

UNIVERSITY UMC OF REDLANDS, CA
“IT IS TO YOUR ADVANTAGE”

John 15:26, 27; 16:4b-15¹

Pentecost Sunday – May 19th, 2024

²⁶ “When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. ²⁷ You also are to testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.

⁴ “I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. 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.

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Introduction.

Whenever we face a challenge in life, we react in one of two ways: our own way or God's way. Even though we know that God's way is the best and that He has a good plan and purpose for our lives, we still choose to do things our way. We can choose to go our own way or God's will.

Although we know that doing what pleases God is the best option, we are naturally drawn to choose the opposite. And yet, the Lord has the power to make everything work for our good.

One of those moments that changed my life was in 1986, when I was about to finish my studies of High School, I had decided to go to the National Polytechnic Institute to study Petrochemical Engineering, but the Lord had different plans for me.

Not just different plans, but better ones. At that time I couldn't see what God had prepared for me, I couldn't even imagine the blessings, the challenges, the satisfactions, the tears but also the tremendous joy that awaited me, such are God's plans.

We often find ourselves struggling with our own expectations and desires. We cling to our plans and resist letting God be in control. However, we must learn to surrender to God's will, trusting in His wisdom and perfect knowledge.

In today's text we find the apostles trying to digest the message that Jesus had been announcing to them... "I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?'" it is evident that our Lord expects these men to question him.

Instead, all they can think of is what it might mean to them. They are occupied with themselves, just as we are, and can see only their own little world. And so, as he says, "Sorrow has filled your hearts."

Instead of curiosity, and the consequent knowledge they could have, and even the excitement about what is going to happen, sorrow has filled their hearts and they are occupied with themselves.

I am going to Him who sent me.

The Lord Jesus was about to leave the little band of men who had come to believe that: "Jesus is Christ, the Son of the living God." They had expected Him to set up the promised kingdom, but had discovered He was going away... and yet it was to their advantage. How confused they must have been.

I know it is hard for us to believe that it would be better for Jesus' disciples when he had gone.

But have you ever noticed in reading through the Gospels that when Jesus finished the Sermon on the Mount, or even this Upper Room Discourse, or any of his great messages which the disciples heard, that they ever went away with their faces aglow, their minds understanding, their hearts committed, and ready to work?

Instead the record tells us that every time he talked to them he puzzled them. They were perplexed, they couldn't figure him out, and they went away arguing about what he had to say.

They were full of questions, and they disputed among themselves as to who was going to fulfill these things, vying with each other for first place.

But you discover that after the Day of Pentecost, when the Spirit came, when they gathered together and heard the words of the Lord they went away tremendously strengthened and encouraged, ready to face life with radiant faces and joy in their hearts.

That is what the Spirit does. It was indeed to their advantage, and to ours, that Jesus was not with them.

Suppose he were here in the world today, right now, May 19th 2024, Where would he be? Well, probably somewhere in Ukraine, or Africa! But certainly not in Redlands!

And how would you ever get to see him? Yet by means of the Spirit we have access to him, as these disciples never had.

It is to your advantage that I go away.

With the Scriptures in hand, we know the supernatural happenings of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was sent to help, to encourage, to teach, and to guide the people of God into all truth.

We know the glories of the mysteries of the Church and the unsearchable riches of God that would soon be revealed to Paul; the glorious inheritance of the saints that is kept for us in heaven.

It was to the advantage of this little band that Jesus went away for He was to send the Holy Ghost as their indwelling Helper.

How often we too do not understand the greater purpose of God and focus our worries on the immediate, rather than resting our confidence in the ultimate plan of God.

It all comes back to trusting our lives and our futures into God's hands, knowing that ALL things work together for good, to those that love God, and are called according to his purpose.

Now our Lord goes on to point out the ministry of the Spirit, the way he would work when he came. This is one of the most helpful passages in Scripture to enable us to understand the workings of the Holy Spirit in our day, in our generation.

I wonder if there is any verse of Scripture more frequently misread than that one. It is very commonly quoted, and most of us read it as though the Holy Spirit is going to come into the world and work directly upon the hearts of unbelievers, those who are not Christians, and convict them, or convince them, of these three things: sin, righteousness, and judgment.

But if you read it in that way, you have not read this verse correctly. That is not what he is saying. I want to read it again, together with the preceding verse (7), and emphasize a key word.

And I want to take that same word and insert it in a place in Verse 8 where it does not occur but where the context makes clear it belongs. I think then you will see what I mean. Jesus says,

"Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to **you**; but if I go, I will send him to **you**. And when he comes to **you**, he will convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment:"

You see, the Holy Spirit is not coming to the world; he is coming to you, to the church, to the Christian. And when he comes to the Christian, this will convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment.

That is what he is saying. In fact, back in Chapter 14, Jesus had said specifically to these disciples that when the Spirit of truth would come, the world would not be able to receive him. It does not receive him; it cannot receive him because it neither sees him nor knows him.

Therefore, the Holy Spirit does not come to the world; he comes to us. But when he comes to us and operates in us as he intends, he will have this three-fold effect upon the world.

There is the teaching of the Spirit to each believer. The primary fulfillment of this, of course, was to these disciples themselves. It was the process by which the rest of the Scriptures were given.

As this was fulfilled in these apostles' lives, they were led by the Spirit to speak the truth which is recorded here in the pages of the New Testament: the Gospels, the Epistles, and the book of the Revelation.

Conclusion

That is what he is teaching us. That is what the world is waiting to see in our lives -- power, coming not in some spectacular flash which startles and scares everybody, but released in useful quantity.

That's what I need. I'm like these disciples -- a brother to them. I cannot bear the full revelation of the love and grace of Jesus Christ.

I need to have it broken down to my size. But it is there, ready for me to take, ready for me to use in my situation.

That is available to each of us.

So that the world, looking at us, can see the sin of not believing in Jesus. He is the issue.

So that they can see the righteous conduct which God alone can produce in a life.

So that they can know that God is still in control of history, that all of history is trending toward a one great event which lies yet in the future.

So that they can see in us that quality of life which makes life worth living. That is what the Spirit of God is come to do.

Let's pray:

Lord Jesus, we thank you for the truth of these words.

How much evidence we have right here in this room that these words are true, that this is what you are doing today to the end that the world in its blindness and darkness may see you,

Lord of Life,

Lord of Glory,

the One in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,

the key and secret to life itself,

and that they may come to you and receive life at your hand.

We thank you for that life, and for the power given to us by the Holy Spirit. Help us to walk in these ways. In his name, Amen.

Amen