

Date: February 5, 2023  
 Series: *This is...*  
 Title: *...The Holy Spirit*  
 Text: John 14:16-20  
 Preacher: Mark Adams

John 14:16-20

**16 – I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate to help you and be with you forever—**  
**17 – 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.**  
**18 – I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.**  
**19 – Before long, the world will not see Me anymore, but you will see Me. Because I live, you also will live.**  
**20 – On that day you will realize that I am in My Father, and you are in Me, and I am in you.”**

This week I came across a confusing occurrence in January of 2020 in San Miguel, Colorado. At least the DESCRIPTION of the occurrence was confusing. That day---just a couple months before COVID hit---a nondescript Twitter account for the local sheriff’s office started receiving attention from around the nation----after it issued a confusing tweet.

The first sentence from the San Miguel Sheriff’s Office tweet read, *“Large boulder the size of a small boulder is completely blocking east-bound lane Highway 145 at Silverpick Rd. Please use caution and watch for emergency vehicles in the area.”*

Almost immediately, Twitter users started to question whether there was an exception in the laws of physics and spacetime---that would somehow explain how a large boulder could be the size of a small boulder.

- One Twitter user wrote, *“What’s heavier: a large boulder the size of a small boulder, or a small boulder the size of a large one? Asking for a friend.”*
- A different user wondered if perhaps the boulder was having self-esteem issues.
- Another referenced a well-known paradoxical thought experiment. *“Schrodinger’s boulder – both large and small at the same time.”*
- Still yet another offered a potential fashion solution. *“Perhaps the boulder was wearing Spanx or a similar compression garment? That would explain how a large boulder could fit into the size of a small boulder.”*

After providing an update that the boulder had been removed, the sheriff’s office offered a clarification:

- *“The boulder that fell onto Highway 145 at Silverpick Rd was approximately 4ft x4ft x4ft (64 cubic ft) and weighed about 10,000 lbs.”*

So---the Twit that wrote that first Tweet must have a poor understanding of physics---because a 64 cubic foot 5 TON rock is indeed a LARGE boulder!

Why share this confusing story? I wanted to put the word “confusing” in your heads because many people are confused about the Subject of today’s message: *“This is...the Holy Spirit.”* They wonder who or what we are talking about when the subject comes up. The really sad truth is that many of us would have a hard time answering their questions because this confusion about the third person of the trinity is not limited to non-Christians.

In spite of the fact that God’s Word has a great deal to say about the Holy Spirit, it is still a subject about which many of us remain ignorant. I mean, most Christians understand God the Father. His power and grace are quite clear to them. AND—they have high clarity of understanding when it comes to God the Son—but their understanding of the Holy Spirit is vague and fuzzy at best. This may be why, a recent study showed that in worship songs churches mostly sing about Jesus (68%), with only occasional references to the Father (7%)---and few (if any) mentions of the Holy Spirit (5%).

There are several reasons, but I think the main one is false teaching. Over the years many churches and denominations and para-church ministries have warped the Bible's teachings about the Holy Spirit. They have taught untruths like the one that says that when a Christian is under the influence of the Holy Spirit he or she is out of control. Over the years we've even seen supposed movements of the Holy Spirit in which Christians barked like dogs or laughed uncontrollably--or fall on the ground and growl like wild animals. Well, all this is nothing but "*big-boulder-sized*" foolishness---not at all in line with the teaching in God's Word.

All this warped teaching explains why A.W. Tozer once wrote that when the average Christian thinks about the Holy Spirit, "*...he is likely to imagine a nebulous substance like a wisp of invisible smoke which is said to be present in churches and to hover over good people when they die.*" It's why the author of the controversial book, *The Shack*, pictured the Holy Spirit as a partially invisible Asian female.

People who have spread nonsense like this have given the Holy Spirit a bad rep, so to speak---and have caused many sincere believers to steer clear of the third Person of the Trinity all together.

Well---since there IS so much confusion when it comes to our understanding of the Holy Spirit---let's do a quick condensed review---a sort of "crash course" on the Holy Spirit to help correct our OWN misconceptions about the third Person of the Trinity. Hopefully this will enable us to say to our questioning friends: "*This is the Holy Spirit...*"

#### a. The Holy Spirit is not a "THING."

Look at how Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit in our text. In verse 17 He said, "*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.*" What word did our Lord use? RIGHT! "HIM" — not "IT!" Jesus talked about the Holy Spirit as a PERSON because that's who HE is! He's not an "It" or a "thing."

In fact, throughout the Bible we read verses that show the Holy Spirit DOES things only a person would do. For example:

- Acts 8:20 says that the Holy Spirit SPEAKS. This is where the Holy Spirit told Phillip, "*Go to that chariot and stay near it.*" Philip obeyed that command---the command of the PERSON of the Holy Spirit---and because he did that day a man with great influence in the Ethiopian government became a Christian and was baptized.
- Several passages of Scripture say that the Holy Spirit DOES THE WORK OF A PERSON. A good example of this is Romans 8:26, where it says that the Holy Spirit, "*helps our infirmities and makes intercession for us.*" Another is 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:11 which says that the Holy Spirit distributes spiritual gifts, "*to each one, just as He [the person of the Holy Spirit] determines.*"
- The Bible also teaches that the Holy Spirit can be QUENCHED or stifled. In other words, you can say to the Holy Spirit---as you would to any person: "*Be quiet...stop talking to me.*"

And I wonder---have any of you ever done that?

Have you ever said, "*Now, Lord---I don't want to hear anything more about tithing. Quit telling me I should!*" Or "*Lord, stop telling me I need to serve as a deacon. I know the deadline is approaching. I know they need servants to minister to this church---but I'm just too busy.*" Or, "*Stop telling me to go help that neighbor who's taking care of his invalid wife all by himself.*" Or, "*Get off my case when it comes to witnessing to that guy in the cubical next to mine who's obviously interested in spiritual things.*" If you've ever done this kind of thing, then you have quenched the Holy Spirit---something you would not do to an "it" or a "thing."

I mean we "quench" Alexa when she turns on the alarm to wake us up by saying, "*Alexa STOP!*"

But Alexa is a THING---not a person. And the Holy Spirit is not an "THING." He's not an impersonal AI that we would call on to set a timer or tell us the weather or play some music.

And that leads to the SECOND basic in our crash course.

#### b. The Holy Spirit is a Person---more specifically He is THE Person of God.

This is an important principle for us to understand because as R. A. Torrey writes, *“If you think of the Holy Spirit as a ‘thing’ — a mere influence or power, then your thought will be, ‘How can I get hold of the Holy Spirit and use it?’ But if you think of Him in the Biblical way—as a Person of divine majesty and glory, your thought will be ‘How can the Holy Spirit get hold of me and use me?’”*

The Holy Spirit is just as much God—as Jesus is. Look back at verse 16 of our text. Jesus said, ***“I will ask the Father and He will give you ANOTHER Advocate or Counselor.”*** The word *“another”* is the Greek word *“allos”* and it literally means, *“another of the same kind.”* So, Jesus was saying, that the Holy Spirit would be just like Him—GOD.

Over and over the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit possesses attributes that belong only to God.

- For example, Hebrews 9:14 says that the Holy Spirit is ETERNAL.
- Psalm 139:7 says, ***“Where can I flee from Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence?”*** which tells us that the Holy Spirit is OMNIPRESENT.
- The Holy Spirit does WORK that only God would do.

He was involved in creation. Genesis 1:2 says, ***“The Spirit of God moved upon the waters.”*** He is involved in regeneration—or the new birth we experience when we become Christians. This is what Jesus was teaching in John 3:8 where He said that every Christian is, ***“...born of the Spirit.”*** But I think one of the clearest text that shows us the Holy Spirit is God is found in Acts 5. This is where we read about the time Annanias and Saphira sold property and brought some of the proceeds and laid it at the feet of the Apostles. They lied—saying they were giving all of the funds from the sale to the church—when in reality they were holding some back for their own selfish uses. Do you remember what Peter said when he confronted them? He asked, ***“Why have you allowed Satan to fill your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit? You have not lied to men, but to God.”*** (Acts 5:1-4). Did you catch it? Peter equated the Holy Spirit with God.

So, understand---the Holy Spirit is completely PERSONAL and completely GOD. He is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is as much God as is the Son or the Father is. He is distinct from God, yet essentially one with God. So---the claim of some flawed faith systems that say Christians worship multiple Gods is wrong. The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit must be understood in the context of the oneness of God. God is ONE God—not three—not two—but ONE. As Deuteronomy 6:4 says, ***“The Lord our God is One Lord.”***

This is the way we must understand Jesus Christ. Jesus is not a second God—nor just one third of God. He is the eternal God uniquely present in a truly human life. In Christ we encounter God Himself—not just an emissary from God. Jesus is not God’s *“secretary of state.”* No—in Jesus Christ, God is doing His own speaking. He is doing His own work. Jesus Christ IS GOD—uniquely present in a truly human being.

And the same thing is true of the Holy Spirit. I mean—The Holy Spirit is not a third God nor one third of God. The Holy Spirit is God Himself in His nearness and power, anywhere and anytime.

This means—and please catch this—this means that the very divine presence incarnated in Jesus Christ is now present in His people—YOU and ME.

Herschel Ford said The simplest definition of the Holy Spirit I know is this: *“The Holy Spirit is God in the human heart.”* But I think Adrian Rogers says it best when He described the Holy Spirit as, *“Christ in the Christian.”*

Understand the implication of this fact! That means unlike those first 12 disciples, we don’t have to spend time looking for Jesus. Our Lord often went off by Himself to pray and Peter and the others had to search for Him. We don’t have to do that because in the power of His Spirit our Lord God is with us---in us---ALL THE TIME, wherever we go. I remember reading that our English word for *“Holy Ghost”* has its roots in an old Anglo-Saxon word from which we also get our word, *“guest.”* This should remind us that the Holy Spirit is indeed an ever-present Holy Guest in the life of all believers.

Okay done with our crash course. This morning I want to borrow an outline from Tim Peck and try to further UNCONFUSE our CONFUSION about the Holy Spirit---by focusing on one of the things the Bible often associates the Holy

Spirit---namely FREEDOM. The apostle Paul wrote in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 3:17, ***“Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom.”*** With that verse in mind, I want to look at four freedoms that the Holy Spirit produces in our lives as Christians.

### **(1) The Holy Spirit is our COUNSELOR.**

Look back at John 16:7–8 where Jesus says: ***“But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. When He comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.”***

As I’ve told you in the past, the Greek word for “counselor” is pronounced “*para caleo*” and it means someone serves as a “*paraclete*” ----one who is called alongside of another person---to offer assistance. Most weeks I serve as a “*paraclete*” in this sense when one of the kids on my Upward team asks me to “*come alongside*” and tie his shoes. It could also be translated as: “*comforter, helper, supporter, advocate, ally, even friend.*”

Jesus tells us that part of what the Holy Spirit does as a paraclete is convict people of sin. The idea here is that until we profess our faith in Jesus we live in a state of spiritual blindness—we might call it denial—about how we stand before God. Our tendency is to minimize our guilt before God, to point to other people who seem worse than we are, to make excuses. So the Holy Spirit as a counselor or paraclete who penetrates our evasions, shatters our defenses, and silences our excuses in order to show us how we truly stand before God.

As Paul put it in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:3: ***“Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus be cursed,’ and no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’---except by the Holy Spirit.”*** God is using Paul to remind us that our confession of Jesus’ lordship in our lives is tied directly to the activity of God’s Holy Spirit. Apart from the work of God’s Spirit, none of us would become Christians; none of us would turn away from our sins and surrender our lives to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Our sins have made us spiritually dead, incapable of seeking God on God’s terms apart from divine intervention. So God, through the power of His Holy Spirit draws us to Himself---and He does this for all people for, ***“He is not willing that any should perish.”***

So---thanks to our Counselor---the Holy Spirit---we are free to experience salvation. We are FREED from the slavery of sin and free to enjoy a relationship with God. As A.W. Tozer wrote, ***“The primary work of the Holy Spirit is to restore the lost soul to intimate fellowship with God.”***

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is the freedom of salvation.

Here’s a second freedom the Holy Spirit produces in our lives.

### **(2) The Holy Spirit is our GUARANTEE.**

We read about this freedom in Ephesians 1:13-14: ***“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, Who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession, to the praise of his glory.”***

In the 1<sup>st</sup> century, people used a seal to make things secure. New Testament scholar Gordon Fee says, ***“A seal denoted ownership and authenticity; this thereby guaranteed the protection of the owner.”***

If you visit people in the hospital these days you know you don’t just go up to the room. No---first, your temperature is taken. Then you answer several questions: ***“Have you had fever or cough?” “Have you been around someone with COVID?” “Have you been in a large group of people where someone could have COVID.”*** Then they watch as you use Purell to wash your hands. Only then are you given a name tag---many times with your picture on it. That name tag “*authenticates*” you as a “*legal*” visitor. When a nurse sees you walking down the hall with that name-tag on they don’t call security to escort you out of the building. The Holy Spirit is like that---His presence in us---authenticates our salvation. It marks us as a forgiven man or woman of God.

Did you notice the OTHER word Paul uses here? He says the Holy Spirit is also a “*deposit*.” In other words, the Holy Spirit is a first installment or down payment that is God’s pledge to complete what he started in our lives. Quoting Gordon Fee again: “*The Spirit Himself is the down payment in our lives that guarantees our certain future. The gift of the Spirit is the first part of the redemption of the whole person.*” So, with Him in us---we are free to experience security in our relationship with God.

Referring to the word “seal” again---the Holy Spirit is a “seal” of ownership. As Jesus put it in John 10:28, “***I give them [Christians] eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of My hand.***” Thanks to the Holy Spirit we know no one or no thing can take away our salvation. We are eternally secure.

I’m reminded of an old children’s sermon where you put a small toy person in your hand and grip it tight. Then you challenge the children to open your hand and get it out. They never can. Your grip as an adult is too strong for the grips of all their tiny hands put together. That’s freedom. We are safe---secure---freed from all fear---even the fear of death.

People who have not put their faith in Christ do not have that freedom. As Romans 8:9 says: “***If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.***” Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is the freedom of a guarantee of security.

### **(3) The Holy Spirit is our COACH.**

Okay---as a counselor the Holy Spirit brings us to Christ, as a guarantee the Holy Spirit makes us secure with God, but what about after we've come to know Christ? Paul answers this question in Galatians 5:16–17 where he says: “***So I say, LIVE by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.***” And in Galatians 5:25 it says: “***Since we live by the Spirit, let us KEEP IN STEP with the Spirit.***”

The word “live” in verse 16 is literally the word “walk,” and the picture here is that the spiritual life is a process of walking. This is where we get the idea of the spiritual life being a journey—that a commitment to Christ isn’t a destination. No---it’s the beginning of a journey, of a pilgrimage from where we are today to where God wants to take us.

And this journey is a hard one. It’s a marathon that is uphill all the way. You see, once we become Christians, we aren’t perfect---we’re just forgiven. We still struggle to live in ways that please God. The only way to progress in this uphill journey is to keep in step with the Spirit, like a marching band keeps in step with its band leader. This image presents the Holy Spirit as being kind of like a coach---walking or jogging beside you urging you on.

These days it’s popular to join a health club where---if you pay a “little” more money---they will give you your personal coach. This person will tell you how long and how fast and at what elevation to run on the treadmill. He or she will supervise you as you lift weights and do all kinds of exercises. Some coaches even ask you to keep a journal of what you eat. The idea is this coach helps you meet your goals for health. The Holy Spirit does something like that when it comes to our SPIRITUAL health. He offers us hands on encouragement, resources, and help as we walk up this sometimes steep hill of spiritual growth and maturity.

Like a good coach, the Holy Spirit won’t walk for us, but He walks beside us, inviting us to keep in step with His promptings, to follow His direction, and to rely on His encouragement and strengthening. This is what I’m talking about in this third freedom. With the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit, we are free to move forward spiritually.

It’s like when you are in the airport and you are walking as you pull your luggage. You look over at a guy who is walking half as fast as you but moving TWICE as fast as you. The Holy Spirit empowers us like that---to make progress---progress we could never make on our own.

No matter what we encounter along this incredible lifelong trail, our Coach is there with us, offering us everything we need to take the next step. When we feel stuck or discouraged or like quitting and turning back---the Holy Spirit is there

to prompt us on and to give us the power to keep going. Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is empowering freedom to move forward toward Christlikeness.

Here's one more freedom the Holy Spirit provides.

#### **(4) The Holy Spirit is a GIVER.**

Last August we did a churchwide study of Spiritual Gifts. Do you remember what God used Paul to say about his in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:7–11?

Let me refresh your memories. ***“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is GIVEN for the common good. To one there is GIVE through the Spirit the message of wisdom---to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit---to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues---and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He gives them to each one, just as He determines.”***

The thing I want us to note is that The Holy Spirit gives each and every Christian one or more of these spiritual gifts. Paul says that when we use these gifts in the church for the common good---that is a *“manifestation”* of the Holy Spirit. He says that because it's in using these gifts that the invisible presence of the Holy Spirit is made visible for people to see.

The reason we are given these gifts is to use them in a local church. This is why we stress the importance of every Christian finding a good church home to JOIN and become active in. When we use these gifts that church is built up and strengthened. That church has all it needs to do what God calls it to do. Looking at this from the other side---if the invisible presence of the Holy Spirit isn't being experienced in a local church, it's not because the Spirit hasn't given these gifts. It's because the Christians in that church aren't using these manifestations for the common good.

The point is---in the power of His indwelling Spirit our Lord gives each of us the gifts we need to do the good work He has called us to do in the church. Thanks to the GIVING of the Holy Spirit we are FREE to serve God in His church.

This is Alka-Seltzer tabs in water---one sealed. Why is one fizzing and the other not?

Right---because one is still in its watertight seal. For Alka Seltzer to work you have to open it up. The same is true of spiritual gifts. When we neglect to use them, we're guilty of a kind of spiritual fraud. You see, the Holy Spirit gives us these gifts, but it's up to us to unwrap them.

As Paul told young Timothy, we should each, ***“Fan into flame the gift, which is in you!*** (2 Timothy 1:16) The spiritual health of any church is determined not by how powerful the worship service is, not by how effective the speaker is, not by how great the facility is---but by how many individual members are using their spiritual gifts in ministry.

You see, it's the Holy Spirit's giving of these gifts that frees us to serve God. After all, what do we have to really offer God? Not much. But if we use that which He has given us to manifest His presence, to make His invisible work visible through our tangible service, then we are free to serve God. Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is the FREEDOM to make an eternal difference in this world!

This morning, let me ask you—would you like to have these freedoms?

- The freedom that comes from knowing your sins have been forgiven and you are saved?
- The freedom that comes from knowing your salvation is secure. You are safe in God's hands?
- The freedom God's indwelling Spirit provides as our coach---helping us move onward as Christians?
- The freedom to serve God in His church making a real difference in this world?

Well, then you must first accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior—for when you do you will also receive the Gift of His Spirit. This was the main point of Peter's sermon at Pentecost that day. Remember? He said, ***“Repent and be***

***baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*** (Acts 2:38)

And, if you already have this Gift, listen to God’s voice right now so you will hear how He is guiding you to respond to this morning’s worship. You may be a member and you feel God’s Spirit telling you it’s time to get off that purple seat and get involved in one of our ministries. He may be telling you that you need to become a part of our church family--- that your spiritual gifts are needed here.

Let’s Pray