

## **The Helping Presence of the Spirit**

*John 14:15-31; June 5, 2016*

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**Introduction:** I'm sure most of you saw the news that broke this past Friday of Muhammad Ali's death. He was a three-time world heavyweight boxing champion and who had been battling Parkinson's disease since 1984. He was very quotable guy and growing up I remember my dad quoting on one of his famous lines all the time: "Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee. The hands can't hit what the eyes can't see." A CNN article recently described what his final moments were like. He was surrounded by his family. "They help his once powerful hands. They hugged and kissed their...father. They chanted Islamic prayer... (and) tried to stay strong. Some whispered in his ear: 'You can go now. We will be okay. We love you. Thank you. You can go back to God now.'" It's never easy losing a loved one. Though we don't know exactly what they are feeling, we can all relate to the emotional and physical loss they are experiencing.

**Transition:** Now consider what Jesus' disciples are experiencing, as we continue our study through the farewell discourse where Jesus is instructing the Eleven disciples about life after his departure. Jesus has recently told them that his hour had come to leave this world and return to the Father. The very one who had called out to them saying, "Follow me," and they had left everything, is now about to leave them and go where they cannot follow him, at least not immediately. What are they going to do? Where are they going to go? How would they survive without his guiding presence? As we saw last week in John 14, Jesus sought to comfort them saying, "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me" (John 14:1). Additionally, he told them that they would do even greater works than he had done because he was going to the Father and that they could ask anything in his name and he'd do it (Read John 14:12-14). Our passage today really hinges on these promises that Jesus made:

- The prospect of doing "greater works" requires enabling power, the power that will come only from the Holy Spirit when Jesus ascends into heaven (thus explaining why his going to the Father is a good thing).
- The promise that Jesus will do anything we ask in his name is contingent upon a genuine loving relationship with Christ. He can't simply be manipulated to meet your own personal needs.

**Read 14:15-31**

**The Point: Display genuine love for Christ and Enjoy the Helping Presence of Christ.**

### **I. Genuine Love for Christ is Displayed in Obedience to Christ (14:15, 21-24, 31).**

The focus in 14:15-24 is on love, with "love" occurring eight times. Jesus call his followers to display their love for him through obedience. This is very reminiscent of the demands on the OT:

*"And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your*

*God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, [13] and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today for your good?” (Deuteronomy 10:12-13 ESV).*

Jesus' love formula: Stated Love + Actual Practice = Actual Love

- In other words, if you say, “I love Jesus” but you don't obey his commands, then you don't love Jesus.
- Love, in the Gospel of John, is not an abstract emotion you only feel but it's something very practical.
- One of the greatest challenges we will continue to face as a church in the days ahead is that our knowledge outruns our obedience. For many of us, our greatest challenge in following Christ isn't knowledge related, knowing what to do, but it's application related, actually putting into practice what we've been called to do by Jesus in his word.

Why is it important to not too quickly overlook the force of these words?

*“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us” (1 John 4:7-12).*

*“We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother” (1 John 4:19-21).*

*“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:1-3).*

A few observations:

- Jesus isn't suggesting that the way we earn God's love is by obedience. Our love is only a response to God's initial love towards us. What Jesus is suggesting is that if we see that our lives aren't characterized by obedience to his commands, then we really don't love Jesus, though we may sing about him on Sundays and tell others that we actually do love him. Jesus is suggesting that if your love is real, it will be seen in your actions, how you obey.
- If you find that there is little obedience in your life, the solution isn't to try and obey harder but rather to come to the cross and experience the love of God in Christ. When you truly experience the love of God in Christ, it changes you. You become alive on the inside and overflow with continual love for God.

- Jesus is the perfect example of love displayed through obedience (14:31; cf. Phil. 2:8).
- Since our love for Christ is displayed through our joyful obedience of him, we should spend with him learning about him and what he demands of us. The reason we encourage daily Bible reading is not just so we can check off a box, but it's so we can learn about the triune God and apply what we learn to our lives.

Soccer Nights Sidebar:

- One of Jesus' commands is this:

*“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:14-16).*

- The reason we do Soccer Nights is because it's a tangible way we can love and serve our community and display the light of Christ. Why not consider serving with us whether it's one night, three nights, or all five nights? And there's so much more to do than just soccer (setup, tear down, registration, childcare for kids of volunteers, snacks, etc.).

Transition: There are a number of promises to the genuine follower who loves Christ:

- You are loved by the Father and the Son (14:21)
- The Father and the Son will “make their home” with you (14:23), now through the helping presence of the Spirit and then one day forever.

## **II. The Helping Presence of the Spirit Dwells in those who Love Christ (14:16-20, 25-30).**

Jesus' departure out of the world prepares the way for the Spirit to come and indwell believers.

- Review 13:1, 36, 14:1-3, 16-20.

### **The Spirit and Salvation History**

- Jesus' death, resurrection and exaltation is about to usher in a new period in salvation history, highlighted specifically by the work of the Spirit. This is why it is to the disciples' advantage that Jesus does to be with the Father (14:28-29).
  - John 7:39: “Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”
  - Acts 1:8: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you...”
- It's not that the Spirit had not been at work previously because the Spirit was present at Creation (Gen. 1:2) and was even at work within some believers prior to Christ (Num. 27:18; Deut. 34:9; Ezek. 2:2; 3:24; Dan. 4:8-9, 18; 5:11; Mic. 3:8). Rather, the Spirit had not been given in a full and powerful sense that was promised for the new covenant age (Ezek. 36:26-27; 37:14; Joel 2:28-29; cf. Acts 2:1-13).
- The Spirit enters believers when they respond to the gospel:

*“In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory” (Eph. 1:13-14).*

### **The Spirit as Another Helping Presence (14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7).**

- “Another”:
  - The Spirit “will replace Jesus’ encouraging and strengthening presence” (Kostenberger). It’s as if “Jesus himself takes up residence in them” (Kostenberger).
- “To be with you forever”
  - This is a promise of divine presence and it involves all three persons of the Trinity: the Spirit (15-17), Jesus (18-21) and the Father (22-24).
  - This reminds us of Moses’ final words to Israel, “The Lord...will never leave you nor forsake you” (Deut. 31:6; cf. Hey. 13:5). Jesus won’t leave them or us as orphans. He will remain present through the Holy Spirit.

*“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:14-16).*

- The promise of God’s presence has been a consistent theme from the beginning. In fact, we could walk through Scripture talking about the people of God in the place of God enjoying the rule, blessing and presence of God. The Garden, the Tabernacle (Exod 25:8; 29:45; Lev. 26:11-12), the Temple (Acts 7:46-47), believers - the New Temple of God (1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16), the New Heavens and Earth

*“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God” (Rev. 21:3).*

- The great thing about the promise of the Spirit’s presence is that he is with us wherever we go. Access to the Spirit isn’t limited to your experience on Sunday mornings. You have 24/7 access to the Spirit. Thus, we should walk in constant communion with Jesus through his Spirit. How do you do this? Through prayer. Talk with him about everything.
- The Spirit brings peace. Thus, they and we now have no need to fear or worry (14:1, 27; cf. Phil. 4:7).

*“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6-7).*

**The Spirit as the Spirit of Truth (14:17; 15:26; 16:13).**

- He will teach the disciples all things and bring to remembrance what he taught them.
  - This promise is specifically to the original disciples. The Spirit was essential in the formation of the NT Canon. He didn't provide new revelation but reminded them of the revelation brought by Jesus. His mission is a continuation of Jesus' mission. This explains to the readers at the end of the first century how the first disciples came to an accurate and full understanding of the truth of Jesus.

*“For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21).*

- The Spirit works in a secondary sense today, helping believers to understand the words and works of Jesus (note: the Spirit doesn't provide new revelation today).
- The “sword of the Spirit” is the Word of God (Eph. 6:17). The Spirit works powerfully in our lives when we set our minds on the Word of God and combine it with faith.

I'm sure the Ali family is still mourning the loss of Muhammad Ali, and rightfully so. But as we think about Jesus' departure from the world to be at the Father's right hand, we should not be sorrowful or anxious. In fact, his very presence is in you through his Spirit and he will still your anxious hearts. He will lead you into truth through illumination of his word. He will bring peace to your hearts and drive our fear. Let's experience him and walk with him in genuine love as we long and wait for his physical return and eternal life with him.

**The Point: Display genuine love for Christ and Enjoy the Helping Presence of Christ.**