

Life Group Notes

Sunday 15th May 2022

Speaker: Andy McCullough

Title: Jesus Goes, The Spirit Comes

Passage: John 14 -16

It's the night before the crucifixion. Jesus is telling his disciples that he will leave, but that he will entrust the small community of faith to Someone else. He calls this person the Paraclete. This is not a familiar word in English, which is why it is variously translated Comforter, Counsellor, Advocate, Helper. Culturally the Paraclete was a broker or fixer, an influential person who uses their connections to represent and protect people – perhaps like an appropriate adult or an advocate today. Five times in these chapters Jesus speaks about the Paraclete – the Holy Spirit – coming to be with the disciples.

1. Presence. The Spirit brings the Presence of God (14:16-18)

Language: “to be with you,” “you know him,” “he dwells with you and will be in you.” Orphans are vulnerable, get taken advantage of, mistreated. The Paraclete will take responsibility. Dwelling/abiding as a big theme in John: Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. Spirit came as a dove and rested on/remained on Jesus. “Abide in me/remain in the vine...” Jesus is promising a community among whom and within whom the Holy Spirit dwells.

2. Instruction. The Spirit brings the instruction of Jesus (14:26-27)

Big picture, Jesus is talking about the role of the Holy Spirit in writing down the New Testament. Jesus has spent three years teaching, telling parables, doing healings and wonderful things. In an oral/semi-literate culture people had incredible memories. And memory is communal. Jesus says the Holy Spirit will remind and explain, instruct, expound... so the Scriptures, we believe, are God-breathed: inspired by the Holy Spirit, the very words of God! Reliable, holy, without error, life-giving! There is a secondary sense of this verse for us: for us also the Holy Spirit takes the Bible and illuminates it to us, helps us understand it, brings it to our remembrance.

3. Witness. The Spirit bears witness, and so do we.

Context: hatred and persecution, the dark week before Jesus' death. Chapter 15 is about how much the world hates disciples: “If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.” The Holy Spirit gives the Church the courage, the guts, the resilience of sustained witness under fire.

4. Conviction (16:7-8). The Conviction of the Holy Spirit.

The conviction of the Holy Spirit brings a deep sense of right and wrong. Jesus is definitely saying “I'm leaving you the Holy Spirit who will work in your consciences, who will guide you into what is right and wrong...” but we often miss this as thinking it is a deeply individualistic, subjective, personal thing. However, he is still speaking of community discernment, community conviction. This safeguards us against individual foibles.

5. The Voice of God (16:13-14).

This is Communal; the Church is to be a community of the Voice of God. Not just through her leaders. Everyone here should know and be growing in the privilege of hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit. It is Truth-aligned: will measure up to the Bible/ will not contradict the life and teachings of Jesus, who said “I am the truth.” It is Authoritative: “not on his own authority...” the promptings of the Holy Spirit are not just a suggestion. God is speaking. It can be Predictive: “declare the things that are to come.” God knows the future and can speak about the future. In fact, he loves to do this. And always Jesus-rich. Churches that are full of the Holy Spirit talk about Jesus a lot.

Suggested questions

1. What do you think of when you think of a Community of the Holy Spirit? What are you hoping God will do in Reading Family Church this term, during this series?
2. What is your experience of the presence of the Holy Spirit? When are you most aware of his Presence?
3. Have you ever experienced the Spirit “bringing to mind” something from the Bible?
4. Who have you shared the gospel with recently? Pray for opportunities to be a witness this week.
5. Why do you think it is important to discern the conviction of the Holy Spirit together in community? What is the Holy Spirit convicting you about at the moment?
6. In what ways does God speak today? Pray together to hear God’s voice, and share prophetic encouragements with each other.