

John 16.4b-15—The Holy Spirit is better than Jesus

I. Introduction

- a. I made a decision when our kids were young not to miss anything if possible. I wanted to see them take that first step. I wanted to be there for everything. Of course, I had to work to provide for my family. But the decision I made was only to work my 40 hours unless overtime was mandatory. I was often made fun of for wanting to go home and spend time with my wife and children. I don't have any regrets.
- b. I hope time spent with them was to their advantage. I recall when Lydia was small but very mobile would ask me to turn on the light. She knew it had something to do with a switch on the wall but she could not reach it. I thought, you know, there are going to be times when I am not available to turn it on for her. And there are times when we might be busy doing something else. So, I decided to show her how to move a chair or stool over to the light switch to turn it on herself. I thought that would be to everyone's advantage. And it was.
- c. In a very simply way, she wasn't learning independence but rather dependance on knowledge from her dad. I had given her something that she would have with her from now on. In fact, that understanding could help her get cookies from the counter that were out of her reach and she had need of learning how to use her knowledge wisely.
- d. My sermon title may sound a bit confusing but it was to get your attention. Jesus tells the disciples that it is to their advantage that he leaves because he will send the Holy Spirit. We will unpack how the Holy Spirit is better than Jesus in what follows.

II. Main Point

- a. Living in a world that hates the man you are following is one thing, being left in this world that hates you without Jesus is another. In a way, the sorrow the disciples feel after being reminded that Jesus is about to leave is appropriate. However, the main point seems clear that it is to their advantage that he leaves because he will send the Holy Spirit. We will see why that is true.

III. Outline

- a. The Spirit is better than Jesus
- b. The Spirit Convicts the World
- c. The Spirit Glorifies Jesus

IV. Exposition

- a. After preparing the disciples for opposition from the world, as painful as it may be, Jesus again talks about his imminent departure. However, he says it will be to their advantage that he goes away.
 - i. The second part of verse four, transitions us to this discussion. Jesus had not told them so clearly of his departure and the suffering they would face. Why had he not said "these things?" Because he had been with them.
 1. The hatred of the world was directed at Jesus and he absorbed all that himself.
 2. Their issues were with Jesus and they figured if they stopped him then his followers would fizzle out.
 3. Verse 4 unavoidably brings up the fact that he will no longer be with them...at least not in the same way.
 - a. He will be with them in a much better way and that promise is extremely comforting.
 - ii. As I was working on this passage, I wrote out to the side "I don't understand this" a couple of times. I soon discovered that I wasn't the only one who had questions about some of these passages.
 1. Verse 5 sets up a contrast: I didn't say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. But now I am going away to him who sent me.

- a. They did not need to know of the danger in following Jesus while he was with them. But now that he is leaving, he must prepare his disciples of what is coming.
- b. That is not confusing. What is confusing is what follows: and none of you asks me, 'Where I am going?'
 - i. It's confusing because back in (Jn. 13:36) Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" and in (Jn. 14:5) Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going.
 - ii. Obviously, they did ask him. And obviously, Jesus doesn't lie or forget.
 - iii. It would make it easier if he had said, "none of you asks me right now." And maybe that's what is meant. At least some suggest that "now" in the text is actually meant to be at the end instead of the beginning. Grammatically, that just doesn't work.
 - iv. The nearest believable solution is this: If I had planned to go fishing with Joshua on Saturday but something came up at the last minute, he would ask me "where are you going" but he really doesn't care where I am going. The unspoken questions are "Why are you leaving me?" and "Is this more important than our fishing trip?"
 - v. That is normal conversation. The previous questions from Peter and Thomas were self-centered and they were afraid.
 - vi. If you take anything from this, just know there are hard things in the text and it's okay that we can't figure this out.
- iii. Still, what is clear is the fact that Jesus is going to the Father who sent him.
 - 1. Whether it was Joseph who claimed God sent him to Egypt or Abigail who said God had sent David or the prophet Gad who was sent by God and on and on...we have this understanding of God's providence when these people say that God sent them.
 - 2. I think the same is true of Jesus. He's been saying this since chapter 5 but I think they only understand in terms of God's providence. We know that he eternally existed with the Father. His sending is far different than those mentioned above not only in who he is but the Son was sent directly from the Father.
 - 3. That begs the question, "Why did the Father send the Son?" What did he come to do?
 - 4. I ask those questions because Christ's mission is tied in with why it is to their advantage that he goes to the Father. Keep this in mind for a moment.
- iv. This reminder has filled their heart (singular) with sorrow and that's why he says it's better that he goes away to encourage them even though the truth caused them pain.
 - 1. Before exploring how the Holy Spirit is better than Jesus, take note of this singular heart. This is rather amazing. It looks forward to the image in (1 Cor. 12:26) ²⁶ If one member (of the church body) suffers, all suffer together.
 - a. It also points to this beautiful image in (Acts 4:32) ³² Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.
 - 2. I share those two examples because we should be asking, how can a group of people become like that? Well, it's part of the result of why it is to their advantage that Jesus leaves and the Spirit comes.
 - a. But there is another problem. At the end of verse 7, Jesus makes clear that not only is the Spirit better but he cannot come unless he leaves.
 - b. Why can't the Spirit come? Can't God the Holy Spirit do whatever he chooses?
 - c. I asked the questions why the Father sent the Son and what was his mission?

- i. The Spirit of God cannot come in full new covenant promise fulfilling indwell power until the cross and resurrection are finished.
 - ii. Until perfect payment has been made on the cross and the Father accepts payment and therefore raises Jesus from the dead, the Holy Spirit cannot come and dwell in his people.
 - iii. It is similar when at the end of Exodus and the tabernacle was complete and God's presence occupied the holy of holies, no one could go in. The book of Leviticus explains how they must bring sacrifices to enter. If they walk into the presence of God without covering their sins with blood sacrifices they will immediately die.
 - iv. The same is true here. Those new covenant promises cannot happen unless the perfect sacrifice of the Son of God has been completed.
 - v. Here are those NC promises: (Ezek. 36:25-27) ²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.
 - vi. Jesus makes clear in (Jn. 7:38-39) how to receive the Spirit and why he cannot come in just yet... ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" 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.
3. The Spirit's coming rests on the finished work of Christ. His death, burial and resurrection must be complete for all the NC promises to be applied. Thus, one must repent and believe...receive God's forgiveness...be counted righteous by faith and the Spirit comes in. And because the payment is complete, the Holy Spirit remains.
- a. How is it to their advantage?
 - i. One important advantage is that Christ's presence through the Holy Spirit goes with us anywhere we go to continue the mission of Christ in making God-glorifying disciples of all nations.
 - 1. We will look at this more in the next point.
 - ii. Another extremely important advantage is that the Spirit of God lives in us to transform us into the image of Christ.
 - 1. God's presence by way the tabernacle and temple were meant to make his people like him. But they would break the covenant promises and God's presence would leave them and therefore could not finish the work of transformation due to the limits of the covenant.
 - 2. That's why the new covenant is better because God met all of his own demands and therefore, the Spirit can remain in us and continue transforming us into the image Christ.
 - 3. In other words, the work of Holy Spirit is to pull back the veil so that this can happen: (2 Cor. 3:16-4:1) ¹⁶ But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all,

with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

- b. Let's now see how this lines up with the Spirit's work of convicting the world.
- i. Jesus says in 8-11 that the Spirit will come to convict the world.
 1. Convict means to show someone his sin.
 - a. No one can be saved if he does not see his need to be saved. Furthermore, the world might ask, "Saved from what?"
 - i. The short answer is saved from God's wrath. Paul unpacks this in Romans 1. There's too much to work through right now but hear this brief portion.
 - ii. (Rom. 1:18-20) ¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.
 2. There are three things mentioned that the Holy Spirit will convict of the world of: sin, righteousness, and judgment.
 1. In verse 9, Jesus explains that concerning sin....BECAUSE they do not believe in me.
 - a. You probably need to think of this in a couple of ways.
 - i. The greatest sin in the world is to reject Jesus. I assume many people have a different idea of what the greatest sin is. But failure to believe and not just "give the Man upstairs some sort of nod" but rather throwing yourself at his feet begging for mercy and following him the rest of your days in glad submission and praise.
 - ii. The second way is, really, unbelievable. To trust Jesus as my all-sufficient Savior is all that is necessary to be forgiven of my sin for which I am convicted and guilty.
 2. Now, verse 10...concerning righteousness....BECAUSE I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer.
 - a. I take this convicting the world concerning righteousness to be making it known that their righteousness is nothing but filthy rags.
 - i. Phil. 3 gives several examples of a righteousness that is worth nothing but Paul sums it up in (Phil. 3:9) not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ
 - ii. Maybe the clearest picture of self-righteousness is in this parable from Jesus in (Lk. 18:10-14) ¹⁰ "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' ¹³ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

- iii. (Lk. 18:9) ⁹ He...told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt.
 - b. They thought they were righteous and Jesus unrighteous. They claimed he was of the house of Beelzebul. I could go on.
 - c. Jesus is who his works prove him to be. He is the Son of God. He is the promised Messiah. He is God! He goes to the Father. They rejected him.
- 3. And finally, in verse 11 concerning judgment...BECAUSE the ruler of this world has been judged.
 - a. At the cross and resurrection, Satan is defeated. Of course, a defeated foe is as dangerous as the man on death row. What else does he have to lose?
 - b. Paul explains it like this in (Col. 2:15) ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.
- 4. One last thing to mention. How does the Spirit do this? The answer is mainly through those who follow Jesus who are his witnesses.
 - a. Notice Paul's conversation with Felix in (Acts 24:25) And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, "Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you."
- c. Should this last point be, the Spirit guides into all truth or the Spirit glorifies Jesus? I went with glorifying Jesus because the way the Spirit does that is by guiding the disciples into all truth!
 - i. Jesus has given these disciples a heavy load to carry. The world will hate them because they hated Jesus. The world will remove them from their synagogues which means they will be cut off from life as they know it. Families will be severed.
 - 1. It seems in verses 6 and 7, truth had caused them much sorrow but nevertheless he goes on to tell them more truth.
 - 2. However, he knows their limit. (Jn. 16:12) ¹² "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.
 - a. I really love seeing this. Jesus doesn't hold back just because of sorrow but he only loads them with what they can carry for the time being.
 - ii. Jesus knows that even though he is leaving, he will continue to give them more truth. He will do that through the Holy Spirit.
 - 1. (Jn. 16:13) ¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.
 - a. Just as the Son listened and obeyed his Father and gave the disciples all that the Father showed him, so too the Spirit continues to glorify the Son!
 - iii. Do you want to know the primary role of the Holy Spirit? Do you think it's his turn to take the spot light? Will he make much of himself? -----No! Verse 14 makes clear he will glorify Jesus!
 - 1. He gladly takes this "behind-the-scenes position" to advance the work of Christ to the praise of God the Father.
 - a. Anything attributed to the work of the Holy Spirit that doesn't bring glory to Christ seems to be out of step with his primary role.

V. Response

- a. Do you have the Holy Spirit? Is he leading you to become more like Christ? Is he bearing witness through you to convict the world?