

# GOSPEL FOR MAY 24, 2015

START WITH SCRIPTURE: John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

## OBSERVE:

Jesus is preparing to depart from the disciples, but he is reassuring them that this is a good thing for their sake. Contrary to what they may be feeling as they dread his departure, Jesus says *you are filled with grief because I have said these things. 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.*

So, what does he focus on in this part of his farewell discourse that should comfort them?

First, he makes it clear who this *Advocate* is that is coming. This is the Holy Spirit. The Greek word for Advocate is *paraklesis*, which means one who “stands beside.” It is particularly applied to one who is a counselor or attorney in court. So, the Advocate would be one who “stands with” the Apostles when they *testify*. Through them, the Advocate would be testifying to the story of Jesus.

Second, the text picks up in John 16:4 with a warning. Jesus is preparing the disciples for the inevitable persecution that is to come. Although he is returning to the Father, He is advising them that the Advocate will be with them through these tough times.

Although they are grieving, Jesus is instilling in them an anticipation for the coming of the Spirit. It is for their good because the Holy Spirit will empower them to take the world by storm!

Third, Jesus instructs them as to a part of the ministry of the Advocate. Specifically, the role of the Holy Spirit in testifying about Jesus is to convict the world about *sin and righteousness and judgment*. This is in keeping with the role of the Advocate as an attorney, and with the metaphor of a courtroom.

With the disciples, the Advocate is a kind of defense attorney; but with the world, which is in rebellion against God, the Advocate is a prosecutor.

The Advocate will *prove the world to be in the wrong about sin* (because of disbelief) *and righteousness* (because Jesus will no longer be physically present to make his own case concerning himself as the source of righteousness) *and judgment* (*because the prince of this world now stands condemned*).

The message here requires some unpacking – unbelief, or a lack of trust, equals a lack of reliance on the righteousness of Christ, and therefore a lack of relationship with God. The Advocate will convict the world about righteousness because Jesus is the “Righteous One” whose perfect life, death and resurrection validate his authority, and the Advocate will continue to point to him. And judgment will come

because, quite frankly, this world is in rebellion against righteousness, and the *prince of this world* is Satan.

What Jesus is describing is an invasion by God into this enemy-occupied territory, first through his own life, death and resurrection, and then in the person of the Advocate.

Fourth and finally, Jesus makes it clear that there are many more truths that will be revealed in time, but he knows the capacity of the disciples is at its limit. It is *more than you can now bear*. So one more role of the Spirit is to continue to guide the disciples into all truth. They will be able to discern that it is the Spirit that is guiding them because *He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you.*

In other words, the Spirit's message won't be "innovative" or "self-referential." He will bear witness only to the message established by God, and will prepare the disciples for the future. And above all else, the Spirit will lift up Jesus and his message, and make known only that which is consistent with the message of Jesus.

#### **APPLY:**

We can only imagine how confused and depressed the disciples must have been to learn that Jesus would no longer be physically with

them, guiding them and teaching them. How they must have shaken their heads in disbelief and disagreement when Jesus said *it is for your good that I am going away*.

The truth is, Jesus' departure prepares the way for his presence in a whole new way, and enables his new ministry on their behalf. For example, as our high priest at the right hand of the Father, Jesus continues to intercede for us, as Hebrews 7:25–26 says *Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens*.

And the Holy Spirit continues the work of Jesus on earth, convicting us of sin and turning us toward repentance; applying Jesus' own righteousness to our sin so that we may be made righteous through faith in him; and drawing the sharp contrast between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world which is ruled by *the prince of this world*, i.e., Satan.

Had Jesus remained in the flesh in the world, there would still have been boundaries to his ministry and influence – a Jewish carpenter from Nazareth who was limited, as we are, by time and space.

But through the Advocate, who is present spiritually and supernaturally everywhere, the Spirit of Jesus can speak to every

heart, in every language (check out Acts 2!), and is not limited by time or space.

In a very unique way, we owe the Scriptures that we read to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit — *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16)*. All of the Apostolic teaching that we have, and that has guided the church for two thousand years, is revealed through the Scriptures and that has been imparted by the Holy Spirit.

And the Spirit continues to be vital and active in the lives of men and women today who are convicted of sin, and turn to Christ for forgiveness and grace. And it is through the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit that Christians continue to be empowered to testify to the life-changing work of Christ!

### **RESPOND:**

It is a little startling to realize that everything I know about God the Father or God the Son I know because of God the Holy Spirit! The scriptures that I read are *God-breathed*, which means that the Spirit, who is the *ruach* and *pneuma*, the very breath of God, has revealed them.

And the presence of the church, which has survived persecution, faults and failures like the crusades and the Inquisition, and religious

wars, and yet continues to bear witness to the love of God in Christ Jesus — what else could keep such an institution in business if not the Spirit of God?

And then there is the inner witness of the Spirit in my own life. Yes, something as personal as that dawning awareness that I am a sinner; that I need a righteousness that I can never achieve; that Jesus provides that righteousness; and that through this Spirit I have a power that comes from beyond me to do things I could never do on my own — all of that comes from the presence of the Holy Spirit, dwelling in me.

Strange, that this Third Person of the Trinity, so mysterious to many Christians, is the very voice and vitality of God in the world today!

*Come, Holy Spirit! Guide us into all truth! Convict this rebellious world of sin so that we may all turn to God in repentance! Apply the righteousness of Christ to our broken souls! Separate us and purify us from the so-called “prince of this world.” And empower us to have the courage and opportunity to testify about Christ to this lost world. Amen.*

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