

The Holy Spirit

John 14:15-17

We see the content of Jesus' upper room and garden conversations with the disciples as coming from or dealing with the fallout from the bad news that He had announced to them. He told them that one of them would betray Him, that He was going away and that they could not come with Him and that even Peter would not be strong enough to be faithful as he would deny Jesus 3 times even before the next sunrise.

So, we have seen that Jesus anticipated the thoughts and feelings of His disciples and comforted them with truth that confronted their fears. He told them that He was going away to prepare a place for them so that when the time came they could be with Him, so He was not abandoning them. They did not need to feel hopeless in His absence since His presence with them had represented God's will and God's love for them. The Father had been with them as much as He had and His going away did not take the Father away. He would be gone but the Father would still care for them. He assured them that His going away was not a withdrawal of His commitment to the cause but that it was necessary for the cause. (They could not understand this but they soon would.) In the future, they would advance the cause on a scale far beyond anything that they had experienced in their time with Jesus. "Most assuredly, I say to you. He who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to My Father."

The next question that Jesus addresses seems to be one of distance vs. intimacy. Everything that Jesus had taught them up to this point had been toward deeper intimacy with Him. He called them to follow Him which meant leaving everything behind in order to do so. He measured their commitment in terms of what they were willing to leave behind. (Father and mother and sister and brother) The rich young ruler was challenged to give away all that he had to come follow Jesus. Zachaeus did just that. They left everything to be with Him. He worked with

them to change their thinking and attitudes so that they would be like Him. He taught forgiveness and love of one's enemy. He taught the spirit of the law rather than the letter. He called them to come with Him and become as compassionate, as caring, as sensitive, and as much of a healer as He was. Imagine the experience of healing the sick as you had seen Jesus heal the sick and coming back to share that experience with Him. It would have been something felt so deeply that it would defy description. Jesus drew the disciples to Himself and they had a comradery that was completely unique to their specific time and experience. John expressed this as well as possible in 1 John 1, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, and which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of Life - the life was manifested and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us..."

All of this to say that when Jesus said that He was going away and that the disciples could not come with Him, it seemed to them as if Jesus was preferring distance from them over intimacy with Him which was a reversal of direction. They expected that Jesus would always be encouraging them and challenging them to seek more of Him rather than less. When Jesus said that He was going away they heard Him saying less and not more. He had never talked like that before. And He wasn't talking like that, He just needed to get them to see it with Him.

Notice that in verse 13, Jesus assures the disciples, "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name I will do it." And then in verse 16, "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever." In verse 13, we pray and in verse 16, He prays. Let me introduce you to your new prayer partner, His name is Jesus. Let's walk together. We'll go from Bethany to Jerusalem. Let's eat together. We'll meet at the upper room and share the Passover. Let's get in the boat together, we'll cross over to the other side of the lake. Let's feed the hungry together. I'll bless the food and break the bread and you pass it out to the people. Let's pray together. Out of all of these, which is the most intimate?

I will go and you will pray and I will pray. This is not distance but proximity. We will not be apart but next to each other. We will be closer than ever before.

Whatever the disciples thought about their time with Jesus, deep within themselves they knew that it was temporary. They knew they were mortal. What they had could not last. It would have to change in a way that they could not describe or anticipate. This seems to have been a subject they debated and speculated about. Their assumptions did not prepare them for the reality they were about to experience. Jesus told them that He was praying for the permanent solution that would replace the temporary circumstance they were in. "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever." Jesus' description of the Spirit is that He is your Helper, the Spirit of truth... whom you know. The Spirit of truth was a phrase that Jesus had just used of Himself, "I am the way the truth and the life..." Jesus had been their singular helper up to this point. He was the one whom they knew. He described for them a permanent manifestation of Himself.

Finally, Jesus added, "He dwells with you and shall be in you." He dwells with you refers to the Spirit empowered ministry of Jesus. The Spirit dwelt within Jesus and they were with Jesus, and consequently, with the Spirit. He would now be within them like He had been within Jesus. So they would share with Jesus the experience of Spirit empowered life and ministry. Before they were next to Spirit empowered ministry but now the Spirit, the empowerer, would dwell within them also. On every level Jesus' "leaving" meant intimacy with rather than distance from their Lord.