

Sermon Series: *The Person & the Work of the Holy Spirit*

It Is To Your Advantage That I Go Away

John 16:7-15 (ESV)

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.

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

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

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

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

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.

Being With Jesus & Seeing Him Face to Face

One of the greatest desires of my heart is see Jesus with these eyes of mine, face to face. As I read through the gospels and follow the events of His life through all the places Jesus walked, I often yearn to have been there with Him. I wish I could have walked with Him and witnessed the events of His life.

To Walk with Him & Hear Him Speak

I often think, “Oh, what a blessing to be with Jesus; to walk with Him from town to town, to hear His words as He spoke compassionately to sick and hurting people, to hear the authority in His voice as He preached to crowds, and to sit with Him around a fire—roasting fish and making small talk.

To Look Into His Eyes

Oh, how I wish I could have looked into His eyes when He calmed the storm. How I wish that I could have how His eyes might have flashed as He debated with the Sadducees and Pharisees. How often I wish that I could have been with Him and received a hug from Him when my heart was lonely and breaking. Oh, how wonderful it would have been to have known and lived with the man Jesus of Nazareth?

To Listen to Him Pray

How wonderful would it have been to sneak along behind Him in the early morning hours before the sun came up and follow Him to some lonely, quiet place and then listen to Him praying and talking to God the Father?

Explain Miracles & Shake His Hand

How wonderful would it have been to sit down with Him after He raised Lazarus from the dead ask Him, “How did you do that?” How wonderful would it have been to stand along side Him in His workshop and hand Him this saw and then that file? How wonderful would it have been to shake His hands—those healing hands that were rough and strong, yet, at the same time, gentle?

To Lie Down In Security & Peace

How wonderful would it have been to lie down at night totally exhausted after a long day of walking, and teaching, and preaching and being threatened by those religious leaders in high places who possessed great power and yet not be afraid for one moment because Jesus is next to you, breathing softly, sound asleep. There’s no need to fear, because this Guy commands storms and they still. He gives two-word commands to demons and they must obey! No, there is no need to be afraid of sleeping out in the open at night because Jesus is near. Everything is fine because I’m with Jesus.

No Longer Do I Call You Servant, But Friend

How wonderful would it have been to be with Jesus on that unique Passover night as Jesus got up from the table and washed the disciples’ feet and hear Him tell them to love one another just like He had loved them. And then to have listened to all that He said that night; all the amazing things that He taught and have Him call you, not servant, but “friend” (Jn 15:13-15). Imagine what joy would fill your heart at hearing Jesus say, “*I no longer do I call you my servants. From now on I call you my friends.*” What could be better than that? ***What could be better than hearing with your own ears the very words of Jesus to you saying, “You are my friend?”***

What Could Be Better?

What could be better than that? What could be better than being with Jesus, knowing that He possessed all power and that nothing, absolutely nothing, was stronger than Him. Therefore nothing could separate you from Him. Furthermore, since it is good to be with your friends, and since Jesus always does what is good, how wonderful would it be to know that you would always be with Him and never be separated from Him? How wonderful is that? What could be better?

Then Jesus Said A Puzzling Thing...

And then you hear Jesus say something very puzzling that catches your attention and causes you to furrow your brow. Jesus has been talking for a while, which was not unusual, and He said some things that were hard to understand, which was also not unusual. But something He said was quite troubling, something about Him going away and that this was good??? What was it that He said?

John 16:7 (ESV)

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.

What an amazing thing to say! You know, that almost sounds like Jesus is saying that He is going away. And it almost sounds like He is saying that that is a good thing. And it even sounded like He said that His leaving would be “to our advantage?” Did I understand that correctly? First of all, how can He leave us? He knows how weak and lonely we are? And where is He going? Where else is more important for Him to be than here with us to set right all that is wrong in this world? And there is much that is wrong!

His Leaving Is To Our Advantage?

And why on earth would He say that *His leaving is advantageous* to us? What could He possibly mean? And who is this “helper” that He is going to send? Honestly, it sounds as if Jesus is saying that there is someone else who is *better* for us to be with than Him? Imagine that! That can not be true, can it? Certainly Jesus must be mistaken... but Jesus is never mistaken??? He can not possibly be saying what I think He is saying, for who else could be better to be with than Jesus Himself? But that *is* what Jesus said.

“Nevertheless, I tell you the truth...” Jesus usually talks like this when He is communicating something really important and wants to get our attention. He continues.

John 16:7 (ESV)

7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away...

“It is to our advantage that He go away?” How can it possibly be to our advantage for Him to go away? How can it possibly be good for Him to leave us? I don’t ever want to be separated from Him. I want to be near Him forever. Wherever He goes, I want to go. Wherever He stays, I want to stay. If He goes to Jerusalem to be welcomed as King, then I want to go there and be with Him. Or if He goes into the deepest part of the most barren dessert, I want to go there and be with Him. How can He say that it is to our advantage for Him to go away? He is my life and apart from Him I can do nothing, except fall into complete loneliness and the deepest despair.

A Good Purpose For His Leaving

Yet, I trust Him and I know that all that He does is good and right and true. So there must be a good purpose for what He is saying and doing. He goes on.

John 16:7 (ESV)

“... for if I do not go way, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you.”

So there is a purpose in His leaving. If Jesus stays, then the Helper, whoever he is, will not come. But if Jesus goes away, then He will send the helper to us. And the clear, unmistakable point to what Jesus is teaching is that it will be better for us for Jesus to leave and for the the Helper to come to us. *The presence of the Helper in our lives will be better for us than the physical, bodily presence of Jesus.*

How can this be? Who is this Helper? Do any of us rejoice that Jesus is not here and that the Helper is here with us? How many of us know how to agree with Jesus in what He is here teaching? We need to learn some things and explore this truth so that we might rejoice in it.

Who Is the “Helper?”

The word translated “helper” is the Greek word παράκλησις (*parakletos*). The word is unique to John and comes from the combination of two Greek words, παρά (*para*), which means *along side of* and καλέω (*kaleo*), which means *to call, or to summon*. Literally the word means “one who is called along side another to help, a person summoned to one’s aid.” The word was used to refer to one

who served as an advocate in a court of law¹ to help someone with the defense of their case, but in a broader sense could “refer to an advisor, a legal advocate, a mediator or intercessor” (BAG, p. 623).²

The later Hellenistic use came to denote “the act of consoling”³ someone during a difficult time. Thus the word has been variously translated; “Helper” (ESV, NAS), “Advocate” (NIV, NRSV), “Comforter” (KJV, YLT), and “Counselor” (RSV). The word is rich and full of meaning. The idea conveyed in the word is that Jesus is promising to send a person who will come along side us and give us advice, comfort, protection, help, and defense.

The Helper is Spirit: The Spirit of Truth

Jesus gives us more information about this “Helper” in verse 12 and 13.

John 16:12-13 (ESV)

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.

Jesus refers to the Helper as “the Spirit of truth” (literally “the Spirit of the truth”). Jesus three times refers to the Helper as “the Spirit of truth” (Jn 14:17; 15:26; 16:13; see also 1 Jn 4:6). So the Helper is **Spirit** and not flesh and bones (Lk 24:39). He is immaterial and not material. We can see at least one advantage to this—He is not constrained by physical limitations. He is spirit thus geography and topography cannot hinder him. Walls will not keep Him out, neither can bars shut Him in. He is Spirit and therefore not bound by physical limitations. He can transcend physical boundaries and be present in more than one place at one time. This Helper is Spirit and that is very advantageous.

Three Ways The Helper Is Like Jesus

Furthermore, the Helper is very much like Jesus. We notice that the Helper has many characteristics that are strikingly similar to Jesus Himself.

1) The Helper is Advocate

First of all, the Helper is an advocate—counselor, comforter, and defender. John also says the same thing about Jesus.

1 John 2:1

My little children, I am 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.

Jesus is our advocate and the Helper is also our advocate.

¹ Marvin Richardson Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2002), Jn 14:16.

BAG Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich: *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*.

² Frank E. Gaebelin, Merrill C. Tenney and Richard N. Longenecker, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 9: John and Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 146.

³ Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, Jn 14:16.

2) The Helper is Truth

Second, The Helper is the Spirit of truth. His essence or character is defined by truth. This is also said of Jesus.

John 14:6

I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Jesus is truth and the Helper is “the Spirit of truth.” Jesus says, in **Jn 16:13**, that the Helper will guide the disciples “into all truth.” This is exactly what Jesus has been doing for the whole of His ministry. Jesus is truth and the Helper is also truth.

3) The Helper Speaks the Words of the Father

Third, Jesus says that the Helper will “*not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak*” (Jn 16:13). Jesus said the same thing about Himself.⁴

John 8:28b (ESV)

...I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught Me.

Jesus did not speak His own words, but He spoke only the words He heard from His Father. The Helper will do exactly the same, He will speak what He hears from the Father. The content of what Jesus taught came from the Father. This will also be true of the Helper. Jesus was regularly listening to the Father, so too the Helper will be listening to the Father and then speaking the words of the Father. Jesus was a great speaker and communicator. The Helper too, will serve in the role of speaker and communicator.

From these verses (Jn 16:7-13) we see three similarities with Jesus; 1) Jesus is our **advocate** and the Helper is also our advocate, 2) Jesus is **truth** and the Helper is the Spirit of Truth, and 3) Jesus only **spoke** the **words** He heard **from the Father**, so too the Helper will only speak what He hears from the Father. Jesus was one who **spoke**. The Helper will also be one who **speaks**.

The Helper Is Holy Spirit of God

The Helper is, of course, the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of truth and the Holy Spirit are synonymous terms that both refer to the Helper.

John 14:26 (ESV)

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.*

There should be no confusion. Jesus is speaking about the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Helper, the Advocate, the Counselor, and Comforter. **The Helper is the Holy Spirit of God.** The Helper whom the Father will send in Jesus’ name, is the Holy Spirit. This means that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father.

John 15:26 (ESV)

⁴ See also Jn 7:16; 8:26; 15:15.

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.

Here we see one of the verses that leads us to a trinitarian understanding of who God is in the fullness of His essence. The Helper, the Holy Spirit, is from the the Father and proceeds from the Father. Yet, He is *distinct* from both the Father and the Son. Yet both “send” Him. Jesus tells us, in **John 14:26** that “*the Father will send Him in My name*” and in **John 15:26** Jesus says, “*I will send Him.*” So we see both Father and Son agreeing together and actively cooperating in the sending of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit, proceeding from God the Father, comes in the name of the Son to represent both the Father and the Son to the world.

Who is this Holy Spirit? He is the spiritual presence of God manifested in the world.

The Holy Spirit Is God

The Holy Spirit **is** God. We call the Holy Spirit the “third person of the Trinity,” but He is no less God than is either the Father or the Son. We Christians believe in one God⁵ who exists in three persons who are together co-equal and co-eternal. The first line in Hope Church’s Statement of Faith says,

We believe in one God: holy, sovereign, infinitely perfect, eternally existing in three persons—the everlasting Father, His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, and the Holy Spirit, the giver of life.

The Statement of Faith of the church I grew up in states,

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.⁶

Why Do We Believe Holy Spirit Is God?

We do not believe in three gods, but in one God who manifests Himself as three distinct but equal persons. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God the Father. The Holy Spirit, who is now present with us, is the personal presence of God Himself. He is the fullness of God Himself who now dwells within us. He is God. We see this in several places in Scripture.

Why do we believe the Holy Spirit is God? First, because of Jesus’ instructions regarding baptism. In **Matthew 28:19** Jesus teaches that believers are to be baptized into the one name that is expressed by three equal persons. He says that when we baptize we are to baptize in the **name** (not *names*) of God, which is expressed fully in the phrase, “the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

⁵ Dt 6:4; Ex 15:11; Is 45:5-6, 21-22; 44:6-8; Rom 3:30; 1 Cor 8:6; 1 Tim 2:5; Jam 2:19.

⁶ Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention (1925, revised 1963, 2000) quoted in, Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology : An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 1994), 1200-01.

Only God is Holy

Second, the Spirit of God is called the “Holy” Spirit. In the moral sense of the word there is only one who is completely holy, unstained by sin, and that is God alone. Holiness is quality that God possesses in infinite measure.

Lying to Holy Spirit Is Lying to God

Third, we learn from Ananias & Sapphira that lying to the Holy Spirit is the same as lying to God.

Acts 5:3-4 (ESV)

3 But Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?

4 While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.

Holy Spirit Is Omnipresent

Fourth, we learn from David that the Holy Spirit is omnipresent.

Psalms 139:7-8 (ESV)

7 Where shall I go from your Spirit?

Or where shall I flee from your presence?

8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there!

If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!

*9 If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,*

*10 even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me.*

There is no place one can go that it is away from the presence of God. Wherever one might go, God’s Holy Spirit is there. The Spirit of God is everywhere. This is wonderfully advantageous, for when Jesus walked this earth in His fleshly body, it was possible to “go from His presence.” It was possible to be separated from Him. However, it is impossible flee from the presence of the Spirit of God.

Holy Spirit Is Omniscient

Fifth, Paul teaches us that the Holy Spirit of God is also omniscient.

1 Cor 2:10-11 (ESV)

10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

11 For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

God’s knowledge is infinite. He knows all things. The Holy Spirit searches the depths of God and knows all of God’s thoughts. The Holy Spirit is God and He knows completely all of the mind of God.

The Holy Spirit is Person

One final point about the Holy Spirit, He is a **person**. The Holy Spirit is the person of God the Father and God the Son who is now manifestly present in us who are His children. He is a person not a “force” or mechanical “power.”

Jesus identified the Helper whom He would send as Spirit (Jn 16:13; cf. 14:17; 15:27). The word Spirit in Greek is πνεῦμα (*pneuma*).⁷ In Greek the word is neuter, being neither masculine or feminine. Usually one would expect a neuter pronoun to accompany a neuter noun, however, this is not what Jesus does. Jesus uses a masculine pronoun (ἐκεῖνος, John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13–14)⁸ when referring to His Holy Spirit, pointing to the fact that we are to understand Him as **a personal Spirit not an impersonal force**. We so often think of Holy Spirit as a power source, however, this is not completely true. He does give us power for service and proclamation, but He is a person. *He is a powerful person, not an impersonal power.*

Jesus Intends His Words to Comfort

Furthermore, consider the way in which Jesus spoke about the Holy Spirit. From our text this morning, Jesus intends to comfort His disciples in light of the news that He is going away. He comforts them by telling that in His place He will send “the Helper” or the “Comforter.” He says, in verse 7, “*I will send the Helper to you... He will come to you.*”

A Person or a Power Generator?

Which would be more comforting to you, if someone told you that in His absence He would send another *person* to be with you or a *giant power generator* that would supply you with unlimited power for you as long as you had need? Jesus intends His words to comfort His disciples by making them aware that *He is sending a powerful person to them, not an impersonal power.* He is not an “it.” He is a person, a spiritual person. Consider how Jesus describes His Holy Spirit.

Jesus was sending a **guide** (Jn 16:13) and a **teacher** (Jn 14:26). He would speak all the words of God (Jn 16:13). He would be a teacher who lead them into truth. The Holy Spirit would be a personal **instructor**. The Holy Spirit would **listen** and **speak**. He would bear **witness** about Jesus (Jn 15:26) and **glorify** Jesus (Jn 16:14). He would **convict** the world of sin and He would tell what righteousness is. He would help and **comfort**. He would help the disciples remember all that Jesus has said. And He would give peace (Jn 14:26-27). Most of all, He would speak to the hearts God’s children and confirm that they are indeed the children of God (Rom 8:16). He would **communicate** God’s love to God’s people. All of these works are performed by a passionate person not an impassive power.

He can be **resisted** (Acts 7:51) and **grieved** (Eph 4:30) and conversely He can **rejoice** (Lk 10:21) and be **pleased**. He can **love** and be loved (Rom 5:5; 15:30; Col 1:8). He enjoys **fellowship** and communion with God’s children (2 Cor 13:14). He is the **giver of gifts** (1 Cor 12:4ff). He **opens the heart** to the gospel (Jn 3:5-8) and **enlightens** the mind (Eph 1:17-18). He **sanctifies** (Gal 5:16-18) and **transforms** (2 Cor 3:18; Gal 5:22-23). *These are the activities of a loving person. These are the activities of God, through the indwelling personal, presence of His Holy Spirit and we are being called to know Him on a personal level.*

⁷ A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), Jn 14:17.

⁸ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology : An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 1994), 232.

The Invitation of the Spirit of God: Come To Me & Know Me

This is the invitation of God. This is the invitation of Jesus. This is the invitation of the Holy Spirit. “Come to Me get to know Me.” How? By the presence of My Holy Spirit in your heart. Do you know God personally through the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit?

What Is God Saying To Your Church?

If someone were to ask you, “What is God saying to your church?” how would you answer them? If someone said to you, “What is God saying to Hope Church?” what would you say?

You know God’s Spirit speaks to His churches, right?

Revelation 2:7

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

This phrase is repeated seven times in Revelation chapters 2 and 3—once to each of the seven churches mentioned (Rev 2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:29; 3:6; 3:13; 3:22). These words are the words of Jesus and yet they are also the words of the Spirit. The words of Jesus and the words of the Spirit are the same words spoken by the One true God.

So I wonder what the Spirit of God is saying to Hope Church? If you ask me that question, I would answer that I think the Spirit of Jesus is saying something like this,

“I want you know **Me**. I want you to know Me from the *heart*! I want you to *really* know Me. I’m inviting you into a living experience of a personal relationship with Me. There are so many of you who know **about** Me, but yet you do not know Me in the deepest, most intimate encounter of My Holy Spirit with yours! I want you to experience Me. I want you to *feel* Me. I want your heart—all of it. Will you give it to me? Will you accept My invitation? Will you take your knowledge of Me and use it to fall in love with Me?”

I think the Lord is inviting us to a new experiential place of walking by His Spirit who lives within us. I think the Lord is inviting us to experience Him by spending some time learning about His Spirit. So for the next month or so (or maybe more) we will spend time in texts that will help us understand and embrace a love for God by learning about His Holy Spirit.

Alister McGrath has said, “The Holy Spirit has long been the cinderella of the Trinity. The other two sisters may have gone to the theological ball; the Holy Spirit got left behind every time.”⁹ Unfortunately I think he is correct. We talk about God the Father and we talk about Jesus, but when it comes to the Spirit of God who is the Spirit of Jesus, we become a little uncomfortable. We just do not have the vocabulary to speak about the Holy Spirit.

How do you think of the Holy Spirit? As a powerful person sent to comfort and strengthen you or as power generator that you only need to plug into when you’ve run out of your own strength? He does give us power to live and please God, but He is a person to get to know, not power source to be deployed.

⁹ Alister McGrath as quoted in Wayne Grudem ed., *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? Four Views* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 175.

Being with Jesus is the joy & delight of every true Christian. There is something better than being near the physical body of Jesus and that is having the personal, Spirit of Jesus dwelling *within* you. There is something better than walking next to Jesus and that is walking by the Spirit of Jesus who dwells *within* you.

The whole point of the sermon today is to ask the question, “Do you agree with Jesus that it is better to enjoy the presence of His Holy Spirit in our hearts than the physical, bodily presence of Jesus Himself? Jesus said, “It is good that I go away, so My Holy Spirit can come.”

Do you believe this?