

Sermon- Through the Eyes of the Holy Spirit

Scripture: John 16: 5-15

Sunday, September 22, 2019

As you know we have been dwelling on the Farewell Discourse in John 14 to 16 for the last few months. And in this section, Jesus is preparing this disciples for the terrible events that are about to take place and the radical new vision for the world that his disciples will have to share with the world after Jesus leaves them. This was a really big ask for that band of 11. Jesus would have spent a lot of time preparing his disciples for what was to come. But only in the Gospel of John do you find such a detailed accounting of the contents of Jesus' last discourses. Now last week Jesus was telling them about the Advocate He and His Father was about to send them. We looked at some issues related to the interpretation of scripture and we also looked at how Jesus prepares his disciples for the future by forewarning them of the persecution to come.

In today's section in John 16, we get to look at another lesson in preparing the disciples. He tells them again that he is going to send them the Holy Spirit and this time he focuses on a specific aspect of what the Holy Spirit would do. That is what we are going to look at today.

But right off the bat, the very first verse raises an interesting problem in interpretation. Verse 5 reads like this. ***"But now I am going away to the one who sent me and not one of you in asking where I am going. Instead, you grieve because of what I told you. In fact it is best for you that I go away, because if I don't the Holy Spirit won't come"***.

Now if you have been following through with me we have noted two instances where Jesus' disciples have asked his exactly this question. Back in John chapter 13, in the section where Jesus predicts Peter's denial, in verse 36 we have apostle Peter asking Jesus, "Lord, where are you going?" Just a little later, in the next chapter where Jesus

declares to his disciples, “I AM the Way, the Truth and the Life”, in the previous verse, verse 4 we see Apostle Thomas declaring, “We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Now scholars have gone crazy trying to explain this. They have said that John 16 maybe has been placed in the wrong section and that maybe it should have been placed before chapter 13. Other scholars say, the word “now” in verse 5 is the key. Because maybe Jesus was saying that, it is in the “now” that no one is asking him where he is going. But these explanations tie the interpreter into a pretzel. You see, if the scroll writers thought that there was a problem with the way the chapters were laid out, they would have corrected it. But they chose to lay it out in this sequence because they thought it made sense and this was the God inspired sequence. So we need to ask the same Holy Spirit who enabled them to make sense of this text to help us to make sense of the text in the way it is written. And I believe it does make sense, if you were to immerse yourself into the scene that is playing out by the power of the Holy Spirit.

So let’s enter into the room where this conversation is playing out. Now here is what is going on. You see Jesus has been warning his disciples that he was going away for quite some time now. And initially Jesus’ warnings don’t register in their minds. When Peter gets that Jesus is saying he is going to die Peter gets all upset and tells Jesus, he will not die. At other times like in chapter 15 and 16 you see the disciples getting depressed when Jesus talks about his death. So if you were to curate all the disciple’s reactions to Jesus’ forewarnings you get, denial, anger and depression. That includes all the stages of grief, except for acceptance. But Jesus is not simply preparing them to his leaving. Jesus is trying to get into their heads that Jesus is leaving because that is part of the plan. The plan that will solve the problem of human sin and transform the world. And so they are very much a part of this amazing plan. In other words, Jesus was trying to explain that his going away or impending death was not a bad thing but a good thing.

But Jesus also understands that it is hard for his disciples to make this leap from their master dying to “this is actually a good thing” because nothing in their human experience would enable them to make such a leap in their thinking. So what did Jesus do? He brought up the topic again and again.

Now if you want to bring up a topic, you need a lead-in, right? So Jesus simply used a lead-in “none of you are asking me where I am going”. Kind of like setting up a straw-man argument to push against it. That is what Jesus is doing here. See it may not be technically correct that the disciples did not ask him where he is going. But it is correct that the disciples do not understand the “why” of his going. So Jesus looks for ways to bring up the discussion about his going over and over again. So on this occasion he brings up a straw man like argument, “none of you ask where I am going” simply as a manner of speaking to get one more opportunity to explain the “why” of his leaving.

Makes sense?

Ok so Jesus finds a way to bring the discussion back to his “leaveing”. He reiterates that that his going is going to be good for them. Why? Because if he goes, he will send the Holy Spirit. And what would the Holy Spirit do? Well three things.

He will convict the world of its sin, He will convince the world of God’s righteousness and He will make the world aware of the coming judgment.

Before we get too far just a clarification of the word “world”. Well, the Greek here is the word “kosmon” and in a previous sermon I has talked about the different meanings of the Greek words translated into English as “world”. The word used here is the word “kosmon” which has a flexible meaning and in this case it is referring to the “people of this world”.

So verse 8 can be translated as, when the Holy Spirit comes he will convict the people of this world of it’s sin, of God’s righteousness and of the coming judgement.

Ok let's look closer at each of these three areas.

First, the Holy Spirit will convict the people of this world of its sin. In verse 9 he specifies that the world's sin is not believing in who Jesus is. This is very interesting if you think about it. Pay close attention. Jesus is taking not talking here about what the Holy Spirit will do to an individual human being. This is a revelation about the impact of the Holy Spirit on the people of the world in general. But what does this actually mean. Because the Holy Spirit actually can be present everywhere at once. And if the Holy Spirit were to convict the whole world of their sin of not believing in Jesus then we would have the whole world coming to Christ at once and the world would be ready for Christ's second coming right? Obviously global mass conviction and transformation has not happened. So what is Jesus saying when he talks about the Holy Spirit convicting the people of this world about their sin of not believing who Jesus is? Well it works like this.

For a person to come to Christ, God has set up a system in which his disciples play a key role. They share the Gospel to groups and to individuals. But sharing the Gospel is like giving someone a treasure box. But this box is locked. But the key is not with us. The key is given by the Holy Spirit directly. That is why when people ask me if I am converting people I tell them, no I am not and I cannot. I can only give people what I have. I can give them a treasure box because that is all that is in my hands. I don't have the keys to these boxes. But the Holy Spirit has to give them the key to open it and access all the amazing stuff in the box. And when and how the Holy Spirit gives people the keys to the boxes distributed is a mystery. We don't know when and we don't know how the key is given. But we do know that Jesus' words are true. Somehow this happens. One of the most amazing things you will notice is how far and wide the Holy Spirit has reached. Almost every where there are people, there is the church. So you may have heard of the term, "unreached people group". Well, that term is becoming irrelevant to missionaries now and so the term is being redefined to "unengaged unreached people groups". The

“unengaged unreached people group” are those people groups that have less than 2% evangelical Christians and there is no indigenous mission movement within themselves. Back in 2005 there were 3000 such groups. As of 2019 there are just 300 such people groups in the whole world out of 20,000 people groups, which is about 121 million people or just 1.7% of the world’s population. Think about this folks. The world has 6500 different languages. That represents even more distinct dialects and cultures from New York city to the Amazon rainforests. Yet people almost everywhere except for 1.7% of the world’s population don’t have their own missionaries. That is the power and reach of the Gospel. It is not because of any one person or organization that we are in this place. It is because of the Holy Spirit having gone out and distributed the keys to the treasure boxes that you and I are supposed to distribute. Jesus said that the world will be convicted of the sin of not believing in who He is and it has already happened.

The other two parts of verse 8 are related. So the Holy Spirit will also convict the world of the righteousness of God. What does this mean? Well, it means this. Is God really good? This is not a question that the human mind can answer on its own. We look at the terrible things happening in this world and the first thought that comes to our minds is, if God was good and he has the power, why did he let this happen right? Drunk driver crashes car into someone and an innocent person dies and the driver escapes. Or you a natural disaster. Now some people read the Bible and especially the Old Testament and see that God tells the Israelites to wipe out whole populations and they say, this is violent and terrible. Any God who tells his people to do this cannot be good. When we look at his with our human mind it is not a straight line between we have a God who made this whole beautiful universe to God is therefore good. No, we cannot directly come to that conclusion. But it is the Holy Spirit’s work in us that enables us to understand that God is good beyond our understanding. That even when bad things happen, God is working all things out for good and that what we think of as good is just

filthy rags according to the standards of God. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict the people of this world about the goodness of God.

Finally, there is a third piece of the Gospel. And it is the part about the coming judgement. You see, left to our devices, the people of this world do not believe that God had anything to do with where people came from and they do not think there is anything to consider beyond the grave. But the fact is that God made us in his image and God will cause us to stand before him and give account. And if we have not clung to Jesus Christ, we are not going to fare well on judgement day. You see when people look at the Old Testament and are repelled by God giving the command to kill whole people groups, at the bottom of that repulsion is this sense that God should not punish people. It is a rebellious child telling the parent that they have no right to correct them. Only worse because parents only can correct, but God has the right to judge. And the day of reckoning or day of judgement is coming for everybody. But it takes the Holy Spirit to convince people of this.

So every piece of the Gospel has to be unlocked by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has to convict people of the sin of not believing in Jesus, the Holy Spirit has to convict people of the Goodness of God and the Holy Spirit has to convict people of the urgency of throwing oneself at the feet of Jesus because judgement day is coming and it could be here soon because only 1.7% of the global population is still unreached.

Now if you are hesitant about sharing the Gospel because you can look at this situation and say, that is why I don't share, because people don't believe or change. Or perhaps you are thinking that they will get offended or even that they might think of me as "that kind of person". Well the Good News is that if it is the Holy Spirit's job to convict people of who Jesus is, and of God's goodness and judgment day then that makes it better because it takes the pressure of you to convince anybody. Your job is not to change anybody's mind. Your job is to share what you have. The treasure box of the Gospel that

was given to you. You can also share how the Holy Spirit unlocked the box given to you and what he did in your life. But isn't it a beautiful thing that the job of transforming people's heart is going to be done by the Holy Spirit himself!

So go and distribute the boxes my friends, all over the place! Tell the stories of what God has done in your life. Share the word of God. Be generous with you time and resources. Distribute God's word freely. All with the stress-free realization that God has taken the main responsibility of transforming the hearts of those you work with. May you see the Holy Spirit do what Jesus promised he would do all around you. Let us pray.