

SERMON NOTES

Pentecost

Synaxis Gospel
John 14:25-31

POWER!

INTRODUCTION

The setting is in the upper room, the evening before the crucifixion of our Lord. The supper is over; Judas has left to betray Jesus into the hands of His enemies, the chief priests and rulers of the Jews. Jesus, knowing the time is short wishes to prepare His beloved disciples for the ordeal to come. He needs to prepare them, as well, for the next phase of their ministry, when He will no longer be physically present with them. To do both, He speaks to them one last time.

Chapter fourteen of John's Gospel begins the record of this teaching. It extends through chapter sixteen, ending with the prayer of Jesus in chapter seventeen. After His prayer, He and His disciples will depart for the olive grove in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives.

Earlier in chapter fourteen, Jesus had told them of His imminent departure from this world. But He had sought to comfort the distressed disciples by explaining that He was leaving to prepare a place for them, so that where He is, there they may be also. In the meantime, they would be doing even greater works than He has done on earth. Moreover, He promised that the Father would send another, like Himself, Who would stay with them forever.

Jesus called this One the Spirit of Truth. Related to His statement of the coming of the Spirit of Truth (also referred to as the Counselor, a title some translate as "Comforter"), Jesus promised that He will not leave them as orphans; He Himself will come to them and will be *in* them—in all those who prove their love for Him by obeying His commandments. In the form of the Holy Spirit, He and the Father will make their home with them. The discussion underscored the unity of the Father and our Lord in answer to Philip's request that Jesus show them the Father.

Jesus had much more to say to them (and to us), which follows in the next chapters, but with our reading at the end of chapter fourteen, He begins His farewell words.

SYNAXIS READING

John 14:25-31

"These things I have spoken to you, while abiding with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

“You have heard that I said to you, ‘I go away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced, because I go to the Father; for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it comes to pass, you may believe.

‘I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me; but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do.

“Arise, let us go from here.

NOTES

“These things I have spoken to you, while abiding with you.

“These things” refers to the earlier teachings of Jesus about His departure to prepare a place for them in His Father’s house, His being the way to the Father, the unity of the Father and Himself, and the promise of the Spirit of Truth, the Counselor, to all those who love Him.

“While abiding with you” is a way of saying “before My death.”

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit,

The One given the title ‘the Helper’, ‘the Spirit of Truth’, earlier in chapter 14:16-17, is now identified as the Holy Spirit, Who was familiar to the disciples from the Old Testament Scriptures. There, He was also referred to as the Spirit of God, and as the Spirit of the LORD.

As the Spirit of God:

He was present at Creation.¹

He is called the Creator.²

He endues specific persons with special power to do God’s will.³

He gives prophetic utterance and visions to specific persons.⁴

As the Spirit of the LORD:

He comes upon and empowers special persons as judges⁵ or as kings.⁶
to deliver His people

He, Himself, delivers His people.⁷ He leads His people.⁸

He comes upon certain persons to make them prophets of God.⁹

¹ Genesis 1:2

² Job 33:4

³ Exodus 31:3; 35:31

⁴ Genesis 41:38; Numbers 24:2; 1 Samuel 10:10; 11:6; 19:20, 23; 2 Chronicles 15:1; 24:20; Ezekiel 11:24;

⁵ Judges 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14

⁶ 1 Samuel 16:13, 14

⁷ Isaiah 59:19

⁸ Isaiah 63:14

⁹ 1 Samuel 10:6; 2 Samuel 23:2; 1 Kings 22:24 (2 Chronicles 18:23); 2 Chronicles 20:14; Ezekiel 11:5; Micah 3:8

He conducts persons from one place to another at will.¹⁰
He will rest upon the Messiah.¹¹
He is identified as “the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.”¹²
None can withstand His power to destroy.¹³
None can teach Him anything.¹⁴

As the Holy Spirit:

He comes upon and empowers certain men for leadership such as Moses¹⁵ and David, the king.¹⁶
He can be vexed. This can turn Him to be One Who is the enemy of the one vexing Him and as such the Holy Spirit will fight against the offender.¹⁷

In the New Testament:

As the Spirit of God:

He descended upon Jesus at His baptism.¹⁸
He indwells all those who trustingly believe in Jesus Christ¹⁹ and leads them.²⁰
He is identified as the Spirit of Christ.²¹
He is the only One Who knows and communicates the things of God to people.²²
He endued specific persons with special power to do God’s will.²³
He is the giver of wisdom to His Apostle.²⁴
He is the giver of prophetic utterance and witnesses that Jesus is the Lord²⁵ and that Jesus is not simply a spirit being but also a real man.²⁶
He seals the believers in Christ for the “day of redemption.”²⁷

As the Spirit of the Lord:

He rests upon the Messiah (Christ).²⁸
He gives the power to discipline to the Apostles of Christ.²⁹
He conducts certain persons from one place to another at will.³⁰
He is said to be the Lord.³¹
He grants liberty.³²

¹⁰ 1 Kings 18:12; 2 Kings 2:16; Ezekiel 37:1

¹¹ Isaiah 11:2; Isaiah 61:1

¹² Isaiah 11:2

¹³ Isaiah 40:7; Micah 2:7; Or, perhaps here, read ‘to deliver’.

¹⁴ Isaiah 40:13

¹⁵ Isaiah 63:11

¹⁶ Psalm 51:11 (This verse may also imply that to have the Holy Spirit is the same as being in the Presence of God.)

¹⁷ Isaiah 63:10

¹⁸ Matthew 3:16

¹⁹ Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 3:16

²⁰ Romans 8:14

²¹ Romans 8:9

²² 1 Corinthians 2:11, 14

²³ Matthew 12:28; Romans 15:19

²⁴ 1 Corinthians 7:40

²⁵ 1 Corinthians 12:3

²⁶ 1 John 4:2

²⁷ Ephesians 4:30

²⁸ Luke 4:18 (quoting Isaiah 61:1)

²⁹ Acts 5:9 (In this case, members of the Church lied to the Spirit of the Lord, and died as Peter said they would.)

³⁰ Acts 8:39

³¹ 2 Corinthians 3:17

³² 2 Corinthians 3:17 Paul could be saying the Spirit is the LORD (Yahweh) or the Lord Jesus Christ. It is impossible to distinguish from the Greek word ‘κῦριος’ which translates both the Hebrew Tetragrammaton (the four

He changes the believer into the image of the Lord.³³

As the Holy Spirit (only a few of the 92 references):

He is the gift of the Father to all that ask Him.³⁴

He seals the believers in Christ; He is called the Holy Spirit of promise.³⁵

He can be grieved.³⁶

He is God's Holy Spirit; He is God.³⁷

From the Old Testament references, combined with the great "Hear O Israel, Yahweh, your God, is One Yahweh,"³⁸ the disciples would not have thought of the Holy Spirit as anything less than the One God manifested as the Spirit visiting, and empowering, and leading (but sometimes disciplining) His people. For the disciples to receive this stupendous gift of God Himself was breathtaking.

The term translated *Helper*, is also used by John, in his first epistle, for Our Lord Jesus Christ³⁹ and means *Advocate*. Like an attorney, He is our defender and advisor. On earth, Jesus had performed this function for the disciples, and He still is our Advocate in the throne-room of heaven.

whom the Father will send in My name,

"In My Name" refers to the fact that the Name of God encompasses His character and all that He is. To come in someone's name, means to come demonstrating (or at least claiming to demonstrate) all that the name represents. An ambassador is, for all practical purposes, the one in whose name he comes. However, in the Spirit's case, in the unity of the God-head, He **is** the One in Whose Name He comes. As noted above, the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of God) is called "the Spirit of Christ."

The Holy Spirit is sent by the Father, as was Jesus Christ. Here He is sent at our Lord's request.

He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

His function will be to be the same kind of Advocate, as Spirit, that Jesus had been, as Man. He will teach them things that they could not understand earlier, and bring to their mind all that Jesus had said. This would be particularly important for the writers of the Gospels.

Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you.

Peace is not simply a serenity of spirit and a sense of wellbeing; it is cessation of war. Whereas sinners had been at enmity with God, Jesus made peace for them at the Cross. His disciples will have the same relationship with the Father that His Son has.

The world can only wish us peace; Christ can guarantee peace.

Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

This statement echoes the great encouragement that the LORD gave to His people through His prophet Isaiah:

'Do not fear, **for I am with you**; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God: I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'⁴⁰

consonants representing the NAME and thought to be pronounced "Yahweh") and *Lord* which can also mean *Master*, a title given to Jesus Christ.

³³ 2 Corinthians 3:18. See the note above.

³⁴ Luke 11:13

³⁵ Ephesians 1:13

³⁶ Ephesians 4:30

³⁷ 1 Thessalonians 4:8; Ephesians 4:30

³⁸ Deuteronomy 6:4 Or, as normally translated, substituting LORD for the Holy NAME: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD"

³⁹ 1 John 2:1

“You have heard that I said to you, ‘I go away, and I will come to you.’⁴¹

The following statement explains where He is going, to the Father; He has already told them that when He goes to the Father, they will see Him again. This does not refer to the Second Advent, but to the coming of the Holy Spirit. They will see Him then with spiritual eyes, for He will dwell in them.⁴²

If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced, because I go to the Father; for the Father is greater than I.

The form of this conditional sentence in Greek assumes that they do not love Him. “If you loved Me (but you do not), you would be glad . . .” They do not love Him in the sense of wanting His best interests, in a self sacrificing way, but love Him for their own best interests (as most of us do today). They want Him to stay with them, even though it is better for Him to go to the Father.

The Father is greater, possibly, in the same way that the works of the disciples will be greater than our Lord’s. The Father is not limited; as a man, our Lord was limited. St. Paul teaches us in Philippians 2:6-8:

Who, (Jesus Christ) although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped (or held on to), but emptied Himself [or, made Himself of no reputation], and taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled himself, by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

From this state of humiliation and limitation, He is returning to His former glorious state (as John shows us in his book of Revelation). The disciples should, therefore, be glad for His sake. Moreover, by dwelling, as the Holy Spirit, in countless believers, the limits of space and time are expanded, resulting in greater works than were possible when He lived on earth.

And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it comes to pass, you may believe.

Although the verb *may believe* is a subjunctive form—usually indicating possibility or probability—here, the nuance is of a definite result. *Will believe* captures the nuance better. What will they believe? They will believe that He is God. He has said something like this earlier in the evening, and it is recorded in John 13:19. Jesus had told the disciples that Judas would betray Him. Then He said, “I am telling you now before it happens so that when it happens, you will believe that I AM”—thus using the meaning of the holy NAME for Himself. This is what they are to believe: He is the One Who bears the NAME.

The prerogative of knowing the future belonged to God.⁴³ This statement of Jesus recalls the statement of the LORD God in Isaiah 48:3 and following, where He tells them they can know that He is the only One Who tells them truly what will happen in the future:

“I declared the former things long ago and they went forth from My mouth, and I proclaimed them. Suddenly I acted, and they came to pass.

Because I know that you are obstinate, and your neck is an iron sinew, and your forehead bronze, therefore, I declared them to you long ago, before they took place I proclaimed them to you, lest you should say, ‘My idol has done them, and my graven image and my molten image, have commanded them.’”

⁴⁰ Isaiah 41:10

⁴¹ This may refer back to John 7:33, but more probably to John 14:16-19.

⁴² John 14:16-19

⁴³ This belongs to God alone, as J. H. Bernard has rightly noted in his work, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary of the Gospel According to St. John, Vol. II* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928) p. 468.

I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in [no hold on] Me;

The time is almost at hand, when the powers of darkness will finally be able to touch Him, as they never could until this *hour*. However, it will not be because of anything sinful in Him, but because He was offering Himself in our place.

but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do.

Our Lord was allowing this action by the evil powers because the Father had commanded Him to allow it. He proves His love for the Father by obeying. In the same way, our Lord has asked us to prove our love for Him by obeying His commandments.

Arise, let us go from here.”

With this thought, He is ready to begin the ordeal that will start in the Garden of Gethsemane. The next chapters continued this discussion, and after a final prayer they departed.

APPLICATION

Today is Pentecost. About two thousand years ago, Pentecost was a day that witnessed the unleashing of a stupendous power upon the earth. Our reading informs us that this stupendous power can be ours.

Pentecost fell that year on a Sunday, called in those days the First Day of the Week. It had been fifty days since the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It had been ten days since His Ascension. One hundred and twenty people, both men and women, were gathered to pray in a room in Jerusalem. Suddenly, there was the fierce sound of a violent wind. The terrifying sound filled the entire house where the group had been praying only a moment before. Along with the sound of the wind, they saw fire that separated into one hundred and twenty individual tongues or flames. One of the flames came to rest on each of their heads. What they felt we can only guess. But what happened to them we know. They received POWER, for they were filled up with the source of the greatest power in the universe; they were filled up with God, Himself.

The crowds outside in the streets heard the fierce and mighty wind-like sound and came running together. They were Jews from the Diaspora who had traveled from their homes in many foreign lands to come to Jerusalem to celebrate the ancient feast of Passover. Luke tells us in the book of the Acts of the Apostles that these Jews were Parthians,⁴⁴ Medes and Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and parts of Lybia near Cyrene. They, like many Armenians who live outside Armenia, spoke best the languages of their new homes. In fact, some of the Jews attending the feast that day were from areas once a part of the Armenian Empire. Moreover, the king of Armenia at the time was the son of Polemon I of Pontus. Therefore, it is highly probable that some of the Jews that day spoke Armenian as their first language.

As the enormous crowd from these far-flung lands heard the awesome sound and gathered near the house that was its epicenter, they were amazed and bewildered to hear the members of the

⁴⁴ From the Parthians came the ruling princes of Armenia.

prayer group, upon whom the Holy Spirit had descended, speaking in the languages of the pilgrims' native lands. No doubt some were hearing Armenian. "What does this mean?" they asked each other, for it was an astonishing sign.

It was at that moment that Peter stood up with the eleven disciples and began to preach the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ. The hearers of this sermon, delivered in the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, were cut to the heart, and begged Peter and the other Apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in ('in dependence upon' or 'in the power of')⁴⁵ the Name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the LORD our God will call." (The Armenian Havadamk is the only version of the Nicene Creed today that notes, as Peter did, that repentance must accompany baptism.)

That day, about three thousand of those citizens "from every nation under heaven" believed the Good News, the Avedis, and were saved. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit' and returned to their homelands with His mighty power to spread God's wonderful message of salvation. We may safely assume from this account that those Jewish believers, who returned to the lands of the Armenians, brought the Gospel to us in the very year that it was accomplished—the year of Christ's Death and Resurrection—even before the arrival (according to our tradition) of the Apostles, Thaddeus and Bartholomew.

Our reading for today gives us the record of Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit, the gift of the Father, to indwell our Lord's followers after His Ascension. We celebrate today the fulfillment of that promise. A careful study of the reading reveals what an awesome promise Jesus made. When the disciples heard the title, *the Holy Spirit*, they knew that Jesus was speaking of the spiritual manifestation of the LORD God recorded in their Scriptures, as He moved in His stupendous power to deliver and lead, to defend and guard, to teach and discipline His people. Now this Holy Spirit was promised to them! In this way, though He was leaving them physically, Jesus would return to them, to be in them, to empower them beyond their wildest imaginations. When it happened, they would know that He, Jesus Christ, indeed, is the God of their Scriptures, the great *I AM*.

The good news is that the gift of the Holy Spirit was not just for those disciples, the gift of the Holy Spirit is for all of us who love our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He only asks that we be willing to obey Him. Because of the Holy Spirit within, we too have power to live in the way God has called us to live, to serve Him in the way He has called us to serve, to overcome all obstacles, to defeat sin and the power of Satan. For nothing, and no power, can withstand the Power of God. This is breathtaking but believe it! Jesus said it; Pentecost proved it.

⁴⁵ The Greek preposition $\epsilon\pi\iota$ when used with the dative, as in this instance, has many translation possibilities, but 'into' or even 'by' (as an instrument of means) is not one of them. The preposition $\epsilon\nu$ would be used for those meanings. Here, in our passage, 'in dependence upon' or perhaps 'in the power of' seems to fit the context best. We depend upon Christ for our forgiveness. He has the power to forgive.