

This is Us

4. Spirit-Filled

(Pentecost Day)

May 22-23, 2021

Welcome to week 4 of our series “This is Us.” If you have a Bible you can turn with me to John 16. In this series we’re taking a look at what Jesus told his disciples at their Last Supper together the night before he was crucified. He taught them important truths which became the family values of the Church; truths like “serve one another; encourage one another to obey God; love others.”

Jesus often said things that his disciples didn’t understand. After he told them a parable about different types of soil, the disciples had to ask him what he meant. The disciples were even afraid to ask Jesus what he meant when he said he was going to be delivered into the hands of his enemies. (Luke 9:45) They were used to him saying mind-boggling things like, “unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you have no part in me...” and “you must be born again...” Jesus said things that didn’t make sense at face value. We understand them today because Jesus explained them and history confirmed them. But the disciples were often baffled by his words.

So the disciples may not have thought deeply about it when Jesus said, *But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. (John 16:7)* Jesus told them, “It is good for you that I am going away.” They might have wondered, “Is this another one of those mystifying things Jesus says? It can’t possibly be good if he goes away.” The idea of Jesus going away didn’t seem to register with the disciples. In verse 5 Jesus says, “None of you ask, ‘where are you going?’” Jesus is trying to help them to understand that he is going to leave them physically, but that it will work out great for them because he also says, “The Advocate will come.” “The Advocate” is one of the names for the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to the disciples – including to us. After he rose from the dead, Jesus gave his disciples the Great Commission to go make disciples. Then in Acts 1:4-5 he tells them, *“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵ For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 1:4-5)*

Acts 2 records the moment the Holy Spirit came upon the believers on the day of Pentecost when the Church was born. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to those early disciples, and he promises the same thing to all who follow Jesus through the ages. That includes you and me.

So, who or what is the Holy Spirit? What are we to be expecting? For many believers, the Holy Spirit is the mysterious third person of the Trinity. We have a solid image of God the Father because we have had fathers. We also can relate to God the Son because he was a human being like us. And we've seen paintings and movies depicting Jesus ministering in Israel 2,000 years ago. But the Holy Spirit? – that's a fuzzy one for many. It's harder to relate to a spirit. In John 16 Jesus tells us some important truths about the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is a person, not a force. Jesus referred to the Spirit as "He," not "it." He is the third **person** of the Trinity. The Spirit is not an impersonal force like electricity. He doesn't take possession of us, he fills us. Satan possess, the Spirit fills. Being filled with the Spirit is not like falling into a trance; it is not like being under the influence of a drug. We don't lose control of ourselves. He doesn't dominate us; he fills us with his presence. So really, Jesus is promising that God himself will come and dwell in us! That is amazing to think about – and maybe a little intimidating... what will happen when God shows up in our lives? In John 16 Jesus shares just a little bit of what the Spirit does.

What the Holy Spirit does:

- **The Holy Spirit comforts us**

Another translation of the word "Advocate" is "Comforter." That tells us that the Holy Spirit brings us comfort from God when we need it. The Comfort of the Holy Spirit is not just a pat on the back --- "There, there..." That kind of comfort won't cut it when we are in real pain. Someone whose child just died needs more than pat on the back. Someone whose body is wracked with debilitating pain needs more than a "There, there" from the Lord. The Holy Spirit brings comfort because he is WITH us, not far off on the throne of heaven. And there is comfort in his presence.

Over the years many have told me they sense God's presence at our Crossroads services. One career military guy told me that he felt a deep peace and presence whenever he pulled into our parking lot. That is the presence of the Comforter. Others have told me that they have started to cry during worship and they weren't sure why. That is a response to the presence of God. When Jesus was physically on the earth, he could only be at one place at a time. But after he sent the Holy Spirit, it meant that God could with us in each of us all the time.

In the Old Testament the presence of God was centered in the Holy of Holies in the Temple in Jerusalem. Before that he was in the pillar of fire that the Jews followed in the desert. But when the Spirit came at Pentecost the presence of God was not in a pillar of fire outside the city; the fire rested on each one of the disciples. God is with each of us all the time wherever we go.

- **The Holy Spirit teaches us truth** (vv. 12-13)

“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. ¹³ But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

Jesus couldn't tell the disciples everything he wanted to tell them; they couldn't handle it. But he said that the Holy Spirit would fill in the blanks for them later. The Spirit leads us into the truth about God and the truth about ourselves. This is why rapid church multiplication movements in India or Iran generally don't go wildly off base and into heresy. If they have copies of the Bible the Spirit will lead them into truth. And the Spirit will convince others that they need Jesus. We can't convince anyone on our own. It's not our job. It's hard to watch someone we know reject Christ or walk away from their life in God. We want to shake them and tell them, “Jesus loves you! Don't you know that?” That won't work, though. Our role is simply to tell people about what Jesus did in our lives and point them to Jesus. Then it is up to the Spirit to convince the people they need to be forgiven and to follow Jesus.

- **The Holy Spirit is Holy**

It's his name after all! That means he will give us the power to become like Jesus. In fact, it is the only way we can become like Jesus – by the power of the Spirit. *Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control;* The fruit – or the natural by-product of being filled with the Spirit- are those character traits, which are the traits of Jesus!

- **The Holy Spirit empowers us for ministry through gifts of the Spirit**

1 Cor. 12: 1 Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. I don't want anyone here at Crossroads to be unaware of spiritual gifts either, because God strengthens us through them.

Mike Pilavachi wrote a book called, *Everyday Supernatural: Living a Spirit-Led Life without Being Weird*. In it he shares incidents from his own life and others he knows, of ministering to people in the course of his daily activities. He'd come across someone who was sick or injured and pray for their healing. He'd pass someone and sense a message from God for them. The key was to respond to the promptings to do that.

In his book he also tells of Brother Andrew, who felt God call him back in the 1950's to serve persecuted Christians. In the early years of his ministry he would load his car up with Bibles and drive them to communist-controlled Eastern Europe. What he was doing was dangerous but Brother Andrew would pray and God would miraculously “blind” the eyes of the border guards. They would open his car's trunk, somehow not see the Bibles (which were there in plain sight), and Brother Andrew would be waved through. *God's Smuggler* tells of all sorts of everyday supernatural encounters. God helped his car keep going without fuel; he once recognized another believer “in his spirit” as he passed him in the street; he saw miraculous answers to prayer. It sounds

crazy, doesn't it? But his life has been full of God's power.¹ That is because he was filled with the Spirit and obeyed the promptings of the Spirit.

It's not just daring missionaries who experience God's work through the Spirit, though. It is the normal Christian life. Hearing these stories helps us see why Jesus said, "It is good for you that I go away..." The Holy Spirit brings comfort, conviction, holiness, truth, power. We need those!

- We need God's comfort – and the Holy Spirit brings that. Jesus here in person could not personally comfort billions of people; the Spirit can.

- We need to know God's truth ---about who God is and what he is like. We need him to know the truth about ourselves. We need him to show us our need for Jesus and we need his power to break the grip of sinful habits.

- We need the gifts of the Spirit to build each other up and to reach people for Christ. We need to be encouraged and taught by those with teaching gifts. We need to be healed by those with that gift. We need to be led by those with the gift of leadership and hear a word from God through prophecy. We need to use all the tools in God's toolbox to reach the world.

We get what we need to live for Christ through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. At its core, the normal Christian life is a supernatural one. That doesn't mean it is flashy, just that we aren't meant to follow Christ on our own power. When we try, we make ministry or following Jesus about technique or will power, we fail and put burdens on people.

- **The Spirit allows us to be Naturally Supernatural**

The great news is that we don't have to act in a strange way or speak with a weird intonation or dress like a televangelist in order to live in the power of the Holy Spirit. We are to be filled with the Spirit, then naturally respond to his prompts. We pray for people in natural tones of voice. We speak using normal words.

One key to experiencing God's power is to respond to promptings from him. Sometimes a person comes to my mind. I think I should give them a call or connect with them. Maybe you've had that experience too. There have been times I've acted on that thought and connected with that person. Quite often, it becomes obvious that God was prompting me to make that contact. Other times I don't follow through and make the call. Why not? Most of the time it is because the prompt never seems urgent or overwhelming – just a passing thought. It's easy for me to assume it is just my own thought, nothing special. But I have realized that the Lord rarely shouts – he speaks in a still small voice that is easy to ignore. He won't send an angel with a booming voice saying, "CALL MIKE." No, it will be a soft whisper, "Call Mike..."

I've spoken before about the night a prompt from the Holy Spirit saved my life.

¹ Pilavachi, Mike; Croft, Andy. *Everyday Supernatural: Living a Spirit-Led Life without Being Weird* (p. 20). David C Cook. Kindle Edition.

Years ago, I got a call in the middle of the night. A member of our church was dying and I was asked to come to the hospital. As I got dressed to go, Linda turned over in bed and said, "Take the van." I normally drove my subcompact Honda Civic, but I took our van that night. As I got near the hospital, a drunk driver speeding the wrong way down a one way street came through the intersection and demolished the front part of the van. I was unhurt, but if I had been in the Honda, I would have been severely injured or killed. Why did Linda tell me to take the van that night? That was the only time she said that in over 40 years of marriage. I believe the Lord prompted her to say that and she did. And it saved my life. It was the Holy Spirit at work in a very natural way – but in a supernatural way too.

Jesus gave his followers a mission to go make disciples, then told them to wait for the gift of the Spirit. They did, and the Spirit filled them. Throughout the book of Acts we see believers being filled with the Spirit. **Ephesians 5:18 - *be filled with the Spirit***, That's because it is impossible to live for Christ and make a difference in the world by our own power or ingenuity. After the service our prayer team will pray for you to be filled with the Spirit. If you would like prayer for healing, or a prophetic word, come forward and our team will pray for you and with you. And now I'd like to pray for you as well. Let's bow...