

John #44: Better Than Jesus Beside You (John 16:4-15)

PRAY

Sometimes we just don't understand God's plans—why he's done things the way he has
Or even if we do get his plans, we don't believe he's chosen the best way to do them
For instance, we love how Jesus came to earth, lived, died, and rose again—Praise God!
But at the end, once Jesus secured our salvation, he left...
And it seems like he left with the job half-done!
Yes, he completed the work the Father gave him to do—It was finished
He forgave sins, defeated death, kicked off the kingdom, and so on
But what about all the sin we still fight against or see around us, here?
What about all the terrible suffering people still experience, now?
What about our still very broken world, groaning for redemption?
Wouldn't it be great if Jesus had stuck around, to help us through all of this?
Yes, we believe he's coming back to make everything right in the end
But how'd we need to wait for a return at all? Why'd he leave in the first place?
We feel like Jack Sparrow, marooned on a desert island, wondering why all the rum is gone:
Why is Jesus gone? Someone answers: 'blah blah blah'... No, but why is Jesus gone?

Though we may find ourselves confused and discouraged by Jesus' absence,
Believe it or not, Jesus himself tells us that his departure was good news for us
How? Well, let's **TURN** in our Bibles to John chapter 16... John 16 [page #902]
There are additional biblical answers for why Jesus had to go away
But here we see the central reason why it's good news for us: the Holy Spirit
His presence in our lives and his activity in our world
Something that I think we often take completely for granted:
Not realizing the Spirit's blessings... Not accessing his benefits... Not utilizing his power
So I hope to remedy that today... I want you to leave deeply grateful for the Holy Spirit

A couple weeks ago, we finished off John 15, and moved into chapter 16
Where Jesus forewarned his followers to expect hatred to come their way
Because we belong to Jesus, not to the world
Jesus said the key way to confront this hate was by the Spirit's witness: **READ v.26-27¹**
And we can prepare ourselves for being hated by remembering Jesus' words: **READ v.1-4a²**

We stopped there, mid-conversation... v.4 continues in the next paragraph: **READ v.4b³**
'I didn't need to tell you yet'... Jesus was still with them, and could shield them from a lot
But now, things were about to change, dramatically: **READ v.5⁴**... That might be confusing...
Because just shortly before this, Peter *had* asked him this exact question
In John 13:36: "*Lord, where are you going?*"... So it sounds like a contradiction
But there are some easy explanations:
One possibility is that they had asked it, but they weren't anymore
They had dropped the question... But Jesus wanted them to raise it again
Or, they had asked the question, but hadn't really been after that specific answer
I heard someone describe it this way: Say a boy and his dad plan a fishing trip

But they have to cancel when the dad is called away for a work emergency
The disappointed little boy goes, “Aw, Dad, where are you going?”
But he doesn’t really care about the destination—*where* he’s going
He’s more just protesting and asking, “*Why* are you leaving me?”⁵
Likewise, the disciples had been wondering *why* Jesus was leaving,
but not really caring about *where* he was going, or *what* it meant for them
Really, they were too focused on what they would lose,
to grasp the glory of what was about to happen to Jesus

Jesus could tell they didn’t get it yet, because of how sad they were: **READ v.6⁶**

I imagine his troop of guys walking slowly along, long faces, pained expressions, teary eyes
But whether or not their sorrow showed outwardly, Jesus knew their hearts: **READ v.6b⁷**
He had been talking all evening about going away, about laying down his life for
his friends, and now about how the world would hate them
And the longer he talked, the sadder they got
Despite his seemingly negative themes, though, Jesus actually wanted to encourage them
Remember how he told them: ‘*Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.*’
He hadn’t said that just moments before and then changed his tone:
“Actually, on second thought, you should be sad and afraid...” No!
What a comfort it is to know that when we are troubled and sad, Jesus knows our hearts
He knows how we’re feeling, whether or not our sorrow is reasonable or right
And he speaks peace into our troubles, even if he doesn’t take them away

[tr] In this case, he was going away, but this was good... Look: **READ v.6b-7⁸**

Jesus saw their hearts crushed and shrinking back at the thought of what was coming
But however painful it seemed, he says this wouldn’t be to their loss, but to their gain⁹
This verse reveals Jesus’ big idea for our entire passage, namely that:

Jesus has gone, but the Spirit has come—and that’s better! (v.4-7)

[r] It’s actually best for us (to our benefit) that Jesus left and sent the Holy Spirit to us
[r] Jesus has gone, but the Spirit has come—and that’s better than if Jesus had stayed!

This is a shocking claim... They would’ve had a hard time believing it, so he insists it’s true:

READ v.7a¹⁰... Back in chapter 14, Jesus told them that if they truly loved him,
They’d rejoice because he was returning to the Father... That was better for him
And now he adds, soothingly: ‘And it’s better for you, too!’

‘But how, Jesus?! That makes no sense!’

Jesus was human, like them... Jesus was present... Jesus was powerful...
Jesus could talk and eat and laugh and cry with them
How could it be better to trade that for a Spirit they couldn’t touch—or even *see*?
If I gave you the choice, on the spot, of a physical Jesus or an invisible Spirit,
Which would you choose? Jesus says there’s a clear choice, from his point of view
So *how is it* to our *advantage*, as believers, that Jesus went away?
Jesus will give two clear, major reasons why it’s so great we have the Holy Spirit with us now
But before I pass those on to you, I think we can consider some broader answers to this question
Ready for some big words? (I’ll explain them)

It is better for us relationally, spiritually, geographically, temporally, and eschatologically

Relationally... How much more intimate of a connection we have with God because of the Spirit!

Think about it... As Francis Chan explains, *"Jesus merely walked beside the disciples; the Spirit would actually enter their human bodies. You've probably heard this truth a hundred times, but have you marveled at it? [Take some time] right now just to dwell on the fact that God is in you... Astonished? This is not a distant, loose connection. This is the Spirit of God choosing you and me to be His dwelling place."* ...Wow!

And that leads into having the Spirit being better *spiritually*, on several levels:

As we'll see a few verses down, the Spirit guides Jesus' people into all truth

And the truth would set them free! The truth would change them forever

Jesus leaving left them a far greater opportunity to exercise faith and hope

Read what became of these whimpering cowards in the book of Acts

J.C. Ryle points out that *"The growth of their knowledge, and faith, and hope, and zeal, and courage was so remarkable that they were twice the men they were before. They did far more for Christ when he was absent than they had ever done when he was present."*

This happens to us in the modern day, as well... The Spirit changes us, spiritually, for good

You might wake up tomorrow feeling super tired or stressed or impatient or angry

Left to you, those things would likely derail your day and define your attitude

But if the Spirit lives in us, and we choose to walk by the Spirit,

That reality can overcome our stress, irritation, or fatigue

Those things don't spiritually define us... And they don't need to control our day¹¹

Having the Spirit is to also our advantage *geographically and temporally*

In other words, in the world of space and time, we ought to be thankful for the Spirit

Jesus, in his human nature, could only be in one place at a time, just like us

But the Holy Spirit would fill every place his people gather, anywhere in the world

So, through the Spirit, Christ himself can be present with us everywhere

We don't have to travel to see him in the holy land, or catch him on tour

If he'd stayed, Jesus would have had to become like some pope, touring around the world

How rarely would he come visit our city, let alone our church!

You and I would get like a billionth of his time... But not with the Spirit!

He lives in us 24/7, helps us in our weakness, prays for us, and goes with us wherever we go

And finally, having the Spirit is better *eschatologically*

What's that? Just think: In the grand scheme of things, or in God's plans

Jesus had said: **READ v.7b-c**¹²... In the mysterious wisdom of God,

There was a connection between the ascension of Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit

One couldn't happen without the other

Thus, in a paradoxical way, we're better off now, since Jesus is no longer physically here

If Christ remained on earth, he wouldn't become our Great High Priest or the King of Heaven

He was headed for a coronation! But that could only come once Christ's work was done

We see multiple prophecies in the Old Testament (in Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Joel)

that promise that the age of the kingdom would be characterized by the Spirit

So when Jesus said, 'The Spirit is going to come!'

he was implying, 'The kingdom is going to come!'
And that, my friends, is unthinkable better, in the grand scheme of things
Do you ever think, 'How amazing it would be to be living in Jerusalem when Jesus lived!'
We wish we could sit with him: hearing his sermons, watching his miracles, being healed
We think our lives, our faith, our walk with God, would all be so much better than now
But not so fast! Besides the fact that you wouldn't have modern plumbing or electricity,
Jesus himself insists that it's better to be alive *now*, post-Pentecost
When millions worldwide have been brought into happy, saving faith in Jesus
Including you and me, who probably never would've come before

[tr] So there are some broad, biblical reasons why having the Spirit would be superior
But for today, let's home in on the reasons Jesus gives here in John 16
And to frame the first one: Believer, where would you be if you never had Jesus?
Not pleasant to think about, right? I suspect I'd be drowning in self-gratification
My already-strong selfishness wouldn't be restrained at all... I'd be self-consumed
Not living for anyone but me... And probably pretty hopeless about life in general
Where would you be without Jesus? Then consider this question:
Would you ever have Jesus without the Spirit's work in your heart? The answer's 'no'
And so: **Jesus has gone, but the Spirit has come—and that's better!** [*keep up w/ sub-points*]

➤ **It's better because of the Spirit's convicting power (v.8-11)**

[r] It's better for us that the Spirit has come, because of his power of conviction

Jesus says: **READ v.8¹³**... He will convict the world that stands opposed to God
Which means he will prove them to be in the wrong... He helps them know their guilt
And in so doing, the Spirit calls the world to repent of sin and turn to Christ
We tend to think of conviction as a negative thing... But it's most definitely not!
It may be unpleasant... We don't like being shown to be wrong... But it's good
Before the Spirit's conviction, we are all part of the godless world!
Without it, we'd be oblivious to all the ways we've offended Almighty God,
Ignorant of all our idolatry and ingratitude... Hopelessly lost, on a literal highway to hell
We need conviction to kick-start our journey to find mercy and grace in Jesus

When the Spirit came, he began doing this good work in the world
It's not that Jesus wasn't doing this... He was
But the Spirit would continue his work, extending it to much greater lengths
Jesus says the Spirit would convict the world of 3 things: sin, righteousness, and judgment

READ v.9¹⁴... Billions do not believe in Jesus and are blind to their need of him
This is arguably the greatest need, for anything, in the world
The Spirit is the solution... His conviction is gracious in showing people their unbelief,
In hopes that some will believe and thus stop being the world

READ v.10¹⁵... Righteousness is usually a good thing, of course!
Unless it's an outward, prideful form of righteousness—a self-righteousness
Thinking we're good on our own, or that we're better than others... Filthy rags!
The Spirit shows us what true righteousness is, shows us that we don't have it,

And thus exposes how we need a righteousness that is not our own
Jesus himself frequently convicted people of outward righteousness
But with him soon to depart, the Spirit would continue his work: **READ v.10b**¹⁶
Think of when you need to go on a trip, away from home
How you need to provide coverage for your responsibilities while you're away
If you have a job, you need someone to do your work
If you have kids, you need a baby-sitter... If you have pets, a pet-sitter
Sometimes we even need a house-sitter to look after our homes
The Spirit is far more than a glorified sitter... But he is Jesus' coverage while he is away

Sin, righteousness, and *judgment*: **READ v.11**¹⁷... Speaking of the devil, the father of lies,
Who is full of falsehood and false judgments... And so are those under his rule
People have falsely judged Jesus throughout history, and they still do
We've misunderstood him, mislabelled him, and mistreated him
We've misjudged ourselves as well... The world would have you believe you are fine
You are inherently good; however you choose to live is great; and you don't owe
anyone anything... So don't listen to the prudes who fear-monger you about sin
And there certainly isn't a judgment to worry about on the other side
But those are all lies, rooted in the father of lies' work... Like, "You will not surely die!"
But all this falsehood can't and won't continue forever... In fact, the devil is *already* condemned
READ v.11b¹⁸... He still prowls around like a lion or a dragon, but he's a defeated foe
As of Christ's death and resurrection, he was judged, convicted, and sentenced
And if that same judgment, reserved for the devil and his angels,
is on its way for the people of this world, they're in desperate need to learn of their plight

And that's where the Spirit comes in, thank the Lord
That he convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment are all ways to say:
The Spirit exposes the truth of who we really are
He shows that we are sinners, that our righteousness falls short, and that we've misjudged Jesus
And once we understand the bad news, the good news of Jesus can come rushing in
We learn that, though we are sinners, Christ died for sinners, to pay for our sin
We learn that, in exchange, we can be given his perfect, spotless righteousness
And we learn that the Righteous Judge can declare sinners no longer guilty

Those of us here who follow Jesus are proof that the Spirit has been doing this, to this day
Think through your own spiritual history... Where was it that the Spirit broke in for you?
Maybe you're a first-generation Christian, and when things changed is really obvious
Maybe you come from a long line of believers, and the Spirit has worked for generations
But since none of us are direct descendants of the first disciples,
We are all envisioned here as part of the 'world' the Spirit would convict
And most of us can think of the time when we were first personally convicted
that we are sinners, and that we need a Saviour... Praise the Lord
Maybe the Spirit is working on you today, perhaps even for the first time
To expose your evil and compel you to run to Christ for grace
It is God's kindness that leads you to repentance

But this work isn't only meant for those who ultimately repent... It's also for those who don't
It's the cross-examining work of the Spirit in the world,
Which convicts of guilt and leaves people without excuse before God's judgment
This is sobering, though we can still be grateful for it, as this ensures justice will be done

[tr] Starting to see why it's such great news that the Holy Spirit has come?

Imagine a world without his conviction...

Where we live like spiritual zombies, wandering around dead—and blind to our deadness

Thank God that is not the reality... In reality, Christ is King and the Spirit is here

But believe it or not, the news gets even better... As we'll see in our final set of verses today,

Which describe the Spirit's work specifically for believers, not for the whole world:

Jesus has gone, but the Spirit has come—and that's better! And:

➤ **It's better because of the Spirit's guiding purpose (v.12-15)**

That has a double meaning... He has a guiding purpose that is glorious, as we'll see

But he also has a purpose of guidance... He aims to guide us to truth and to Christ

[r] It's better that the Spirit has come because of his guiding purpose

In v.12, I picture Jesus looking around, and recognizing the disciples' limited capacity right then

They weren't really handling what he was saying well... They were still quite downcast

Listen to how tender he sounds: **READ v.12¹⁹**

But we wonder: If he still had many things to say, why didn't he stick around to say them?

Because he didn't need to... The Spirit would pick up where he left off: **READ v.13²⁰**

So he is the Spirit of *truth*... Truth is bound up in his identity and purpose

You can picture him like a wilderness guide, leading you on a hike or a tour

If you didn't have the guide, you'd get totally lost

And you wouldn't be able to find the sights you set out to see

A guide serves the purpose of guiding you exactly where you need to go

Likewise, the Spirit's purpose is to guide us exactly where we most need to go: **READ v.13a²¹**

Now, when we hear that, we may get a couple misconceptions in our heads

For one, we may start to get excited about some hidden or secret knowledge the Spirit can give

Like getting privileged information about God's will: what job to take or person to marry

Or learning secrets of the future: who will win the SuperBowl or what stocks will take off

But no, that's not the kind of truth this is talking about at all

Neither is this a promise to make us super smart, full of knowledge about the universe

Like learning facts about astronomy, alligators, anchors, or Argentina

No, 'the truth' is referring to the truth about the Lord and everything related to him

It means that the Spirit, like a guide pointing out the path along a trail,

will lead us to understand God as he has revealed himself to us in Christ

So, do you want to know Jesus? Do you want to know him more?

Then pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you... This is his mission and purpose

And if I might challenge you: Are you seeking the Spirit's guidance into truth these days?

In a world full of lies, this is an absolute lifeline, right there for the taking

READ v.13b²²... So he won't just make stuff up... He'll pass on truth from heaven...

READ v.13c²³... What ‘things to come’? Does this mean you can go into fortune-telling?

No! The promises of this verse were most directly fulfilled with the first disciples,
Who were guided into all truth and empowered to write the N.T. Scriptures—
Which included some prophecies about the future

This exceptionally happened to John, who wrote both this book and Revelation
We should not expect to be shown future things in the same way they were

But in a sense, we are still guided into these truths, through the Scriptures they wrote
Really, the primary way the Spirit of God still speaks to us today is through the Word of God
This is how he guides us into all truth... And if it doesn’t align with this, it’s not his truth

Further, if it doesn’t chiefly draw attention to Jesus and glorify Jesus, it’s not the Spirit’s work
Because his guiding purpose on earth is to make much of him... Look: **READ v.14-15**²⁴
Dane Ortlund put it this way: *“The Spirit’s animating impulse is not a raw, faceless power in the life of the Christian. The Spirit ignites our contemplation of Jesus Christ.”*

Are you thankful for this? This is a glorious guiding purpose,
And it makes Jesus’ going away, so the Spirit can come, totally worth it...
Because it meant Jesus’ glory would go supersonic
His glory goes global, and cosmic, and deeper and wider and higher
So we can know the Spirit has been at work in us whenever we’re amazed by the Lord Jesus
Our hearts should be increasingly captivated... Loving him more and more
Continually stirred to worship him with our hearts, voices, and bodies

But let’s be frank: Many people in our world who emphasize the Holy Spirit
tend to do so to draw attention to themselves...

That’s a blasphemous abomination, taking the spotlight meant for Jesus
J.D. Greear explains that: *“There is a certain irony in how the Spirit operates; whenever he is really present, you are not thinking about him, you’re thinking about Jesus. The Spirit’s work is to direct you to notice something else. The same is true of the Spirit of God. His purpose is to illuminate the gospel and bring glory to Jesus.”*

If you drive by Parliament Hill at night, you’ll see the Peace Tower lit up
(At least you do when it’s not under endless construction!)

Big floodlights illuminate the buildings, so you can marvel at their beauty at night
But when you see this, you don’t even tend to notice or think about the lights
You think about what the lights are helping us see

The Spirit is a bit like that... J.I. Packer called his work a “floodlight ministry”,
Quietly turning our attention toward the Saviour
Really, you’ll barely even notice a Spirit-filled person, because you’ll be thinking about Jesus

v.15 contains spectacular gems of truth, which we barely have time to examine: **READ v.15a**²⁵

If the Son owns all the Father owns... And he can rightly claim, “Mine!”...

Then this is a bold claim of being nothing less than God himself

But also, notice the progression in the verse: **READ v.15**²⁶

It goes from the Father, to the Son, to the Spirit... And then, stunningly, to us!

In Christ, by the Spirit, we are given all the riches of God

It’s why Ephesians 1 can sing: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places...”*²⁷

Or why 1 Corinthians 6:21-23 can claim: *"For all things are yours, whether... the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's."*...That'll change your life, if you let it

CONCLUSION

On our lowly Mondays and Tuesdays, when we're struggling with missing kids' shoes and last-minute school deadlines and doctors' appointments and family drama and highway traffic,

We can totally lose sight of all this

Which is why we need to continually give the Spirit time and space to speak truth to us

Seizing moments to open our Bibles—over family meals, in groups, by yourself—

In order to let the Spirit draw our minds to the glories of Christ

The blessings we already have, and the glories we are destined for in him

These truths change our days... And they change *us*

The Spirit is here, in us now... with his convicting power and with his guiding purpose

And that's why having the Spirit inside you is better than having Jesus beside you²⁸

Will we believe that God knows what he's doing?

PRAY

Benediction: prayer, 5min,

¹ "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. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.

² "I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.

³ "I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you.

⁴ But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?'

⁵ HT Carson

⁶ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.

⁷ sorrow has filled your heart.

⁸ sorrow has filled your heart. 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.

⁹ HT Ryle

¹⁰ Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away

¹¹ HT Chan

¹² if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

¹³ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:

¹⁴ concerning sin, because they do not believe in me;

¹⁵ concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer;

¹⁶ because I go to the Father and you will see me no longer;

¹⁷ concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

¹⁸ because the ruler of this world is judged.

¹⁹ I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.

²⁰ 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.

²¹ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth

²² he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak,

²³ and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

²⁴ He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

²⁵ All that the Father has is mine

²⁶ All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

²⁷ Ephesians 1:3

²⁸ HT Greear