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February 24, 2008

"THE ADVOCATE"

John 14:15-17; 15:26-27; 16:6-14

Last week Amanda preached on the most important of the 7 signs recorded in John's Gospel - the resuscitation of Lazarus.

Following that event Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday to the thunderous cheers and shouts of support from a huge throng!

The following Thursday evening, on the last night of his life, John

records Jesus' "farewell discourse." It begins near the end of

chapter 13 and runs through chapter 16. In that farewell address

Jesus is trying to prepare his followers for his approaching

execution and death as well as his resurrection. One of the

recurring themes of that discourse is the ministry of the Holy

Spirit. In his conversation with Nicodemus Jesus talked about

the Holy Spirit, likening him to a mysterious wind which we

neither control nor fully understand.

I want to explore this material about the Holy Spirit from three different perspectives:

- Who is the HS and what are His origins?
- How does the HS relate to the Risen Christ?
- Finally, how does the HS interact with people?

Let's now read about God's Holy Wind or Spirit (read John 14:15-17; 15:26-27; 16:6-14, beginning on p.109 NT in the pew Bibles).

Who is the Holy Spirit and what are his origins? Notice that Jesus speaks of the Spirit in personal terms not as an impersonal force. Notice also the inter-connectedness between the Father, Jesus, and the Spirit! This is some of the scriptural material from which the doctrine of the Trinity arose, that God is a fellowship of three-in-one. Jesus said, "the Father will send the Spirit in my name," (14:26) and in another place, "I will send you the Advocate from the Father" (15:26). So both God the Creator and Christ the Divine Son work in harmony in sending the Holy Spirit to us. One theologian wrote in fact that the HS is the bond of love binding God the Father to God the Son

Secondly, how does the Spirit relate to the risen Christ?

Jesus said, "I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go

away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you" (16:7). Jesus also taught "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever" (14:16). By calling the Spirit "another Advocate" Jesus implies he was the first Advocate. The Spirit's job is to continue Jesus' presence and work in the world following his resurrection and ascension to heaven. The Holy Spirit is in essence Jesus' alter-ego.

The Holy Spirit not only continues Jesus' presence in the world, but also points people toward JC. The HS is the great evangelist! Jesus told his disciples, (15:26) "When the Advocate comes . . . he will testify on my behalf." A few verses later Jesus said of the divine Spirit, (16:14) "He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you."

So the Spirit glorifies and bears witness to Jesus Christ. His job is not to call attention to Himself, but to Christ. For that reason he has appropriately been called "the shy member of the Trinity." The Spirit relates to JC as an actor's agent relates to his actor client. The agent's job is to promote his/her actor

client. Though we believe the members of the Trinity are equal in power and deity, the Spirit's function is to put the spotlight on JC while often remaining backstage and out of sight.

Let's move on to our third question, how does the HS interact with people? He works in people's lives to help them be "born from above." The HS is God's agent of conversion. For people who have yet to believe in Jesus, the HS plays the part of the prosecuting attorney. Jesus says, "The Advocate . . . will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment" (16:8). The world is wrong about sin because many are blind to God's presence in the world in Jesus the incarnate one. They are wrong about righteousness because his crucifixion and resurrection reveal not Jesus' guilt, but his innocence and righteousness. They are wrong concerning judgment because by Jesus' death God has judged the world and Satan, the world's ruler.

The Advocate helps us acknowledge our sinful nature and our need for a redeemer. For example in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, after Peter's famous Pentecost sermon,

Luke writes, "Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said . . . 'What should we do?' Peter said, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (2:37-38). The Spirit convicted them of their need of Christ's forgiving grace and they reached out to receive it by believing. This sounds painful, they were "cut to the heart." But in the words of my mentor Earl Palmer, "It's a good pain because the HS acts like a great physician, revealing a disease so that it may be healed."

Four times Jesus refers to the Spirit as the "parakletos" in Greek, meaning literally "one called along side." Calvin said "the Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ binds us to himself." So the HS is the one who assures us of the truthfulness of JC and of his love for us in ways we can understand, who authenticates JC to us. Jesus promises, "He (the Spirit) abides with you, and he will be in you" (14:17). The Holy Spirit is a comforting presence in the lives of all who believe in Christ.

Years ago while a university student I served as a summer counselor for senior high boys at Mt. Hermon's Ponderosa Lodge in the SC Mountains. During their week at camp many of these kids would have "mountain-top experiences" a spiritual high from their time at camp and would feel close to Christ and feel the Spirit's presence. Back at home sometimes it felt as if the Spirit had abandoned them. The problem was that their faith was emotion-driven. Whether or not we feel the Spirit's presence, Jesus promises, "He abides with you, and will be in you."

The NRSV translation of "*parakletos*" is "Advocate" having a courtroom scene in mind. For non-Xians the HS is like a prosecuting attorney. For Christians the HS is an Advocate or "attorney for the defense." Jesus said that when the Advocate comes he "will testify on my behalf." This means that when disciples are on trial because of their claims about Jesus the HS will give them the rights words to say. He helps us today to bear witness to Jesus Christ in the world!

The Holy Spirit also has a teaching and guiding function in our lives. Jesus calls him "the Spirit of truth." Jesus promised,

“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth” (16:13). He also said, “the Holy Spirit . . . will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you” (14:26). This is largely done through the Scriptures, which the Spirit inspired certain individuals to write.

An example of the Spirit “reminding” Christians of Jesus’ teaching occurred earlier in this gospel. Back in John chapter 2 we read the story of Jesus’ cleansing the temple. In that context Jesus said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” Jesus was speaking primarily of his own body. John comments, “After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word Jesus had spoken” (2:23).

What about so-called Spirit inspired visions? Many have claimed such visions. For example, on Easter morning in 1936 in Korea, a young man claimed he had a vision. God told this man that he had an important mission to fulfill and he was the only person on the planet who could accomplish it. This young man, Sun Myung Moon claimed that the Spirit told him that Jesus’ true

mission was to start the perfect family. Instead, he made a major mistake and was crucified instead. Therefore Moon was given the job of fulfilling Jesus' original mission – starting the perfect family. So began the Unification Church.

How can we know if some new truth a person shares is actually from the HS or not? What yardstick might we use to test such a vision, whether or not it's from the HS? John Calvin, our ancestor in the faith, wrote that because the Spirit inspired the writers of Scripture, any new vision or teaching must agree with the written Word. Of course the NT clearly teaches that Jesus' crucifixion was not a mistake as Moon claimed, but the fulfillment of God's plan.

Jesus said, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth" (16:12-13). The HS uses Scripture to guide us into all the truth, but may also provide ongoing illumination that may open up new vistas, new ideas, the church has not known before. In the words of scholar Gary Burge, "The Spirit works creatively in the church, bringing a new prophetic

word. This word never contradicts the historic word of Jesus and never deflects glory away from Jesus, but it may faithfully bring the church to see its message and mission in a new way" (p.452 NIV Application Bible: John; c.2000; Grand Rapids; Zondervan).

So for those of us who are followers of the Risen Christ, the HS is the comforting presence of the Risen One in our midst, our Advocate, and our teacher "the Spirit of Truth." If you are already a follower of Jesus, may the Spirit comfort, encourage, guide, and direct you, and teach you "all things," enabling you to bear powerful and winsome witness to the crucified and risen Christ.

If you haven't come yet to personal faith, the fact that you are here this morning is evidence that the Holy Spirit has begun working in your life, pointing you toward JC. The critical step the Spirit wants to encourage you to take is to trust in Jesus Christ as your sin-bearer and Savior, and your Lord and leader in life. That happens when you're able to see that the saving work of Christ is not just a great fact, a general truth which you admire at

a distance, but something JC did for you personally. The HS wants you to understand that "God so loved not only the world in general, but you specifically, "that he gave his only Son so that whoever believes in him may not perish but have eternal life."

Let us pray: Holy Spirit, descend on each of us, assuring us of the truth of Jesus Christ and the reality of his saving work on the cross which meets our deepest spiritual need. Spirit of the Living God, melt us, mould us, fill us, and use us to spread the Good News of God's love for us in Christ, in Whose Name we pray. Amen.