

Bible Study Guide

PASTORATE

May 29, 2013

Lectionary Readings

Psalms 29; Isaiah 6:1–8; Revelation 4:1–11; **John 16:5–15**

Context

In the Gospel of John, after Jesus washes the feet of his disciples on the night before his crucifixion, he leaves them with his final instructions. This lengthy section is known as the “Farewell Discourse” (13:31–17:26), in which Jesus speaks about his imminent departure, the disciples’ inevitable struggles with the world, and their need for the Holy Spirit. Throughout this section, Jesus offers his disciples at least five different promises pertaining to the coming of the Spirit. First, in 14:12–17, Jesus promises them that they will share in God’s power through the Spirit, doing “even greater things” than Jesus himself did. Second, Jesus says that the Spirit will help the disciples recall all that he had done and said while he was with them (14:25–31). Third, as the disciples will find themselves on trial for their loyalty to Jesus, the Spirit will give them the words to say, empowering them to testify accurately about Jesus (15:26–16:4). This leads up to the following passage, which includes the fourth (16:5–11) and fifth (16:12–15) promises of the Spirit given by Jesus to his disciples.

John 16:5–15

⁵ “But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ ⁶ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. ⁷ Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ about sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰ about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; ¹¹ about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

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, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

Commentary

The fourth promise of the Spirit is that *he will prove the world wrong* in its assessment of Jesus (16:8). Here the Spirit is called *the Advocate*, a judicial title that speaks to one serving in a legal capacity arguing a case or making a defense. The promise is that the

Advocate will win the case, proving that the world is in the wrong and that Jesus and his followers are in the right. The Spirit will do so on three counts or from three angles.

First, the Spirit will reveal that the world is guilty of *sin* because of its rejection of Jesus; in rejecting Christ, the world turns away from God. Second, the world will be shown to be in the wrong about *righteousness*. The world assumes it will be vindicated (declared righteous) in its condemnation of Jesus, but with the resurrection and ascension of Jesus—*I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer*—God will decide in favor of Jesus, and so all those who follow him share in that verdict. Third, the Spirit will demonstrate that the world is wrong about *judgment*. Ironically, the one condemned by the world will sit enthroned in heaven as the world's chief judge, judging especially *the ruler of this world*. All of this speaks to the role the Spirit will play in proving the world wrong in its soon-to-be rejection of Jesus by the crucifixion.

The fifth and final promise of the Spirit is that *he will guide you into all the truth*. While the third promise of the Spirit in 14:25–31 stresses the disciples remembering Jesus' ministry, the promise here suggests that the Spirit will provide additional revelation not yet heard. Such revelation, Jesus says, though new and different, will be in harmony both with his words as well as the Father's.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some things that stand out to you in this passage?
2. In what ways do you see the Holy Spirit playing a role in your life and faith?
3. Some Christians obsess about the Holy Spirit while others ignore him. Where do you fall along that spectrum? How much emphasis should we put on the Holy Spirit in our lives today?
4. In what ways does the Spirit prove the world wrong today, or expose the errors of this world? How does the Spirit do that?
5. The Holy Spirit points us to the historic ministry of Jesus as well as to the ongoing ministry of Jesus. Why might it be important for the church today to stay focused on both past and present aspects of Jesus' ministry?
6. How have you been taught to understand the doctrine of the Trinity?
7. How might this passage inform our thinking about the Trinity in light of how it speaks of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit relating to each other?
8. How does this story encourage you and your faith?

Collect of the Day

Almighty and everlasting God, you have given to us your servant grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of your divine Majesty to worship the Unity: Keep us steadfast in this faith and worship, and bring us at last to see you in your one and eternal glory, O Father; who with the Son and the Holy Spirit live and reign, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen*.