

XVIII. The Holy Spirit in Biblical Perspective

Led by the Spirit

“The Holy Spirit and the Presence of Christ”

John 16:16–24

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July 17, 2016 – Morning sermon

We are making our way through our Savior’s last sermon, the Upper Room Discourse, in which He teaches on the work of the Holy Spirit. The text we will be looking at in this study contain some extraordinary information and life changing words for us. John 16:16–19 says [16] *“A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me.”* [17] *So some of his disciples said to one another, “What is this that he says to us, ‘A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me’; and, ‘because I am going to the Father?’”* [18] *So they were saying, “What does he mean by ‘a little while’? We do not know what he is talking about.”* [19] *Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, “Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, ‘A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me’?”*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

Almost every year at holy week I get this question; when we get to Good Friday I almost always hear from someone, ‘Pastor, would you mind telling me why we call this ‘Good Friday?’ Why don’t we call it sad Friday or catastrophic Friday or tragic Friday? Why do we call it Good Friday? Even during that Good Friday service there is reflection, sobriety, thoughtfulness and this drum beat of hope and yet we also call it Good Friday. This text today tells us why we call it Good Friday. From the Disciples on, God’s People, His Church, do not call it sad Friday or tragic Friday or catastrophic Friday yet it’s understandable why we might think that, but we refuse to say that. This text will tell us.

This is an interesting text because we keep hearing ‘a little while’ this and a little while that. One pastor referred to this passage reverently as the barker at the fair who says ‘now you see it, now you don’t.’ A little while you’ll see Me and for a little while you won’t and then a little while and you’ll see Me again. So what is going on in this text? You are not the first one to ask that question because the Disciples have asked that question.

Have you ever noticed how many times after Jesus has done a miracle or taught them the Disciples respond with ‘huh?’ but they were embarrassed to say that in front of Jesus so they would go to the side and have a little caucus together. They would converse among themselves asking ‘What does He mean when He says this? What does He mean going to the Father?’ In the previous chapter Jesus uses this going, sending, leaving language all in there with the glorious fact that the Gospel is a Trinitarian Gospel. The Father sent the Son, the Son has come and accomplished His mission – victory – and then He goes back to the Father. That means the next step of the Covenant of grace. He sends His Spirit to us and His Spirit will bear witness to us of the Son to bring us to Him and then give us the ability to bear witness of Him. Thereby He informs us of the Spirit-filled life.

The Spirit-filled life is not a fascination with the effects or gifts of the Spirit for the multi-faceted ministry of the Spirit, but the singular relentless project of the Spirit of the risen Christ is to bear witness of Christ. Then for those who come to Christ, it enables them to bear witness to Christ in word and deed and that is Spirit-filled Christian and the Spirit-filled church.

If that is the case then He wants His Disciples to be fully prepared with what is going to face them. He has already ministered to them to prepare them. When the Holy Spirit comes you'll bear witness of Jesus.

About seven or eight years ago we went to do an Embers to a Flame conference on church revitalization and there is a denomination that is dying in theological liberalism where a couple of churches in that denomination attended this conference. God very graciously put those churches on fire. The man over the conference where those churches are asked 'what is happening down there?' They told him and also told him to go check on the Embers to a Flame conference. The man read the book and asked if the conference could be held for them. I told them to make sure he knew what was going to be talked about so that this man would know what he was inviting in. I didn't want to go under false pretenses but they invited us to come. It was a wonderful time and God was very gracious to us. When the conference was over we had a big worship service in the largest church in that city that was a part of that denomination where I was asked to preach at. When it was over Carolyn Phillips who worked in the Embers ministry was sitting next to a pastor during the service. At the end of the service he asked her 'Does he always talk about Jesus that much in his sermons?' She said 'Usually it's a little more, he was a little laid back today.'

He didn't realize that for that was not a conscious thing for me to think how many times I said the name Jesus, but he just didn't know two things. One, was the Word of God and two is the Spirit of God. The Word of God you can't handle without pointing people to Jesus, beginning with Moses and all the Prophets He explained Himself in all the Scriptures. Two, the Holy Spirit is relentless. He will not let us go anywhere but to exalt Christ. So if one is Spirit-filled, Word-focused and Word-committed then Christ is going to be exalted. You will bear witness of Christ. Now He has prepared them for this for it is to their advantage that He goes to the Father. The Disciples are still wondering about that phrase 'going to the Father.'

He is not going directly to the Father yet for first He will go to a cross. Then He'll go to a tomb. Then He'll go up into glory but notice that He doesn't say 'I go to a cross, then to a tomb' but He says 'I go to the Father.' He is going to the cross and then the tomb to win the victory and when He wins the victory He goes to the Father. When He goes to the Father, the Father then sends His Promise from His Son to us, the Holy Spirit. Now that He is about to go He takes over pastorally with His Disciples. He says to them 'in a little while you won't see Me anymore, in another little while you will see Me' and then the Disciples go to the side and say 'what is this little while He is talking about?' By the way, Christians have been caucusing on this for 2,000 years. What is this little while and who is He talking to?

Those two questions are directly related. When you understand who He is talking to you will understand what He is talking about when He uses the little while. When you understand the little while then you'll understand what He is talking about. There are three possible answers of what He is talking about when He says 'in a little while you won't see Me and in a little while you will see Me.'

The first possibility is talking about His ascension and Pentecost. In a little while you won't see Me for He will ascend to glory and then in a little while you will see Me, meaning at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit during Pentecost. When Jesus gives the Great Commission He says to go and make disciples of all the nations and then He says 'and I will be with you.' He says He will never leave us or forsake us. So some think this is saying they won't see Him because He will ascend to glory and then they will see Him when He sends the Holy Spirit for

they will see Him as the Spirit of Christ comes and brings the touch of Christ to them and to us by His presence.

The second possibility is that it is speaking of the ascension and the second coming of Christ. The ascension meaning that Christ will be in glory and not with us and yes He sends His Spirit but the glorified incarnate Christ is not with us. We do not see Him or touch Him. Then in the second coming He will come and everything will be turned into the joys of the new heavens and the new earth. Some are thinking that when He said 'a little while' it has been over 2,000 years since His ascension. If this is the accurate interpretation of the text that is simply reflecting the eternal perspective of God because God is not bound by time and therefore the Bible tells us a thousand years is like a day and a day is like a thousand years (2 Peter 3:8). It is not a formula for it's just a statement to us that God is eternal and not captivated by time. He created time. So 2,000 years in the eternal perspective is just two days.

The third possibility is that Jesus is speaking of what is about to take place just hours after He says 'in a little while.' It is His arrest, then His trial, then His cross and then the tomb. 'You will not see Me. Then in a little while you will see Me.' This would refer to them seeing Him in three days when His resurrection takes place. When Jesus is arrested nine of the eleven Disciples will flee from Him. Two will follow Him to the trials and of those two another one will flee and that is Peter. John will follow Him to the cross to stand beside His mother, Mary and then at the cross John will also not see Him again.

So who is He talking to? There are three possibilities here as well. Possibility number one is that He is talking to you and me particularly if you see this the 'little while' as the ascension and the second coming. The second possibility is that He is speaking directly to the Disciples. The third possibility is that He is speaking to His Disciples for us and our benefits. So how can we get there? Some at this point are saying it's the third possibility because it seems like it always is. You are right but I want you to work it through it with me in the text because there is something absolutely life changing in this text in terms of where this leads us and when we rightly understand it. Let's go back to the text.

Jesus is using their caucus as an opportunity to draw them out so in the meanwhile here is what He now says. John 16:19–24 says [19] *Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, "Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, 'A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me'?"* [20] *Truly, truly, (so be it forever, amen, amen) I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.* [21] *When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.* [22] *So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.* [23] *In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.* [24] *Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.*

Jesus in responding to them kind of teases them out of their questions and gives them an answer. His answer will help us understand what is the little while, who He is speaking to, the other little while and who He is speaking to there. Here are three facts from what we just read. Fact one, whoever Jesus is talking to has seen, touched and personally encountered the Incarnate Christ with a sensible encounter. What do I mean by sensible? The encounter has been one that has been experienced through the senses – feel, see, smell etc. Jesus says a number

of time 'you have seen Me, the Incarnate Christ.' They have intimately known Him. They have been felt of Him and touched by Him.

The second fact, whoever He is talking to 'in a little while' will be deprived of this personal intimacy with Christ. They will no longer be able to see Him, touch Him and talk with Him. They will lose that dynamic of that personal relationship of intimacy with Him. The third fact, whoever He is talking to has received five prophetic promises. Ten times Jesus says "I will" or "you will" as in this 'will' happen. These 'will' statements come out to five prophetic promises that He is making to whoever He is talking to.

The first prophetic promise is upon their separation from Christ they will weep and lament. That is very careful language in the Bible. This is funeral language. It is what one does in hopelessness and helplessness upon separation in a funeral. The second thing He says is that the world will rejoice while you weep and lament. So in this little while they will go into a funeral lifestyle and at the same time the world will celebrate and rejoice upon this little while separation.

The second prophetic promise is after another little while you will be personally reunited to the Incarnate Christ. You will see Him. You will have a reunion with this Incarnate Christ.

The third prophetic promise is upon this reunion with Christ your (funeral) sorrows will be turned into joy upon joy upon joy. The sorrows don't just disappear but they are turned into joy. To drive the point home He uses an illustration. The illustration is a birth room. It is like a woman who is giving birth for in the process of her giving birth she goes through pangs, anguish and that is why we call it labor. In pain you shall bring forth children (Genesis 3:16). Then He says that when the life is delivered and born, the sorrows of the woman become her joy.

Ladies, I have not experienced this and I want you to know I have no desire to experience this. If you wanted to have a population control program just assign giving birth to men. We are not equipped for it in multiple levels. I don't care what the stupidity of egalitarian is for there is no way we can pull it off nor do we want to pull it off. I know the big thing is to be there when the baby is born but I've always thought I shouldn't be there when the baby is born because there is a possibility in that process of agony and labor my wife is liable to shoot me right then. I do know if I come in right after that baby is born it is going to be a happy room. The delivery room is life has now come forth. That is what Jesus is saying. Over here you think you're in the mortuary, the death room and then all of a sudden you will find out that this was the birth room, the delivery room. Your sorrows will turn into joy.

The fourth prophetic promise is because of this you will be blessed with a Christ-authorized, a Christ-centered, effective prayer life. The day you see Me you will just be overwhelmed and won't be asking anything but I want you to know that after you see Me, from that day forward, I am giving you direct authorization in My Name right to the heavenlies, right to the throne of Thrones. When you pray in My Name, which is praying Biblically, according to My Will, whatever you ask the Father is going to give to you. This is not a blank check but a cashier's check. He has put His Name on it so when we come in His Name in His Word framing our request, the Lord our God will give us that which we ask for.

Now He may not give it to you in the details you asked for it. Jesus says when you ask for fish you will not get a snake and when you ask for bread He won't give you a stone. Here is the problem. Many times when we pray we think we're asking for fish and we're actually asking for snakes. Remember when you asked for that job. You weren't asking for bread but for a stone. God didn't give you that job but another job. Or that person you thought you were

supposed to marry and it didn't work out. You might think 'God I thought You were going to give me what I asked?' He says 'I'm giving you what you asked, for I'm giving it to you according to your need, from My wisdom and not your wisdom because I love you and know what is best for you.' That is why you end your prayers with 'not my will be done but Your will be done.'

Do you remember Abraham and Lot? God told Abraham He was going to give him all this land that included rocks, hills, mountains and everything. Then Lot gets these rich, fertile valleys. I can just see Abraham saying 'Lord, I believed and look what You gave me – rocks and look what he's got – a fertile valley.' God didn't give Abraham the valleys because He knew in the valleys was a Sodom and Gomorrah. That job or marriage you wanted may have had a Sodom and Gomorrah in it. The Lord gives His perfect gifts in His perfect ways, using the effective prayer life of His people.

The fifth prophetic promise is you will get a prevailing joy that cannot be taken from you. This tells you that people are going to try and take it from them. Even though people and Satan want to try and take away your joy you can be assured that it will be a prevailing joy for it cannot be taken from you. So where are we as we work our way through this?

I don't think we're talking about the Ascension to Pentecost because the language is too heavy in terms of an actual encounter with the Incarnate Christ. I have labored in these past few studies to tell you the Lord is with you spiritually when His Spirit who was with Him is now with you. I believe this text is not speaking of the Holy Spirit bringing Christ to bear to be with you but actually the Incarnate Christ will be encountered. Secondly, it says that when He goes away they will weep and lament. When Jesus ascended to heaven did the Disciples weep and lament? No, they went back and prayed – effective prayer for the Gospel to go to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the utter most parts of the world. So I don't see this one as the Ascension to Pentecost.

I certainly see the implications of the Ascension to the Second Coming but here is the problem. Whoever it is that is getting this promise encountered the Incarnate Christ sensibly and I haven't. I haven't touched Him. We have not seen Him. We believe in Him. Though we have not seen Him we love Him. I think it has implications to us but I believe He is speaking to the Disciples and the 'in a little while' refers to His arrest and the other 'in a little while' refers to His resurrection. That is what He is talking about.

When Jesus pastors He wants to prepare the Disciples for what is going to come in a broken world. Since from John 13 this is the fifth time we have seen Jesus, even though the Disciples will abandon Him, and His pastor's heart come through. How does He do it each time? He does it through the Word preached. Jesus is convinced and He is trying to convince us to be prepared in this world, you have to know the Word of God by the power of the Spirit of God and God has ordained the preaching and teaching of the Word. You know Christ and you want to live for Christ, you will be under assault in a broken world, but you are prepared when you are in God's Word every day and because you have prioritized the preaching of God's Word even in spite of the inadequacies and incompetency's of called preachers. God speaks through His Word preached. Faith comes by hearing the Word of Christ.

So many of us think that if we have time today then I'll read the Bible and that's a big mistake. Or if a worship service and preaching fits into my schedule which is mostly around entertainment, then I'll come, particularly if it's entertaining, instead of us prioritizing the sufficiency of God's inerrant Word and the foolishness of preaching. That is what Jesus uses to prepare His people. What is Jesus trying to tell them with what is going to happen?

He says 'In just a couple of hours I will be arrested, remember? It wasn't but a few minutes ago that Judas got up and left the room. He is striking the deal and he knows where I'm going, to Garden of Gethsemane. He will come and betray Me with a kiss. In a little while nine of you won't see Me anymore. Then I'll go to six trials. Then another one of you will not see Me anymore. Then I'll go to the cross. There the One who created everything is going to bow His head.' Amazing love, how can it be that Thou my God should die for me? Then He won't see Me anymore as I'm closed in a tomb. 'In another little while, back in this room where we are now, you will see Me. When I am taken you will treat it as a funeral for you will weep and lament but when you see Me again it will turn into joy.' Here is your takeaway.

The takeaway is the bodily resurrection of Christ transforms the cross of Christ from a funeral dirge of death and despair to a victory hymn of life and joy. When that occurs and Jesus goes to that cross, His Disciples lament and weep. Jesus doesn't jump on them so we ought not to jump on them. Why are they doing that? They have just had three years with Jesus in an intimate relationship with Him. They have watched Him and seen Him do miracles and now all of sudden the One they have been with intimately for three years is gone. See how we weep and lament at the death of loved ones, even though we know we'll be reunited with them. Just a few minutes before they had been with Him in His humility as He took a towel and basin and His strong hands washed their feet. Their hopes are dashed for now He is gone.

Remember the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus after Jesus has resurrected? They are not sure He has resurrected but they encounter Him not knowing it is Him. Jesus asked them why their hearts are down trodden and they say 'because we thought He was the Messiah.' Their hopes are dashed. Their relationship is lost with intimate contact with Christ. You can also see why they weep and lament because of the type of death Jesus died. He dies on a Roman cross of humiliation. People spit on Him and mock Him. He is stripped of His clothes before the eyes of men and women. It is understandable that they are weeping and lamenting.

It is understandable why we take Good Friday and treat it with sobriety, because we know it is our sins that provide the occasion for that cross. They don't have the Pentecostal presence of the Holy Spirit yet. They do have the Spirit but not as the Spirit of Christ poured forth from the One who went to be with the Father. They are still confused and bewildered. They weep and lament also because they hear the world celebrating the death of their Savior. But when Jesus rises those laments are transformed into joy. The funeral dirge becomes a hymn of life and victory.

It wasn't the death of a movement. It was the deliverance from death unto life that was taking place on that cross. It was not a Roman act of intimidation and humiliation for it was God fore-ordained act that He who knew no sin would become sin on our behalf and we would become the righteousness of God in Him. His resurrection was the trumpet sound of that which had occurred so this was not the humiliation of the cross but this is the power of the cross. Our sorrows are turned into joy. He is not speaking of sequence – you have sorrow then you have joy – night time to day time. He is not talking about cycles or chronology. He is not even talking about comparison of now that Jesus has risen look at our joy and the lament pales in significance to that joy, no.

He is saying that the laments become joy. They are transformed into joy so now we call the Gospel the Word of the cross. We come to a Table to remember the body and blood of Christ. We are baptized into His death and we rejoice in His resurrection. Our laments become joyful celebrations of victory because this isn't a mortuary but this is a delivery room. Christ

when He goes to the cross is purchasing our salvation so it is Good Friday. As Charles Wesley put it in his hymn *Arise, My Soul, Arise*;
Arise, my soul, arise; shake off thy guilty fears;
The bleeding sacrifice in my behalf appears:
Before the throne my surety stands,
My name is written on His hands.

It is finished was his cry, it was not a cry of despair but victory and now He is exalted on high! Praise His Name forevermore. We sing the hymns of victory at Calvary. At Calvary is not a funeral dirge and it's serious business because it is my sins and it's reflective business but it is joyful truth that Jesus is risen and lifted high. Therefore what I lamented now becomes my joy.

The hymn *Hallelujah, What A Savior* says;
Lifted up was He to die;
It is finished! was His cry;
Now in Heav'n exalted high.
Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Now go lift Him up and proclaim the cross where the love of God met the justice of God and the double cure of sin's guilt and power was delivered to us as our shame flees, He paid it all. As the power of sin is broken, He is risen. Though you do not see Him you believe Him. Though you do not see Him now you love Him. You rejoice with joy unspeakable that cannot be taken away. O the power of the cross! There is life evermore. Let's pray.

Prayer:

How is the Holy Spirit speaking to you? Perhaps today He spoke to you and said 'Listen it is not your work or your resolve but it is what I sent My Son to do and has now come home to Me in victory.' The lament of sin can be replaced by the joy of forgiveness. I sent, He came, He has come home in victory and He sent the Holy Spirit to you. Now you come to Him. Jesus I come. Father, for all who have come to Christ may we rejoice in that which the resurrection compels us to rejoice, the power of the cross. O for sinners slain, O for redemption and ransom, His death, our life – He has crushed death and sin and our weeping and lamenting are gone. Victory and joy we now sing when we survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died and is risen and we live for I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

The bodily resurrection of Christ transforms the Cross of Christ from a funeral dirge of death and despair to a victory hymn of life and joy.