**THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

June 11, 2017

John 16:1-33

Key Verse 16:13a “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.”

Those who climb Mount Everest do not do it alone. They bring Sherpas. When Edmund Hilary climbed Mount Everest in 1953 as the first man in history, he had a Sherpa, named Tenzing Norgay. Edmund Hilary got all the glory, but nobody remembers Tenzing Norgay. Since Sherpas are stronger than us at altitude, they are very well suited for alpine style expeditions in the Himalayas. They carry the oxygen, the gear and summit push. They take the photo of the climber. But they themselves do not appear in the photo. The Holy Spirit is like a Sherpa, who helps us behind the scenes. Let’s think about the work of the Holy Spirit.

**First**, “they will persecute you” (1-4). Jesus tells them plainly that after his departure, the Jewish leaders will persecute them. First, they will discriminate against them as the cult members; then they will excommunicate them. Finally, they will brand them as political criminals so as to destroy them. That was their common trick. So Jesus said in verse 2, “They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God.” Those who do not know God become self-righteous and despise Christians. So to become a Christian seems to be inviting persecution for ourselves. Why does Jesus tell his disciples such a horrible story? Jesus tells them this so that they will not go astray (1), but remember about what Jesus had warned them about. So we cannot say, “I did not know that it is so hard to be a Christian.” Persecution is a requirement in doing the great work of God. 2 Timothy 3:12 says, “In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” The work of God is a spiritual battle. Satan’s goal is to discourage us and make us fall and stumble. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Our biggest struggle seems to live by faith, not by sight. We see so many godless people successful in their work and laugh at us Christians. They think they do not need God to be happy. They seem to be carefree. When we see those kinds of things, we feel discouraged. But we must fight a spiritual battle and win the victory.

**Second**, the Holy Spirit guides his disciples (5-15). Look at verses 5-6, “Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things.” The disciples were only thinking about Jesus’ departure, and that they would be like orphans, and excommunicated. And they were trembling in the anticipation of fierce persecutions. When we think of their situation after Jesus’ departure, it seems horrible. But this is not the case. Jesus tells them he will give them the Holy Spirit. Look at verse 7. “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.” When he says that ‘he was going,’ this does not mean simple departure or his absence. He meant that he was going through suffering and death on the cross and then to the Father. He will give his life as a ransom sacrifice on the cross. Without this redeeming work of Jesus, the Holy Spirit won’t come to them. So Jesus must go. It is for their good. When the Holy Spirit comes to them, each of them would become quite a different person, for whom nothing is impossible. Each of them would become a great leader in the sight of God, because the Spirit of God would be with them. They can become history-makers and conquerors of the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

At the moment his disciples were in utter despair, but Jesus was not discouraged by them. Jesus taught them the basic work of the Holy Spirit. Look at verse 8. “When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment.”

Now, a common interpretation of verse 8 is, “This is just saying that the Holy Spirit is going to work in the lives of nonbelievers to make them know that they are sinful and to make them feel guilty.” Certainly it is true that the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin. But here the meaning is a legal term. It means “to indict by evidence.” It is a word that embraces the activity of a prosecutor and a judge in one. The Holy Spirit is not here saying, “I am going to make people feel bad about sinning.” He is saying, “I’m going to render a final verdict, that is, guilty.” Those of us who preach the Word of God are the world’s prosecutors. We prove the world to be in the wrong through God’s word. These days, the church is trying to make the world feel good about itself, trying to find a way to make everybody feel like, “You are just fine, and God just wants to make them a little better.” They are not doing their duty. The Holy Spirit works through the Word of God being preached. We should clearly preach sin, righteousness and judgment.

Look at verse 9-11. “About sin, because people do not believe in me, about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer, and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.” There is one particular sin that is most serious: “The sin of not believing in Jesus.” It is popular today to measure people against the Ten Commandments; that’s not what this is talking about. Everyone has a general sense of morality, everybody has a general sense of sinfulness and breaking the rules, but everybody tends to think that even in spite of breaking the rules, they are good enough. So here is the sin that sends people to hell: not believing in Jesus Christ; not acknowledging Him as Lord, Savior, God.

And then we have to preach righteousness. “Righteousness because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer.” Most people think, “If there is a God, if there is a heaven, I’m good enough to go there.” But if you don’t believe in Christ you are not going to go there. There is only one person who ever walked on this earth, who had a right at the end of His life to go directly on His own merit into the presence of God, only one. That is Jesus Christ. So unless you possess the righteousness of Jesus Christ, you will never see God; that is the point. The righteousness is demonstrated, “Because I am going to the Father, where you see me no longer.” The divine message of Scripture is this: the sin that condemns you is rejecting Jesus Christ. The righteousness that saves you is the righteousness that belonged only to Christ.

And then we preach judgment– because the prince of this world now stands condemned. The prince of this world is Satan. Here is the argument: if God has overpowered and judged the most powerful, evil force in the universe, you are not going to escape. You have no chance.

But the Holy Spirit delivers a different message for the disciples. It is a message of comfort and truth. Look at verse 13. “But 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.” Here all the truth includes everything Jesus said and did but the disciples could not handle. In John 2, Jesus went into the temple and drove out both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To the Jews who challenged him, Jesus said, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” His disciples could not understand it at the time. Only after Jesus was raised from the dead, his disciples understood that Jesus was talking about his body. Who revealed the truth? It was the Holy Spirit.

The disciples had been in the bosom of Jesus until now. But they would not be with their shepherd Jesus soon. They lacked experience, and may have been gripped with fear. They didn’t know what to say. Maybe they would be speechless before the Jewish authorities. But when the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide them into all the truth. The Holy Spirit gives them courage, divine wisdom and the power of God to overcome the world. In addition, the Holy Spirit gives the spirit of independence to each of Jesus’ disciples. Not only does the Holy Spirit give the spirit of independence, he shows them God’s glory until they are overwhelmed by the glory of God instead of by their fears. Look at verses 14. “He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.” Therefore, the disciples will not remain in fear and anxiety; they will see the great glory of our Risen Jesus Christ.

I would like to give you a homework this week. Over the course of this week, whatever problem you have, ask the Holy Spirit and get the answer from him. Pray and wait for an answer. You need to be spiritually alert to listen to the Holy Spirit by reading the Bible. How foolish it is to live without asking the Holy Spirit, our great Helper and Advocate! We have our own Sherpa. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. Without the Holy Spirit, we will never know the truth. The church in Corinth, due to the influence of the Greek philosophy, depended on the human philosophy rather than the Holy Spirit. As a result, they did not understand the meaning of Jesus’ cross. So there was division and sexual immorality and all kinds of problems.

**Third**, the disciples’ grief will turn to joy (16-24). Verse 16 says, “In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.” Jesus said many glorious things. But the disciples only heard, “In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.” So Jesus explains that his death and resurrection will be like childbirth.

Some of the disciples said to one another, “What does he mean by saying, ‘In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me,’ and ‘Because I am going to the Father’?” In verse 18, they kept asking, “What does he mean by ‘a little while’? We don’t understand what he is saying.” They were really filled with sorrow and were full of grief and anxiety; they were puzzled and bewildered. Jesus knew that they did not understand that in a little while Jesus would die on the cross for the sin of the world and after three days he would rise again (19). So Jesus tells them a parable of a woman giving birth. Look at verse 21. “A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world.” Jesus compares his death and their grief to birthpains, and childbirth, to his glorious resurrection. A baby comes out crying with a loud voice when a woman in labor feels that she has died. Probably all the women who had babies know what it means to have birthpains and the joy of childbirth. Jesus’ departure to die on the cross and his resurrection seem to have been like birthpains. The disciples will experience great pain. But they will have great joy when Jesus rises again.

Look at verses 23,24. “In that day you will no longer ask me anything. Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.” Until now, the disciples didn’t have much of a prayer life. They prayed habitually and maybe before meals without knowing why. It was like reciting the Lord’s Prayer habitually without knowing its meaning or the power of prayer. It is like Muslims reciting their standard prayers without really believing.

Actually they had not asked for anything in Jesus' name. As long as Jesus was with them, they implicitly relied on human Jesus. But Jesus was returning to his Father in heaven. So his disciples would not be able to depend on human Jesus anymore. But they could pray to God for what they need in Jesus’ name. Praying in the name of Jesus means on the basis of Jesus’ authority, not my own. It implies that we pray according to Jesus’ will and his heart’s desire. When we pray in Jesus’ name, we can experience the power of prayer. Those who have the power of prayer can say, “Everything is possible, sir.” Mark 11:24 says, “Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”

How did the disciples respond to his prediction of his resurrection? To their amazement, just hearing about his prediction of his resurrection made their troubled hearts calm down like gentle lake water in the morning sunshine. When they heard about his resurrection, they felt as if they had been freed from prison cells. When they heard about his resurrection, glorious light began to shine in their souls. When they heard about his resurrection, they could understand all the secret things of the world. At last they could open their mouths and make a confession of faith, and said in verse 30, “Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God.” As we know, the disciples are slow learners. But they learned something very important that Jesus came from God. This made Jesus very happy. A shepherd is very happy when his/her Bible student learns something like this.

Jesus said in verse 31, “Do you now believe?” They would scatter at the time of his suffering and crucifixion. But they would be able to maintain the peace of God in their hearts because they had heard about the work of the Holy Spirit and about his resurrection. They would also win the victory over all the things that had defeated them. Look at verse 33. “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” Jesus ended his farewell sermon with the victory sound. His death will be just a prelude of the coming victory and glory. May God help us to know the work of the Holy Spirit and the meaning of his resurrection so that we may overcome the world and render glory to God.