

The Spirit of Truth

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[0 : 0 0] Well, do keep your Bibles open to John chapter 14, and there's a little outline to follow along as well, if that would help.

Well, friends, it would be good, wouldn't it, as members of Holy Trinity Doncaster, to actually know something about the Trinity. Don't need to be experts, but it would be slightly embarrassing if someone knew we came to this church, but then found out we knew nothing about the Trinity, except maybe perhaps that we worship one God but three persons, or what the relevance of that had to do with our lives.

Because after all, I'm pretty sure if you went down to one community church in Blackburn, that the people there would be big on one community, right? Because they want to live up to their name. Or if you went to City on a Hill, that the people at City on a Hill would know what the church stood for, to be a beacon of light to the city of Melbourne.

So here we are, Holy Trinity Doncaster. So I think it's good for us to know something about the Trinity. And thankfully, we've come to a purple passage tonight on that.

Actually, it's a purple passage on the Holy Spirit. For the last two weeks, we've been looking at, majoring on the two persons, the other two persons of the Trinity, the Father and the Son. But this week, the Son finally introduces the Spirit, the third person of the Trinity.

[1 : 3 0] And as he does, he also explains the relationship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. So if ever needed to explain the Holy Spirit to someone, this would be one of the key passages to turn to.

Now, tonight we're going to do it slightly differently. Rather than go through the passage section by section, as is usual, I'm going to sort of deal more thematically with the passage. This is because Jesus sort of covers three or four key topics in the passage, but he sort of does it in a circular way.

So he keeps repeating himself and coming back to it. So I think it's probably helpful to do it that way. So I want to look at three questions. The first, as in your outline, is who is the Spirit?

The second, why is he sent or why has he come to us? And finally, the third, is he with us? How do we know he is with us? So let's begin with the first question.

We know that the Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, but in verses 16 and 17 of our passage tonight, Jesus actually gives him two names. Jesus says, I will ask the Father, and we give to you another advocate to help you and be with you forever, the Spirit of Truth.

[2 : 3 8] Now, the first name, the word advocate, is translated from the Greek parakletos or paraclete. It's a word that's only used by John two or three times, actually more than two or three times, but only in these two or three chapters, and then once again in the first letter of John.

And the word itself has a range of meaning, quite a wide range of meaning. Literally, it means someone who comes alongside. So we have the NIV translating it as an advocate, someone who is, as it were, a lawyer defending you in court.

But if you look at the other translations, you will get words like counselor, helper, comforter, encourager. And each of these words gives one aspect of what the Holy Spirit's role is.

But none of it is able to actually fully capture the Greek word entirely. Anyway, the idea, the general idea is this, that the Spirit is someone who comes alongside to help.

And if He's just relating with us, then He's to teach and to give us counsel. But if we are relating to others, for example, with the Father or with the world, then He's, as it were, by our side, advocating for us.

[3 : 51] Notice also that Jesus calls Him another paraclete, which means that the first, the Father has already sent a first paraclete. And the first, of course, is Jesus. John writes in the first letter of John in chapter 2 and verse 1, I think I've got some verses up there.

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have another advocate or we have an advocate with the Father. And who's that? Jesus Christ, the righteous one.

So the Spirit then is following in Jesus' footsteps. And whatever Jesus has been doing up to now with the disciples, the Spirit will keep doing. The Spirit is Jesus' substitute, as it were.

Now, this is an important point, isn't it? Because sometimes, we get people or churches trying to drive a wedge between Jesus and the Spirit. So we hear some say, we are a Christ-centered church, and then other churches would retort and say, oh, but we're Spirit-filled churches.

But the thing is that we can't have it, it's not, we can't have one without the other, can we? If we are Spirit-filled, then we ought to be Christ-centered as well. And we can only be Christ-centered if the Spirit is there to help us.

[5 : 08] So that's the first name. The second name, which Jesus gives to the Spirit, is the Spirit of truth. Later on in verse 26, he's also called the Holy Spirit. And holiness and truth are the defining qualities of the Holy Spirit.

Everything the Spirit does and says has a mark of holiness, has a stamp of truth about it. So whatever he does, he cannot lie. And whatever he does, he cannot go against what God commands.

Now again, we sometimes hear people trying to divide the Spirit and truth. So we hear people say, that church worships in truth, but our church worships in spirit.

And you know, I can see where people get that from. It's from John chapter 4 and verse 24, where Jesus says, God is Spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and in truth. But people take it as if you can have one without the other, which is again false.

What Jesus means is that for true worship to happen, you must have both spirit and truth. So Jesus calls the Spirit the Spirit of truth. And what he means by that is that every time the Spirit is present, you will have truth.

[6 : 22] And every time you have truth, you would know that the Spirit has been present. Now I know why people actually say it, because it's actually because people think that some churches have too much head knowledge and not much emotions in their worship, while others have the opposite.

But again, both are deficient, aren't they? Because when the Spirit comes and engages with us, he engages our entire beings, our hearts as well as our heads, and not to mention our wills.

So we shouldn't expect the Spirit to just do one or the other. Well, the third thing we know about the Spirit is that he's sent by the Father at the Son's request.

And the Father sends him in the name of Jesus. So verse 16, I will ask the Father and he will give you another advocate. And in verse 26, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name.

Now later on in the next couple of weeks, we'll actually see that Jesus is the one that does the sending as well. So John chapter 15 and verse 26 on the next page. When the advocate comes, whom I, Jesus, will send to you from the Father.

[7 : 29] So Jesus does the sending. And then again in verse 7 of chapter 16, unless I go away, the advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I, Jesus, will send him to you.

And so we have those lines in the Creed, don't we? The one that says, we believe in the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son. Both the Father and the Son.

Now notice that all this implies that the Spirit is a person, just like Jesus, just like the Father. He's not, as it were, like, you know, in Star Wars, the Force, you know, when we say the Force be with you.

And also, all three persons are united in purpose and mind. So the Spirit comes in Jesus' name to do Jesus' will, and he's sent by both the Father and the Son.

So last week, if you were here, we saw that the Father and the Son work together hand in glove. Well, this week, we actually have to add the Holy Spirit as well. So I don't know whether that means you add another glove or how you do that.

[8 : 33] But all of them, three of them, work hand in hand in whatever they do in creation. But, even though they are united, the Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Spirit.

Each is a distinct person with their own roles. So there is unity and there is diversity. Now, I could go on and there have been Bible College subjects written on this for the whole term.

But if you're interested to know more, we are actually running as one of our topics for the intensive, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. And so you can sign up for that in the next couple of weeks. But let's move on to the next section.

And the question we want to ask there is, what is the Spirit sent to do? We know that he's sent by the Father and the Son, but to what end? And again, the answer is summarized in verse 16.

He's sent to help us and to be with us forever. Now, I'm going to use two big words for me, that is. I want to say that his mission is both functional and ontological.

[9 : 35] That is, functional being to do and ontological being to be. And now, if we glance over the passage again, it's pretty clear what the Spirit helps us to do.

Over and over again, I, you know, can you see what it is? What's the one thing that keeps cropping up? It's to help us keep Jesus' commands.

So see how the passage starts? If you love me, keep my commands. And love here is not just a feeling, okay? It's a way of life. It's a life of obedience to Jesus. But again, he repeats himself, verse 21, whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me.

The one who loves me will be loved by my Father and I too will love them. And again, he says in verse 23, anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them and we will come to them.

Conversely, anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. And Jesus goes so far as to say, if you obey Jesus, you're also obeying the Father because he speaks what the Father commands.

[10 : 43] And again, from the last two weeks, we know what some of these commands are. It's to believe in God, believe also in me, that's chapter 14. As well, a new commandment, I give to you, love one another as I loved you.

So trusting God, loving one another, these are the commandments that Jesus is talking about. And so now, if we look at verse 26, Jesus tells the disciples how the Spirit is to help them.

The Spirit will teach them all things, Jesus says, and in particular, remind them of everything that Jesus has said to them. And that is exactly what the Spirit did.

So after Jesus rose from the dead and he went up to heaven, the disciples recalled by the help of the Spirit exactly what Jesus had said. And we have that with us now, don't we?

The Gospels and the New Testament, which was handed down by them to us so that the Spirit can continue to do the same thing with us, reminding us of what Jesus has said.

[11 : 45] But the point is, great though that is, great though that job is the Spirit has done, it's not quite enough, is it? Because just having Jesus' words written down and having the Spirit as an external teacher, as it were, doesn't quite help us get right there.

So if you've seen the people of the Old Testament, they had God's laws and they had teachers and prophets to teach them. And yet, as we've read in Jeremiah 31 just now, they still broke God's commandments, they still broke God's covenant and they failed to keep it.

Just having a teacher that's external to yourself is not quite enough. But God promised a solution in the future and that's in verse 33 of Jeremiah.

He says, this is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my law in their minds and I will write it on their hearts. No longer will they teach their neighbor or say to one another, know the Lord because they will all know me from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord.

And this now has been fulfilled in the Spirit. The Spirit doesn't just come and is an external teacher to us. He actually teaches as it were in us by writing God's commands or Jesus' commands in our hearts.

[13 : 06] He helps us to internalize Jesus' commands. And so we no longer obey because we feel we have to because our parents make us or, you know, the pastor makes you.

No. We do it because we want to. See what Jesus says in verse 21. He says, whoever has my commands and keeps them. That phrase, have my commands, slightly strange, but actually, that refers to owning Jesus' commands, having it and making it our own.

That's what Jesus is talking about there. It's just like, I think, a bit like playing an instrument or learning to play an instrument or riding a bike. I'm going through that with my daughters right now.

But when you first learn a bike or an instrument, it's rather unnatural, isn't it? Because for the first year or two, when you're playing piano or whatever, all you spend your time doing is looking up and down, looking what the note is, where you think that is, and looking down where the key is, okay, and learning things like all cows eat grass and things like that.

Those of you who know music know what I'm talking about. And it's not very natural. It's not very satisfying because you practice and you keep stopping when you play the piece and, you know, after a while, you can, you know, maybe play one hand.

[14 : 24] But after a while, as you keep at it, and I keep telling my daughters to keep at it, it becomes easier, doesn't it? And so, those people that play piano and instruments now, they don't think about, oh, I'm playing A, so where should my hand go?

It just comes naturally to them. Same with riding a bike. You don't go on a bike, if you can ride a bike, and go, oh, I need to think about balancing. I think, no, you just enjoy the ride and you enjoy the music. And this is something I think that's similar to how we have Jesus' commands.

We read these verses and we expect it to all happen in the flesh sometimes and we get impatient. But even though Jesus speaks as though it's a single point in time, it's actually a process. So, when you first become a Christian, you have a heart and a love for Jesus.

But you don't, at first, obey and keep all of Jesus' commands. In the first place, you don't even know what they all are. And even if you did, you'll find some of them pretty hard, like sacrificial love that doesn't come naturally.

But what happens is that Jesus gives us his spirit as a gift. Notice, we don't earn it. It's not something we earn after we've obeyed all his commands. but we're given the spirit to help us to start to obey.

[15 : 36] And as we do it more and more with the spirit's help, what the spirit does is help us internalize Jesus' commands. They become part of us. They get written on our hearts. And I guess the best example is that if you look at some of the older Christians in church, you know, you just look at them and they're just godly by nature.

Right? And they don't seem to think at any point in time, what would Jesus do? And think, okay, I must follow. They just do it. It just seems to happen.

And that's because the commands of Jesus have been written on their hearts, has become part of their nature. So if you're young, and it looks like all of you are, then let me encourage you not to give up, but to keep loving Jesus by keeping at his commands.

And over time, what the spirit does is make it part of your nature. So keep at it. Well, the second reason in that dot point why the spirit is sent to us, however, is so that the spirit can be with us forever.

Now, I think when the disciples heard this, it would have been a great comfort to them because for the last two chapters, all they had been hearing was that Jesus had to leave them and that they could not follow him. him. But now Jesus tells them that actually someone else will come to be with them.

[17 : 00] And not just for a time, not for a while, but forever. And so intimate will the spirit be to them that in verse 17 he says that the spirit will live with them and be in them.

And so Jesus says that they will know him as a result. And so close is the spirit to Jesus as a substitute that Jesus can even say that he himself, Jesus, will come to them and that the disciples will see him.

But really what they are seeing is the spirit coming in the state of Jesus. And one day when Jesus comes again physically, the Trinity will be with us in every sense of the word, right?

But for now, in this present age, God, the Trinity is with us in the spirit, by the spirit. And the spirit is with us not just to teach us, but because God desires to be with us, to make a home with us.

As Jesus says in verse 23, anyone who loves me will obey my teaching, my father will love them and we will come to them and this is such a beautiful phrase, make our home with them.

[18 : 16] Now, many of you would know the film Annie. It's been made into a musical and the story about Annie is about an orphan trying to get to Mr. Warbuck's home, isn't it?

The billionaire. It's about a poor girl getting to a rich place. But here tonight we read that it's exactly the opposite with God. That actually it's God the rich person who is coming to us, the poor people.

God, the one who created the universe is coming to us, not the other way around. And because that is the case, we get to share in the life of the Trinity.

Jesus says in verse 19, because I live, you will live also. Because I rose from the dead, you will have life. On that day, verse 20, you will realize that I am in my father, but more than that, that you are in me and I am in you.

The one who loves me will be loved by my father and I too will love them and show myself to them. These amazing verses, if you think about it, that God can be in us and that we can be in God.

[19 : 24] That we can know and enjoy the relationship that the father and the son and the spirit have with each other. That we can be loved by the father the same way that he loves the son.

It's not an inferior love that God has for us. God's love for the son sort of, in one sense, overflows from the son to us. And we enjoy that.

We enjoy that eternal love because of the spirit. So in Romans, Paul can say that we are co-heirs with Jesus, with Christ, and sons of God, small as sons of God.

That's the sort of status we have in God's eyes. And so in verse 28, Jesus says they should be glad that he's going to the father because that's where the son belongs.

And when the son goes there, they will then send the spirit. And then we too can be where we belong, in Christ, by the spirit. Well, if all this sounds really good, and I hope it is, the final question we need to ask then is, how do we know that the spirit is with us?

[20 : 35] Subjectively, that is. Because some of us, I'm sure, became Christians and sort of didn't have any physical sensations. No voices from heaven and no visions in the night. So how can we be sure that the spirit is with us?

Well, one answer I guess we've talked about, and that relates to all the things that the spirit does for us, teaching us and helping us to obey Jesus. So if we love him and obey him, that is a sign of the spirit with us.

If we understand God's word, that is a sign of the spirit with us. But I also want to cast it in a larger frame, because I think Jesus begins to talk like that from now on.

And that is that we can tell that the spirit is with us when we become drawn to God and away from the world. We become attracted to things of God and not those of this world.

Because Jesus in these verses start to differentiate between the spirit and those who are of the spirit and the world. So verse 17, the world cannot accept the spirit because it neither sees him or knows him.

[21 : 39] Verse 19, Before long the world will no longer see me. Verse 27, Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.

And verse 30, I will not say much more to you for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the father and do exactly what my father has commanded me.

And that last verse shows us that the other references to the world is a reference to the prince of this world having a hold over the world.

The world belongs to God but at present it is under the hold of Satan. And having entered Judas he is sort of trying to bring things to a head thinking that he can defeat Jesus.

But Jesus welcomes his coming so that he can show himself to the world on the cross how he loves the father and how he does exactly as he commands. But when Jesus does that we are now given a choice aren't we?

[22 : 41] Either to remain with the world on that side of the line or to join with God and in his life. And all of us are given that choice whether to follow God or to follow the world.

And if we follow God then our hearts should grow in love for God for his commands and conversely the things of this world should start to fade. So it's not that we can't enjoy life anymore we can't go on holidays or you know buy things for ourselves but they should have no more should not have any hold over us anymore just as the prince of this world does not have a hold over Jesus.

And we don't find peace like the world does anymore not in financial security good jobs a beautiful wife. No, our peace now comes from God's very presence with us by the spirit.

Not just now but forever. And not just in the good times but even in times of trouble. Some of you would remember this old hymn. Turn your eyes upon Jesus.

Yes, sing with me. Look full in his wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.

[24 : 11] And the strange thing is that when that happens this third question actually becomes redundant. That is, we actually don't need to ask is the spirit with us because we will know that he is with us.

As Jesus says we will know him for he lives with us and he will be in us from the least of us to the greatest of us. It's like I don't need to look up my marriage certificate to know whether I'm married to Alyssa or not, do I?

Because I live with her. I share my life with her. It would be a bit strange that I need to look at a piece of paper to tell me that. And so it is with the spirit. If we love Jesus and we obey his commands, then the spirit will come to us and help us and be with us forever and we will know him.

We will know that he is with us. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for giving us the spirit of truth that we're not left to flounder, we're not orphans in this world, that even though you are by your father's side, yet we have all we need.

We have God with us by the spirit. Lord, help us to grow in the things of Christ, to grow in loving your commandments, to write it upon our hearts, to allow the spirit to do that with us even as we keep obeying it and keep following you.

[25 : 42] And Lord, may your spirit be our source of comfort and peace and wisdom and truth all through our lives from today until we meet you again.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.