

The Spirit has Come Down

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 15 May 2022

Preacher: Joe Hall

[0 : 0 0] Well, we are here together for our weekly appointment around the table in the upper room with the Lord Jesus. If you've been with us over the past couple of weeks, you will know that as a church, we are spending time in this section of John's Gospel where Jesus is speaking to his first followers before he is going to die. These words are sometimes called his farewell discourse.

This is Jesus saying goodbye to his friends. And the reason he spends so much time and takes such care to prepare his followers for him to go away is for this reason. If you glance back to verse 1 in chapter 14, we also read it there in verse 27, do not let your hearts be troubled. Do not be afraid. That is why Jesus is speaking these words. Put yourselves in their position. These guys who would come to know and to love and trust and give everything to follow this man, Jesus Christ, they are now deeply troubled and confused and heartbroken because he's telling them that he is now going somewhere where they cannot follow him. But here's why you don't need to be troubled, says Jesus. You think that you are losing something, that by my going away is your loss, but really you have everything to gain. You have everything to gain by my going to the Father. By going to the Father, he would become the one and only way that we could come to God. That's what we saw last Sunday. But as if that were not enough, Jesus in these verses turns it around. By going to the Father, he says, he would ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit so that God could come to us. He goes so that we can be at home with God, and he goes so that God can be at home with us. Now, this is something so mind-blowing that those first disciples could barely take it in, and we struggle to take it in as well.

But in the words of the author Jen Wilkin, what the head does not know, the heart cannot love. What the head does not know, the heart cannot love. And so we need to begin, even, to fathom and wrap our minds around what Jesus is saying here so that we might wrap our hearts around these words and no longer be troubled. Sinclair Ferguson, another writer, points out, often we think of the Trinity as being the most maybe distant or heady or obscure truth that we believe as Christians. But when does Jesus speak most about God, the Trinity? It is when his disciples' hearts are breaking. It is when they are deeply troubled. We need to know God, to love God. Because if the truth that Jesus gave us to heal our broken hearts before is that he, the Son, has gone up, then this morning the truth he gives us for that very same purpose is that the Spirit has come down. The Spirit has come down. And our first point, really, from Jesus' words is simply this. Who is the Holy Spirit? Who has come down to us?

If you would read with me again from verse 15, Jesus says this, If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him because it neither sees him nor knows him, but you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

[4 : 1 1] Now, first impressions count, don't they? And here, Jesus is introducing us to the Spirit personally by name for the first time. And what is our first impression? Well, Jesus would have it be this, that he, the Spirit, is another advocate. Now, if you're reading a different translation or version of the Bible, you might find a different word there, helper, comforter, counselor, advocate.

There's different words that translate that one word, because in Greek, it's a difficult word to translate, parakletos. Some people just bring that straight over into English because it's so big. That's where we get the word paraklete. Maybe you've heard that word too. And if you break it down, it literally means one who is called to be alongside, called to be alongside. But back then, in everyday life, a parakletos, somebody who was alongside you, described someone like a legal counsel. Okay, so the image is this picture of someone sitting in court. They've been put on trial. And who is sitting beside them, but one who is there to defend them, one who is there to back their corner, to state their case. That is how Jesus introduces us to the Holy Spirit.

Okay, this is your new lawyer, the Spirit of God. And we do need such a lawyer, don't we? Because now Jesus has gone up to the Father, and we do, here and now, face real trouble and conflict.

[5 : 55] Jesus talks here about our hearts being troubled. Very shortly, he will say, in the world you will have trouble. And later in our passage, he speaks about the prince of this world, the devil, who comes to steal and kill and destroy. Jesus doesn't pull the wool over our eyes, does he, about the reality of following him in this world. He says, we will have trouble inside and out. And without Jesus himself being here with us, we will need a strong defense to plead God's case on the basis of Jesus' blood continually to our hearts. One who is here to firm us up against the onslaught of our own sin and the hostility of our world and the powers of darkness. Friends, when we have fallen and sinned yet again, when we have failed God yet again, when we feel far from him, who stands by our side to remind us again of God's verdict on us in the face of those who bring charges against us, call for our condemnation and death, it is the Holy Spirit. We sang earlier, didn't we, when Satan tempts me to despair and tells me of the guilt within, upward I look and see him there who made an end of all my sin.

And who is it who lifts up our eyes that have fallen in shame and despair and points us up again to see Christ sitting there? It is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is for us, coming alongside us, pointing us to the sacrifice of Christ for our sins and saying to our hearts, it is finished.

No more condemnation. That is who the Holy Spirit is for us, and that is who we need, is it not? Every day of our lives, one to come alongside, to plead our case to us on the basis of Christ's sacrifice. And that is exactly who Jesus promises to give to those who love him. Another paraclete, paracletos. But hang on, you ask, what does he mean, another? Another one? That suggests, doesn't it, that we have had one, and now we're getting another one. Well, in Greek, the word literally means another one of the same. And Jesus is implying then that the Spirit who is coming is one who is like him, another one of him. He is going, but another one is coming. To all extents and purposes, they are identical. So much so that for three years, okay, the disciples had not been able to tell Jesus and the Holy Spirit apart. Just glance down at verse 17. The world cannot accept him because it neither sees him nor knows him nor knows him. But Jesus says, you know him for he lives with you and will be in ye.

You know him because he's lived with you. In what sense has the Spirit lived with them? Well, where has the Spirit lived for 33 years? John the Baptist told us at the start of this gospel, the man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has been with them, and they know him because he has been living in the person of Jesus. As if John is inviting us now as readers to go back and read this whole gospel again and see what we missed the first time, that the Spirit has been by Jesus' side like his shadow all the way through, inseparable from him, silently but surely with him, working in and through everything that Jesus has said and done.

Who is the Holy Spirit? Well, if we have been studying this gospel from the beginning, then in a sense, we already know. It's like your colleague at work perhaps one day says to you, I want you to meet my wife. Come and have dinner with us. I want you to get to know her.

[10 : 35] Okay, now you've never seen a picture of her. He's not told you much about her. You think, what will she be like? And then you finally meet her, and within seconds, you know exactly who it is you're speaking to. And in fact, you get the sense that you've known her all along because she is so like him, and he is so like her that her personality, the way she speaks, what she loves, the way she works, they are identical to his and his to hers. And it dawns on you that in a sense, you have seen her every day through her presence in his life, through her impression upon him. They are definitely two distinct and different persons. They have different work to do, but in character and nature, you cannot tell them apart. Now, that is a very imperfect illustration, and you can tear it apart, okay, afterwards. But it's the closest that I could get to this reality. But Jesus tells us, they have known the Holy Spirit because he has been with them, and they did not know it.

So, brothers and sisters, why should we not be troubled by Jesus not being here? Because he says, he and the Father have sent one just like him in his place. He has been with ye, he says, and will be in ye. Now, perhaps you wouldn't say that you were troubled by that so much as a bit disappointed. Hey, we wouldn't say that, would we? But don't we feel sometimes it would have been better or easier to have been a Christian when Jesus was still here than it is for us to be a Christian now? What would we not give to have actually sat in that room with Jesus that night, and to know the color of his eyes, or to know his accent, the way he spoke, to have seen how tall he

was, to have seen the way that he stood, how he held himself? Two of our dear sisters have gone this week, haven't they, to visit the places where Jesus was when he was on earth. The very thought of simply being where he was draws us, doesn't it? How much more the thought of having been there when he was there.

Surely, we think, surely we are worse off for not having been there, not having seen him in the flesh. But brothers and sisters, if we feel regret or disappointment that we are Christians now, and we're not back then, then I don't think we have properly grasped who we have now in the person of the Holy Spirit. Because Jesus says it is as good as, and better for us to have the Spirit with us, in us, than it is for us to have him with us. He says, you would be glad if you knew where I was going, and what I was about to do. Because the Spirit would bring all that Jesus is to live in us. He, who does he say lives in us? The Spirit of truth. Did we not hear Jesus say last week, I am the truth? What does he do? Because I live, you also will live, says Jesus. Why? Because the Spirit comes to bring the life of Jesus into us, uniting us with Christ so that we share in his risen life. So much so, Jesus can say, just have a look at verse 18, if you've got it open. Jesus says, I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to ye. What's he saying? He's saying that to have the Holy Spirit living in us is as good as having Jesus live in us. Now let me ask you, which would you prefer? To have Jesus with you or to have Jesus in ye? Which is better? Brothers and sisters, let this sink in. Just as Jesus' first followers had Jesus living with them on earth and couldn't tell him apart from the Holy Spirit, so now we have the Holy Spirit living in us and we will not be able to tell him apart.

From Jesus. On the day the Spirit comes, he says, then you will realize, then you'll get it, I am in the Father, you are in me, and I am in ye. Friends, how our lives would change if we grasp that to have the Holy Spirit live in us is better than to have Jesus live with us. The Nicene Creed says this about the Holy Spirit, we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life. He proceeds from the Father and the Son and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified. If only we believed that, if only we believed that the Holy Spirit was not second rate, second best to the Father and the Son, but the same in substance, equal in power and glory. If only we lived like that. The Spirit of God is the giver of life. And if your trust is in Christ, then the Spirit has brought all that Christ is to live in your inner being. Praise God. That is who the Holy Spirit is for us.

[16:33] But why do it this way? What is the Spirit here to do as such? The other G-dus, it's not a good reputation to have, is it? He says, but Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world? So he's asking, why the wait? Why are you going and sending the Spirit? Why not just come straight away and let everyone know who you are? Show it to the world? Why bother with this bit where there is the Spirit and not you? Well, Jesus gives us three reasons why it's like that just now.

And we'll spend a wee bit less time thinking about these things. But I would encourage you just to talk about them, think about them, chew on them, let this sink in throughout the rest of this day and into the week. Why send the Holy Spirit? Well, firstly, says Jesus, for God to have his home with us. If you just glance down with me at verse 23, Jesus replied to Judas, anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them and we will come to them and make our home with them. Now, these guys' hearts have just stopped. Hearing these words, their minds have just exploded. You know, I think that that is surely a contender for the most incredible verse in the whole Bible. Because to the guys sitting there, this was inconceivable. He was coming to live in the soul of me and you if we love and follow Jesus. Just read the second part of verse 23 slowly.

[18:19] Jesus says, my Father will love them and we will come to them and make our home with them.

Who has come? These guys are just getting used, aren't they, to thinking of Jesus as being truly God. He told them last week to see who God the Father is, they only need to look at God's Son, Jesus. But now Jesus is telling them, when the Holy Spirit comes, when the Holy Spirit comes, then the Father and the Son will come.

Also, to make their home in the lives of believers. So that your address, if you are a Christian, your soul, rather, if you are a Christian, is now the new address of the triune God.

Or to put it this way, how much of God does not dwell in you if you are a Christian? Jesus' answer is none.

Paul puts it like this in Colossians 2 verse 9, speaking about Jesus and him, the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily and you have been filled in him. You have been filled with all the fullness of God.

How does this happen? How are we filled? By the Holy Spirit who brings the presence of God, Father, Son, and Spirit, to take up residence in your life. Why does that happen, asked Judas? Why is it like that? Well, simply because this is God's great plan, isn't it, from beginning to end.

[20 : 04] That he would dwell with his people in peace. That we, we who have been far from God, turned from him, offended him, that we should be at home with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

That is what Jesus achieved for us. Peter puts it like this, Christ suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God. And indeed, says Jesus, might bring God to us. It's a lot to get our heads around, isn't it? But as we do, as we do begin to grasp this, as I don't expect us to do all at once, it is then that we begin to wrap our hearts around this truth.

Brothers and sisters, does not this thought cause our hearts to overflow this morning with love and praise for the God who has done this work so that he might make his home in me and ye?

And if this is who lives in you, well, how can you not love him and so live for him? How do we respond to this glorious truth? Well, Jesus tells us that too, doesn't he? Verse 15, if you love me, keep my commandments. Or verse 21, whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. Or verse 23, anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. Jesus is so clear, isn't he? Our response to God, our love for him, for all this wonderful truth, is that we live for him. Now, to be clear, Jesus is not saying the Spirit only lives in us if we live a good enough life. If that were true, he would live in none of us.

The Holy Spirit is not for super Christians and people who have it all together. Those people don't exist. He's saying that the Spirit lives in those who love him. And our love for him shows in our obedience of him. Somebody tells you, I love you. I hope you know what to say back. I love you too.

[22 : 19] What God has said to us, I love you. By sending his Son to die for us and sending his Spirit to live in us.

And we respond to God in the right way. I love you too when we live for him and obey him. It's always that way around. You can't reverse that order. But think of it like this. You know, how would life change this morning, this week, brothers and sisters, if Jesus were physically here in the room with us, okay, and if he left with you and went home with you, and then you woke up tomorrow morning and he was there, he went with you to work, he sat by you at your desk, he studied with you, he went about life with you. How would life change?

Surely, surely we would love him more fully and listen to him more closely and obey him more carefully.

So then how should we live knowing that Father and Son and Holy Spirit have made their home in us? If you love Jesus, that is true of ye. And so, says Jesus, anyone who loves me will obey my teaching.

That is our response, a life given over to be the dwelling place of God. But secondly then, God sent the Spirit to give us the things of Christ.

[23 : 54] Have a look with me at verse 26. Jesus says there, All this I've spoken while I'm still with you, but the advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I've said to you.

So this is Jesus wrapping up, okay. He doesn't have much more to tell them. Time is nearly gone. But when the Spirit comes, what does Jesus promise? That he'll have new and different things to say to them?

No, look. He says he'll teach you all things and remind you of what I have said to you. Jesus says this Holy Spirit is not coming with new teaching.

He will simply come and remind you of what I have taught you. Now, how do we know that he did that? Because we are reading this gospel and because we have three other gospels with it.

The Spirit did remind John and the other apostles, didn't they? What Jesus had said to them, his very words. How do we know the Spirit did that? Because we have also their letters and writings that unpack the words of Jesus and his work.

[25 : 06] Because indeed the Spirit did come and teach them what his words meant. He led them into all the truth. So the proof that Jesus has made good on this promise, the Holy Spirit has come bringing the things of Christ, is that we have a New Testament.

Now, to say the obvious thing, the Spirit cannot remind us what Jesus said because we were not there to hear it the first time. So we cannot take these words and take them directly to our situation.

This promise was for these guys in that room, the apostles. The promise that they would not forget Jesus' words. So that they would be able to write them down and keep them and unpack them for people like us sitting here 2,000 years later who did not have that privilege, but who still need to hear what Jesus said and still need to know him.

The Spirit led them then into all the truth so that the same Spirit could give us now the things of Christ through their written testimony.

The fact that we are reading these words, listening to them, understanding them, taking them to heart, that is the work of the Holy Spirit.

[26 : 27] We do not listen to the Holy Spirit as we come to new truths or arrive at new understandings. The Holy Spirit does not give us bits to bolt on to the end of our Bible.

He gives us our Bible. Friends, the Holy Spirit did not come to do his own thing. He was sent, wasn't he, by the Father in Jesus' name.

Father, Son, Holy Spirit, they work inseparably together in everything they do. And so hearing from the Holy Spirit is not something different from reading the words of God.

And if that sounds like a letdown, let me put it the other way around. What is happening when you wake up in the morning and you rub the dust out of your eyes and you pick up the Bible and you open it and you just about read it?

What is happening? The Holy Spirit is speaking to you and giving you Christ again at the beginning of a new day. What is happening when you open the Bible and read it with other Christians or with somebody who doesn't yet know the Lord?

[27 : 32] What is happening? The Holy Spirit is speaking. That is not a letdown, is it? The persons of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, they speak with one voice, and it is the voice of Scripture.

And the Spirit speaks as he brings these words to bear on our hearts and lives. And as he does, we experience more and more, don't we, the peace that Jesus left us.

Peace I leave you, my peace I give you, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Finally then, why it sent the Spirit?

He was sent for God so loved the world. For God so loved the world. Jesus says from verse 29, Wonderful.

Love the Father and do exactly as the Father has commanded me. Wonderful. Jesus spoke these words so that we might believe. John wrote them down so that we would believe.

[28 : 48] What do they want us and the whole world to see and to believe? That Jesus loves the Father and has done exactly what the Father gave him to do.

Incidentally, there's that link again between love and obedience. Jesus loves the Father, so he obeys him. That's what's behind verse 28.

Incidentally, Jesus says the Father is greater than I. Don't trip up over that. He's simply saying that he has submitted himself to the Father's will. And that submission is in the context of the knowledge that the prince of this world is coming.

He's saying time is almost up. I'm about to be nailed to a cross. But I'm going through with it so that the whole world might see that in his death, his love and obedience to the Father displayed.

That he would go and carry out the plan of God from the beginning of time and before. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son. That whoever believes in him may not perish but have eternal life.

[29 : 56] And friends, simply, the Holy Spirit came so that the world might learn what Christ has done. So that the world might come to believe in him and be saved.

Because God so loved those who were against him. That he sent his Son and poured out his Spirit to save those who were far from him. Like me and you.

And as he will continue to do until Christ comes again. The Holy Spirit has brought those words home, hasn't he? To countless people in this room.

In our city, throughout our country, across the world. Who have heard the message of Jesus dying love. And believed in him. And gained eternal life.

And so this morning, if you are here. And what I have said is not yet true of you. You are not yet a Christian. And you have not yet believed in Christ.

[30 : 57] Know this. God sent the Holy Spirit so that you might believe in Christ. He poured out his Spirit to show you who Jesus is. So that you might see in his death.

The love of God for ye. In sending his Son to take away your sins. And if you do love and follow Jesus Christ. What is the application of this?
God poured out the Holy Spirit. So that we might trust in Christ. And share this message. For as we speak. And display the dying love of Christ to our world.
The Holy Spirit works to bring people. To a saving knowledge of him. And to trust in him. So praise Father. And Son. For sending the Holy Spirit.
And let us praise them together now. As we pray. Let's pray together. God our Father.
[32 : 02] How we praise you. That we can call you. Our Father. We thank you for your grace towards us. That you have spared not your Son. But given him up.
For us. And your word says. How then will you not give us all things? And we pray Father. That as we have considered. All that you have given us.
That you might enable us to grasp. Even part of it. That we might begin to digest. What Jesus has said to us. About our wonderful inheritance in him. That you have given us your spirit.
And that you have come to live in us. Father help us we pray. Not only to understand these things. But to wrap our hearts around them. That we might respond in love.
That we might respond in a changed life. And as your Holy Spirit powerfully works in us. You love you. Lord how we pray that our lives might be changed.
[33 : 04] By your presence in us. Father build up this church. By your spirit we pray. Lord bring those who don't as yet know you. To know you.
By the power of your spirit we ask. And we ask all these things. In Jesus name. Amen.