

Series: Portraits of Jesus	Reference: <i>John 15</i>	Title: The Giver	Date: 05.24.2020
Website Writeup:			
We ride a spiritual tricycle - Father, Son & Holy Spirit, but often the Spirits influence is lost on us. What does the Holy Spirit mean in the life of the believer?			

We've been looking at Portraits of Jesus in the book of John. Today we're in John 16:7-15 where he paints the portrait of Jesus specifically as Giver of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is for some, a vague concept. Jesus introduces Him to the disciples to Him in this passage, so let's read John 16:7-15...

⁷But 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. ⁸When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin & righteousness & judgment: ⁹about sin, because people do not believe in me; ¹⁰about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; ¹¹and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

¹²"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. ¹³But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. ¹⁵All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you."

So, Jesus is going away which makes the Disciples confused & unsettled. He goes to great lengths to prepare them for the future & assure them of future help from the Holy Spirit. But...what's the Holy Spirit's role in the life of believers? An important but confusing question, since in one sense the Spirit is elusive. Jesus walked among us, easier to grasp; we can read His words. We read of the Holy Spirit in Scripture, yet the nature of the relationship is ethereal in experience.

Certain Christian traditions acknowledge the Holy Spirit, yet their pursuit's gone cold. Others may reflect more abuse of the Spirit. We need balance. A deep, healthy relationship with the Holy Spirit. Extremes would seem false expressions of the relationship. So, truth lies in the middle. We don't want to neglect, or abuse, the relationship we have with God in the ways He offers Himself. The Spirit's given to believers for many purposes; to not understand or pursue that relationship would be a travesty, we'd miss out on so much spiritual formation. If the Trinity were a tricycle missing a wheel, it wouldn't go anywhere. So, who's the Holy Spirit? Strap yourselves in, this'll be a wild informational ride as we use this passage to dive into who the Holy Spirit is to us.

The Holy Spirit's distinguishable from, yet equal with, the Father & the Son in the Trinitarian relationship. There are many titles the Scriptures give of the Spirit. He's Christ's agent, our advocate, guide, comfort, the sanctifier of our lives, one who forms us into the likeness of Christ & applies the work of Christ to our lives. God made his home among us when He stepped into our world as God the Son & now God dwells with humankind through the Spirit inhabiting individuals & the Church. Jesus, in His human body, was limited to one geographic location at a time. In His body, it's impossible for Him to dwell in you. However, His leaving enabled the Holy Spirit to dwell in every believer at all times since they are of one essence.

There's a distinct personhood of the Spirit. He's not an IT, or simply a power. Notice Jesus uses the personal pronoun 'He' when speaking of the Spirit. Which means Christians can interact as one would with any person. In the negative, this would mean He can be resisted, avoided & grieved. In the positive, it means the Spirit can guide, convict, intercede for & communicate with us. The Spirit is God's quiet coming to execute the Father's plan, to attest the Son's saving work, to enlighten, counsel, strengthen & enable life until the Son's return.

In this plan the Father offers life by offering the Son through the power of the Spirit. The Son accomplishes the redemptive plan to save humanity in the power of the Spirit. And the Spirit applies the work of the Son with the benefits of salvation & continues to develop & empower believers into the future. Yet still as important a role as He has, we're able to persistently deny, or grieve the Spirit. And, we wonder why the deeper Christian life eludes us when we do.

All three members of the Trinity work together in all things as one essence. Yet, within this one God, there are three equal, coeternal persons. God the Spirit proceeds from God the Father through God the Son, as coessential, coeternal & coequal with them.

The Spirit was intimately involved in all aspects of the life of Jesus, from conception to empowerment. Jesus was in constant reliance on the Spirit. If we take the time to look at the life of Jesus in detail we realize the Spirit empowered Him all the way. Likewise, believers are perfected, guarded & empowered for ministry by the Spirit of God. He dwells in the Body of Christ, builds it, leads it in worship, calling people to specific gifts, tasks, vocations & challenges He empowers its witness in missional activity. The Trinity itself, in wholeness, resides in the Church through the ministry of the Spirit.

The Spirit of God's the glue which keeps the fellowship of the Church & the Church is the future of the new creation in the power of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is the downpayment for this future hope despite whatever suffering believers experience now. Reformed theology centers on the issue of forgiveness of sin, defining the Church as those who're justified by faith through grace. Important, but to stop there would be incomplete. The justified person moves into a process of sanctification/transformation by the Spirit, moving towards a hope of the future.

The Son of God, Himself, is present in the Church through the ministry of the Spirit. His incarnation, mission, anointing & resurrection are all works of God the Spirit. Glorification of Christ in believers & unity in Him, are central purposes of the Spirit & the Kingdom. Therefore, He becomes not only a future hope, but a present reality in the life of the believer & the Church. The Church is administered by the Spirit in word, faith, sacrament, grace, offices & traditions. If the Church could grasp an understanding of the Spirit's power, it wouldn't self-destruct, or act in destructive ways. In relation to the Kingdom of God, it's the Spirit who reveals Christ, creates faith & brings joy. He's completing the history of God's Kingdom in the world, for the Church & through the Church, in signs & wonders, charismata & ministries. He's the Church's power.

The Spirit helps us speak & bear witness, reminds us of what we need to know & empowers us to witness, drawing people to God & closer to Jesus. Through the power of the Spirit, sin's put aside & we receive a spirit of adoption as children which brings intimacy with the Father, eradicating fear & intimidation in relationship. He convicts of sin before, during & after our relationship with God is sealed in Him. In this relationship we find joy, life, freedom, peace & hope. We find our communal place in the Body of Christ for the common good through the Spirit. We find fruit which characterizes our lives, in the form of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness & self-control. The Spirit's capable of these things since He's all-powerful, ever-present, all-knowing, eternal & holy. As a person of the Trinity, He has desire, will, emotion, a mind & prays for God's children.

That was a lot of information to show the Spirit's importance in spiritual formation - but how have we handled this relationship? The local church often tends towards extremes. There are parts of the Christian world where the Spirit's often acknowledged, yet rarely pursued. He becomes a theological axiom, rather than a person to be experienced. Christ alone becomes central in this expression of church, with the Spirit mentioned only in passing. However, we also have the Pentecostal expression of faith. Where sometimes, the Spirit's over emphasized at the detriment of the Son, the Word & Father. Neither camp seems to understand & practice faith out of a healthy understanding of the Trinity & the work of all three in the life of the Church. Therefore, in asking what does the Holy Spirit mean to believers, we can't negate the work of all three persons of the Godhead in unity & balance.

In the Great Commission, Jesus alludes to the work of God as carried out by way of all three persons of the Trinity. In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus last command, our first concern, it says...¹⁹"Go therefore & make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father & of the Son & of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." In John 13:20 Jesus alludes to the interconnectedness (one-ness) of the Trinity when He says, ²⁰"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me." To receive one means to receive the other two persons of the Trinity as one essence.

Furthermore, as we're given the Holy Spirit as an eternal seal in Christ as stated in Ephesians 1:13, God the Son also lives in & through us in the power of the Spirit. My best analogy for the work of the whole Trinity in our lives are notes on a piano. Each note has three strings which, tuned together, produce one unified note; a note when struck resonates in us. That's the clearest illustration I can paint of the Trinity working together in our lives. The image of a three pronged tuning fork is also helpful. It's impossible to tune one piano to another. However, a thousand pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to one another. The Trinity, working together in our lives, like a three pronged tuning fork, brings unity among believers as we're all tuned to God. The Spirit's work is a communal endeavor.

Constantly we hear in the Scriptures the Spirit works in, through & for Jesus Himself. This is despite the fact Jesus was fully God as the second person of the Trinity (Mt 1:20; 3:11; Lk 3:22; 4:1; 10:21; Acts 1:2). If Jesus' reliance on the Spirit was so necessary, we conclude it's the same for Believers. Jesus didn't come to live the life of God in a man-suit. He came to live as fully God & fully man, fulfilling all the demands of God's righteousness, to live the kind of life possible only through the power of the Spirit.

In John 14:16-17 Jesus says, ¹⁶*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever,* ¹⁷*even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you & will be in you.*" This very same Spirit who guided & empowered Jesus' ministry was His to give by way of the Father. This speaks of a personal relationship with the Spirit available to believers now, who can communicate with us, as He lives in us, the Spirit which leads us into all Truth.

It must have been incredible for the disciples to walk & talk with Jesus. However, Jesus Himself said in John 16:7 it's better He goes away, otherwise we couldn't receive the Spirit. He promised in John 14:26, ²⁶*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things & bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.*" Therefore, the Spirit's role is to glorify the Son, who glorified the Father, by reminding us of all Jesus said & did.

Paul Pettit, in his book, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation* (p24), gives a wonderful definition of spiritual formation. He says, *'Spiritual formation, then, is the ongoing process of the triune God transforming the believers life & character toward the life & character of Jesus Christ - accomplished by the ministry of the Spirit in the context of biblical community.'* It's a work of the Trinity, through the Spirit, practiced in community. We could say the Holy Spirit's a wind & the church is a ship. The spiritual disciplines, whatever they may be, prayer, worship, study, etc., are ways in which we put up the sails & catch the wind of the Spirit (Pettit pp60-63). Think about the phrase, "All hands on deck!" And we realize one person not pursuing life with the Spirit affects the rest in negative ways. What would happen if one deck hand didn't do his job on a ship? The ship wouldn't be able to catch the wind properly.

Yet, we must also think about ‘how’ we put up those sails. For instance, if we throw up the sail of study, but only for the reason of winning arguments, being right, or reassuring ourselves in some notion, then we’ve not fully put up the sail & trimmed it well to receive the wind. If we throw up the sail of prayer as mini-sermons directed at God, sermonizing the Father, not listening, is that truly prayer? Or, if we come with a list of demands, which we’ve convinced ourselves are God’s will for ‘us’, but haven’t listened, is that truly prayer? None of these examples would be putting up a sail & trimming it well to receive the wind in a way which would push the ship forward.

We neglect to acknowledge the Spirit. Why, we have Jesus, right? But it’s Jesus who sent the Spirit for these very reasons. We bypass the relationship, we *tell* Jesus things & don’t listen to the Spirit. However, if the Holy Spirit’s within us & this tuning fork of the Trinity’s tuning us all to Himself, then we listen intently. If we believe & practice this in community well, not holding up any one voice as a final authority, but check ourselves in community & against the Word, we do well. Fear of being misguided would dissipate as we see the wind fill our sails & drive us forward. It’s a matter of trust. Do we trust the Holy Spirit’s leading, or not? The sad fact is some have manipulated the situation with large claims about the Holy Spirit. Or the opposite, not acknowledged the Spirit’s presence & power at all. Either way it hinders the ship’s performance.

Remember, God’s Spirit dwelled in the Tabernacle in the Hebrew Scriptures. Then Jesus tabernacled/dwelt among us as a man. Then, there’s even a farther shift away from a holy building to a holy people as the Holy Spirit takes up residence & dwells in all believers upon Jesus’ leaving. We’re a spiritual house being built up in Him (1 Peter 2:5). How can we neglect God the Spirit in us, if we’re the Temple of God ourselves. If we were to properly let go of control, throw up the sails & catch that wind within us, there’d be no room for fear of ‘being wrong’, or ‘being misled’. We’re fallible creatures & face forces counter to God’s Spirit. However, God’s greater than our fallibility, or any outside force. Mistakes will be made in our journey, yes, but are we willing to tap into the power we have in God the Spirit?

The writer of 2 Corinthians 3:8 asks, “...*will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious?*,” in comparing it to the Law of Moses. The idea being, the ministry which brought death, the Law, was & is glorious as it convicts of sin & need of salvation. Yet, we now step into a new & more glorious ministry of the Spirit as Christ completes His work & leaves us with the Spirit to continue it. The writer continues in verses 17-18, which says it well, “*Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*” God the Spirit in us, leading us into all truth, forming & shaping us - a great thought.

It seems for some, these are spiritual axioms, or spiritual mathematics, devoid of the fruits of relationship. Some have abused this relationship & made a spectacle of God. Others have grieved the Spirit by silence, a puppet show on one side & a cold theoretical principle on the other. Some of us have even made our Christ-centeredness an idol,

focusing only on the second person of the Trinity & staying silent on others. A travesty, because where the Spirit is, there's freedom, not fear, or abuse, or manipulation & control. Remember we're riding the spiritual tricycle of Trinity.

In conclusion, the Spirit's our advocate, guide & comfort, the one who forms us into the likeness of Christ & applies the work of Christ to our lives. He attests to Jesus' saving work, enlightens, counsels, strengthens & enables life in Jesus. He dwells in the Body of Christ, builds it up & leads us into true worship. Calls people to specific gifting, vocation & tasks, and is the power of believers, one essence with God the Son & God the Father, a member of the Trinity. The Spirit's exactly what these Disciples needed most, although they didn't realize it at the time.

Mine's a shallow attempt today to describe the Spirit's role. My intention is to overload you with information, to give you a glimpse of the largeness of the Spirit's role & importance. You won't remember every detail, but hopefully you'll realize we have direct access to God the Holy Spirit within us. Do we believe the Spirit of God lives in us & is able to lead? If we threw up our sails to catch that wind, the world would see a powerful Church. Jesus said we'd do greater things & we know those greater things would be directed through the Spirit as He glorifies Christ & applies His work of grace & love to the world.

What would a balanced Church look like? One riding on all three wheels of the tricycle? Fruit would grow naturally, they wouldn't have to work at it. They'd be struck with compassion for suffering in all walks of life, with a healthy response to the issues - not overextending themselves, but doing exactly what the Spirit desires. Control & manipulation wouldn't be an issue, but order, appreciation of roles, complexity of leadership & the human heart would be understood & respected. Bitterness & pride would be kept at bay. There'd be no overpowering desire to manipulate, or win arguments. Decisions would come from prayerful consideration & direction of the Spirit, instead of knee-jerk reactions of fear. Its members wouldn't be overtly sensitive, or easily hurt. They'd be able to overlook small things & address larger issues while upholding trust & checking emotion. They'd be faithful, teachable, reliable people. Lighthearted, fun people, even in hard times. Down-to-earth people, not overly dramatic. They'd make choices for community, not self. They'd reveal a heart of God by those choices. Choices which say, others are important & the love shown by them would be a witness to the all the people groups of the world as seen in our Great Commission call.

I could keep going...but you guys reflect much of this! You're growing into this well. I'm excited about that. I hear the reports both internally & externally. Reports are encouraging! If you want to see what a healthy Christian looks like, read our values which I made available at the end of last week's sermon. Under each value there's a mature Christian profile which describes what a healthy Christian looks like in light of that value. Living in this balance, walking in & being filled with the Spirit as we follow Jesus, would look a lot like those profiles.

Further thoughts on the Holy Spirit

1. **He can be "grieved."** - Eph. 4:30 (Grieve - to make sad or sorry.)
2. **He can be "quenched."** - 1 Thes. 5:19 (Quench - To put out a fire.)
3. **He can be "lied to."** - Acts 5:1-11
4. In John 14:16, Jesus referred to the Spirit as "another Comforter." The word "another" comes from the word "allos" which refers to "one of the same kind or quality." It implies a state of equality & sameness!
5. **Indwelling** - John 14:17 - He lives inside us
6. **Instructing** - John 16:13 - He is present to give direction in the way of God, the will of God & the Word of God.
7. **Infilling**- Ephesians 5:18 - The Spirit of God desires to fill our lives with His presence & power so that we might be able to serve the Lord in an abundant & glorious manner. (This is a command. We're told, "go on being filled with the Spirit!")
8. **Enabling** - Acts 1:8 - What transformed the Disciples from a group of terrified men hiding in an upper room into a group of men who took the world by storm? The power of the Holy Spirit. (The Spirit of God is a giver of gifts - 1 Cor. 12:7, 11.)
9. **Encouraging** - John 14:18 - The Spirit of God carries out a blessed ministry of encouragement in the lives of God's children. He knows every trial we face & He's able to support us, aid us & keep us during all of life's difficult times. He's ever with us, (Heb. 13:5; Matt. 28:20); He even helps us in our prayer lives, (Rom. 8:26-27).

Community Group Questions

1. Icebreaker: what's one practice from this quarantine that you'll take with you when restrictions lift?
2. What is your history with the Holy Spirit, what did you grow up believing about Him and where do you stand now?
3. Luke 16: 7-15 mentions 4 things the Holy Spirit will do when He comes. They are:
 1. Prove the world wrong about sin, righteousness and judgement.
 2. Guide us in truth.
 3. Tell us what is to come.
 4. Make known the things of God to us.
4. Pastor Jason also talked about how the Holy Spirit works. People reference having "Holy Spirit encounters," where they have distinct interactions with the Holy Spirit. Have you ever had a Holy Spirit encounter? Share with the group.
5. Perhaps you find yourself today wanting or needing a closer relationship and understanding of the Holy Spirit. Invite Him to come now and touch your heart. Share your desire and situation with your group, if you are comfortable and let them help pray with you.