to be God with you.

[18 : 27] And as I leave, God will not leave you. God will dwell with you because that has been the point from the very beginning that God would be with you, that God would dwell with you, that Emmanuel would always be.

And now this is the age of the Spirit, the age where God will never leave his people, his church. Jesus says here that he dwells with us. He is in us. He's with us.

This is the answer to the problem of Genesis 3, the great rupture. And C.S. Lewis' famous book, The Great Divorce, he speaks about this in a very indirect way.

This is not a book that you use for our systematic theology class at ETS across the street, but it's a great book because it gets you thinking about the great divorce Lewis' reference.

There is subtly to the great divorce of Genesis 3, the separation between God and humanity and all the problems that that's caused throughout history. Now in one moment in this book, there's a character named Pam.

[19 : 33] And Pam, she dies and her soul goes into the heavenly realm and she meets a spirit in heaven named Reginald.

And this is what happens. Pam had lost her young son when she was on earth. He had died long before her. And this is the interaction between Pam and Reginald.

Oh, Reginald, it's you, is it? Yes, dear, said Reginald, the spirit. I know, Reginald says, that you expected somebody else, but I hope you can be a little glad to see me even.

She says, I did think my son Michael would have come to see me. And then almost fiercely, he is here, of course, isn't he? Reginald said, he's there.

He's far up in the mountains. Well, why hasn't he come to meet me here? Didn't he know that I was coming? And I'm going to paraphrase Lewis here. Reginald says, Pam, if you wanted to see Michael, you had to realize that you were made for more than Michael, that the separation that you felt between you and Michael is not first about you and Michael.

[20 : 51] It's about a greater divorce, a greater separation. And she says, oh, you mean religion and all that sort of thing? This is hardly the moment, Reginald, and from you of all people.

Well, never mind. I'll do whatever you need me to do. You want me to pray? I'll pray. I'll read the Bible or read the Bible, whatever you want me to do. Michael says, Reginald says, no, you're treating God only as a means to Michael, but the whole point is learning to want God for God's sake.

And she says, if God loved me, he'd let me see my boy. If he loved me, why did he take away Michael from me? I wasn't going to say anything about it, but it's pretty hard to forgive.

Forgive me my boy. Do you hear it? I don't care about all your rules and your regulations. I don't believe in a God who keeps a mother apart from a son. I believe in a God of love. No one has a right to come between me and my son.

Not even God. Tell that to his face, she says. Now, look, this is a hard illustration. It's difficult, but you see what Lewis is trying to get at?

[21 : 59] He's saying that what Pam cannot see is that the total opposite of what she said is true. She thinks that the great separation that she feels in life between person and person, between us and the land, us and the animals, us and everything, she thinks that it's because of what God has wanted.

God has done. What she's missing is that the great divorce is because we said no. When God said yes in creation to us, we said no. We said, I don't want you.

I don't want to know you. God said, I made you for me. I made you to dwell with me. I made you to delight in my presence. We said no from the very beginning that when we rejected God, God rejected his own son for us that we might dwell with the one we were made for from the very beginning.

God gave up his son for us. God brought great reunion. Now, Jesus is saying here at the very beginning of this passage that Jesus Christ is the mediator of redemption.

He's going as the hour is coming. He's going to bring us back to God, but that the Holy Spirit, He will be the one who will reunite us to the Father.

[23 : 19] He's the one that will come and dwell with us and take everything that Jesus has done and make it powerful unto our hearts in our lives. All right. Now, lastly, and secondly, the Holy Spirit dwells with us.

Verse 26, the Holy Spirit communicates and teaches us. Very last thing here. The central point, the Spirit not only dwells with us, but He speaks to us.

He communicates to us. Now I searched across different translations of this passage, and you can see it.

It comes up several times here. Verse 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've said to you.

Jesus calls the Holy Spirit here the Helper in our ESV translation. You'll see this in different ways across different translations. It'll say Helper, Comforter, or Advocate.

[24 : 22] The NRSV has Advocate. And I think Advocate is actually the most helpful translation because the word that stands underneath this, the word that stands underneath this is a famous Greek word.

We had one famous Greek word this morning, Koinonia. We've got a famous Greek word this evening. Maybe you've heard it, pericaleo. Pericaleo, we have para, the prefix, and a ton of words that we use, parachute.

What does a parachute do? Comes alongside you on your back, keeps you alive. Paramedic comes alongside you, keeps you alive.

Same thing basically. Pericaleo, one who comes alongside you and callio argues with you.

That's the sense of the word. Speaks to you, argues with you is more a legal sense like an advocate. Now there's one aspect of the Spirit's identity that I did not mention earlier, and that's this.

[25 : 27] Jesus says, I'm leaving you, but I'm going to send you another pericaleo, another helper. Why does he say another? Why is the Spirit another helper?

And it's because the New Testament over and over again, John, Hebrew says that Jesus Christ is the first pericaleo. He is the first.

So we have two. Do you know that? That you have two advocates, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. And to put it in the words of one preacher, he says it like this, it's just to understand it, you just got to change the preposition.

Christ is the pericaleo who advocates for you to God the Father. The Spirit is the one who advocates to you.

You see, God the Son speaks on your behalf right now to God the Father. And he says, every time you son, he says, I died for him.

[26 : 27] I died for her. He offers him, he says, look what I've done for them. He's the advocate before the Father. But then the Spirit is the advocate who then comes to you on behalf of the Son and tells to you, tells you, he died for you.

And that's what it means. Comforter is true, but it's a little too soft. It's more than that. He's the one who comes and wrestles with your heart, argues with you.

And Romans 8 makes this very clear that whenever you are prone to wander, you're prone to struggle, you're prone to anxiety, you're prone to fear, you're prone to try to get God by your own means or to push him away altogether.

Is that you? If you're like me, the message is that the Holy Spirit is the one who comes alongside you and actually says to your heart over and over again, you're a child of God.

Don't go that direction. Don't chase after that because you're a child of God. The Holy Spirit is the pericle who comes alongside and preaches to you when both Satan and your own self, your consciousness, accuse you.

[27 : 36] The Holy Spirit comes and preaches the gospel to your heart. The Holy Spirit is the pericle, the advocate. Now the question tonight, and I'm just going to leave us with this because we're going to come back and we're going to get deep into the doctrine, into the truths, into the hope, into how to abide and walk with the Spirit.

We're going to do it very closely. But look, here's the question tonight. The Holy Spirit is the one, is God who comes to be with you and speaks to you?

If you're a Christian today, do you know the Holy Spirit in your life? Do you listen to the Holy Spirit in your life?

Do you hear the Spirit? Do you commune with the Spirit? Do you walk with the Spirit? Do you pray to God the Spirit? He is God. Pray to God the Spirit. Do you hear the Spirit?

And this is an invitation tonight to do that. Let's pray. We ask now that you would help us to hear the Spirit. And so we know that the wind blows where it wishes.

[28 : 43] We pray and ask, oh God, that you would move through here and affect our hearts, that we might hear the Spirit in our daily lives.

And we ask for that now in Christ's name. Amen.