

IT IS BETTER FOR YOU THAT I GO

INTRODUCTION

- Which incident from Jesus's life would you most like to have witnessed? [Poll]
- What would it have been like to walk with him, listen to him first-hand?
- Do you ever wish that you could be there, that you could have lived at that time?
- I wonder – if you could choose to lose a year of your life in order to talk with Jesus in person for an hour, would you?

THE HANDOVER

- But that isn't how God chose to reveal himself to the bulk of humanity – John's Gospel in particular narrates a transition and a handover from Jesus doing his ministry and drawing the disciples along with him, to them doing his ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit. (Recommend: read chapters 14-16 through several times over the coming weeks.)
- This handover covers a whole range of ways in which things will change after Jesus leaves the earth. Turn with me to John 16:5-8

Now I am going to him who sent me. None of you asks me, "Where are you going?" Rather, 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.

- This is a staggering statement! Is this our experience? Can we put our hand on our hearts and say that we are glad that Jesus is no longer walking the earth, because our experience of the Holy Spirit is better?
 - Where the Scriptures speak of something that we don't yet attain to, it's not to condemn us – there is *no* condemnation for those who are in Christ! Instead of condemning, they call us up – they lay out a vision of what could be, and what God is willing to give. So if your answer was anything less than a whole-hearted, unconditional "yes!" then allow some excitement and anticipation to stir. If you feel dry, there's refreshment to come; but if you are finding your life with God already rich, there's still more!
- OK – the context
 - Just either side – this is about witness. The world won't receive the message on its own, but the Holy Spirit will testify about me, and will empower you to testify about me.
 - But actually, this entire passage – chapters 14 through 16 – is about the giving of the Holy Spirit.
 - In this passage, we read that the Holy Spirit will:
 - Be our Counsellor – a word that indicates both comforting and coming alongside to help
 - Be present with us in the absence of Jesus's physical presence
 - Remind us of that we are God's children
 - Reveal the mysteries of Christ to us
 - Teach us and remind us of what Christ has said
 - Make us fruitful, enable us to do greater things than the miracles Christ did on earth
 - Witness to Christ, and enable us to witness to Christ
- When I asked before about whether we would give up a year of our lives for an hour's conversation with Jesus – in many ways, our answer should be "no"! Our experience of the Holy Spirit is supposed to be a better substitute than Jesus sharing out his time between all the believers.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS SERIES

- So, the purpose of this series is to explore and more fully live out what the Scriptures clearly promise us – a life in which we not only understand truth about God, but know God powerfully and comfortingly present with us.
- Jesus is introduced by John as the one who will “baptise with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Matt 3, Luke 3) and his “handover message” to his disciples focuses on the role of the Holy Spirit in their lives – so we will be mostly focusing on Jesus’s own words about the Spirit.

WHAT TO EXPECT

THE TRINITY

God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are utterly in unity and utterly dedicated to each other. The Holy Spirit comes not to receive praise but to testify to Christ; Christ desires to glorify the Father and bring everything under his dominion; the Father desires to see his Son honoured. So as we look at “life in the Spirit”, we know that:

- The Spirit will always glorify the Son and the Father
- The Spirit and the Scriptures are utterly in unity – not to be wrangled together to get them to agree, but in total harmony with each other (role of the Spirit – Spirit of Truth, teaching and reminding us of Jesus’s words)

EXPERIENCE

The Holy Spirit is “with us forever” as a “comforter/helper” (14:16), “in us” (14:20), “producing fruit in us” (15:5) – so:

- These are not simply intellectual truths, they are things that are *experienced* and they relate in part to our *emotions*
- So this means that in discussing them and processing them, we’re going to need to talk about our feelings.
 - That will come more easily for some than for others – my own experience is that women are better at it than men, and that some generations grew up in a culture where talking about feelings was less encouraged.
- It also means that we’re not expecting simply to learn about what the Holy Spirit does, but to experience him doing it in our lives.
- Remember – the disciples had heard all of Jesus’s teaching before Pentecost, but it was the experience of God working in their lives that *changed* them. ***We need teaching, but we also need to encounter and experience God.***
- Remember – in John 20 Jesus breathes on the disciples and says, “receive the Holy Spirit”, and yet in John 21 they are still unfocused and unfruitful – at Pentecost the Holy Spirit baptises them, and they are utterly transformed. ***We are in need of filling and refilling with the Holy Spirit!***

RESPONSE – OPENNESS TO WHERE WE’RE GOING

- Coming weeks:
 - Being constantly refreshed by God, and overflowing in a way that refreshes others. Holy discontent with anything less.
 - The unpredictable nature of being led by the Spirit – going beyond comfortable faith. Being equipped by the Spirit for any and every situation.
 - The empowering of the Spirit, and the transformation that comes with being baptised in the Holy Spirit.
 - Hearing and recognising the guiding voice of the Holy Spirit in our everyday lives.
 - Understanding the diverse gifts that the Spirit has given our church, and learning how to use them for the common good.
 - Desiring and making room for those gifts which we currently don’t have in our midst, or don’t know how to receive as a congregation.
- If, like me, your experience of the Holy Spirit doesn’t live up to the standard of “better than Jesus being on the earth” – if you read the promises of John 14-16 and can’t immediately say, “yes, that’s my daily experience” to them – let’s start by coming to God humbly and hungry.
- Whatever our current experience, however familiar or otherwise this feels, let’s respond with a prayer of openness – openness to God revealing things to us, leading us into new experiences, growing our understanding and love for him.

THREE PRAYERS

“Jesus, thank you that you did not leave us as orphans, but sent us your Holy Spirit.”

“Holy Spirit, we don’t want to fit you into the boxes of our comfort or previous experience – we are eager to experience everything that the Father wants for us.”

“Holy Spirit, we welcome you and trust you to lead us into all truth. We are thirsty for more of you. Fill us, refill us, baptise us.”