MAIN POINT

Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to His disciples and assured them of the work He would do. Do we believe the nature and substance of this promise at The Chapel?

INTRODUCTION

Today we begin our 2018 Common Ground series, “The Holy Spirit.” God continues to draw more people to the Chapel, and the temptation to believe that we are growing in our own power or abilities can easily take root in our hearts. We must always remember that it is God the Holy Spirit working in and through us to accomplish His work. To that end, we’ll be studying the Holy Spirit over these 6 weeks, beginning with Jesus’ promise to send the Holy Spirit.

What promises did you make this week and to whom? Did you keep them? Why or why not?

What promises were made to you? Did the people who made those promises keep them? Why or why not?

Why is it that we sometimes feel compelled to make a promise, but at other times don’t see the need? In other words, what’s going on in us or others that compels us to make or want a promise?

Multiple factors go into our making promises. Sometimes we do so purely out of good intentions. Other times we do it for what we will receive. We might believe that we need to make a promise to get what we want or to ensure someone will like us. We may make a promise to someone because we think that’s what they want to hear. There are also many complexities that go into wanting and believing a promise. Do we lack trust in the person and need their special assurances? Are circumstances especially difficult for us and lead us to doubt? These and more go into wanting or needing promises.

In our text today, Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to His disciples. In immediate context, Jesus was looking at the cross, the grave, and His eventual return to Heaven, all of which would leave the disciples wondering about their future. Jesus promised them that just as He had been leading them, advising them, teaching them, empowering them, and critiquing them, so would the Holy Spirit. Let’s jump in.

UNDERSTANDING

> READ JOHN 14:12-14.

Describe the setting of these verses. Where is Jesus in His earthly ministry? What is about to happen? How does that add greater significance to this moment?
What did Jesus mean when He said that His disciples would do “greater works”? That is, in what sense do we, as Jesus’ disciples, do greater works that Jesus?

What “greater works” have you seen God do in your life or in The Chapel?

In this passage, Jesus made an astounding promise. His introductory statement, “Truly, truly, I say to you,” is an expression designed to draw attention to what follows. Jesus promised that the person believing in Him would accomplish the same works—and even greater ones.

We should not think “greater” necessarily means more spectacular or more miraculous. After all, raising someone from the dead is about as spectacular and amazing as can be. It’s more about quantity than quality. During His ministry, Jesus restricted His travel to a small sector of the world. After His ascension, however, His disciples traveled throughout the Roman Empire spreading the gospel. Both in the number of conversions and the spread of the gospel, the early church did greater things through the power of the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus had promised would come following His return to the Father (Acts 1:4-8).

What “greater things” would you like to see Jesus accomplish in our community?

All of the “greater things” we might see God do in and through us come about by the Holy Spirit. Let’s keep reading to see what the Holy Spirit does in the lives of Jesus’ disciples and the world.

> READ JOHN 14:15-17.

Describe the setting of these verses. Where is Jesus in His earthly ministry? What is about to happen? How does that add greater significance to this moment?

Jesus promised His disciples the Holy Spirit would come to them. What titles did Jesus give the Holy Spirit here? What do these titles teach us about Him?

According to this passage, what is the relationship between the Holy Spirit, loving Jesus, and obeying Jesus? Why is this so important for us to understand?

Jesus knew very well that the requirement of love and keeping his commands would necessitate a resource of divine proportions and accordingly he prayed that his followers would have “another” resource. The Greek word John uses in this passage to refer to the Holy Spirit is transliterated Paraclete. Different translations use different words to get at the meaning: comforter, helper, advocate, and the like, none of which on their own give an accurate interpretation to the meaning Jesus is conveying. The picture presented in this context is that of a Paraclete who will function as a replacement and a strengthening companion much the same way Jesus was for the disciples. Jesus had been leading them, advising them, teaching them, empowering them, and critiquing them. But his time with them would thereafter be limited, and his followers needed a new companion who could function in all those ways.
Although the reader may wonder what relation there is between the discussion of love and obedience and the announcement of Jesus praying for another Paraclete, there is for John a clear connection. Jesus knew very well that the requirement of love and keeping his commands would necessitate a resource of divine proportions and accordingly he prayed that his followers would have “another” resource: the Paraclete.

> READ JOHN 16:7-11.

Jesus recognized the sorrow that filled His disciples’ hearts. They were sad, concentrating on the negative consequences for themselves. They were focused on themselves and not thinking about Jesus. They didn’t realize the extent of what His going away would mean for Him (or them). Jesus would depart only by the long, lonely, and painful path of the cross. They did not recognize and could not yet focus on the benefit of His leaving—that then the Spirit would come to them.

What advantage does the Spirit give us over the early disciples who walked with Jesus in His earthly ministry?

Do we fully appreciate the advantages the Spirit brings? Do we eagerly respond to the Spirit’s presence and work in us? Explain.

We have two advantages over the disciples in responding to this teaching. We have never known a time when Jesus wasn’t in heaven. We know He was going to heaven and, indeed, is still there today. We have never been in Jesus’ physical presence as they were. We have no reason to be upset by His departure from earth. We also know about the Spirit and at least to some degree about His work. This knowledge means Christians today are ahead of the disciples at the time described in this passage. Yet we do not know all we could. In general we always can learn more about what the Spirit does, and in particular we can learn more about what He wants to do in our lives.

What incorrect or incomplete ideas do people you know have about sin? How does the phrase “because they do not believe in Me” enhance our understanding of God’s view of sin?

What do people today think it means to be righteous? How do they think we obtain righteousness?

The Spirit’s convicting work entails several realities, the first of which is sin. Sin means missing the mark and doing wrong by God and by others, but it has a narrow scope here. Jesus defined sin as not believing in Him. The root of all sins is the basic sin of unbelief. It leads to and is responsible for all other sins.

The second reality of which the Spirit convicts is righteousness. This term takes in one or more of the three following ideas: 1) It concerns what Jesus exhibited in His life. The Spirit works to vindicate Jesus. He shows sinners that Jesus was right in what He taught and in how He lived. 2) Righteousness is about what Jesus gives to believers. It refers to sinners being made right with God, or being justified. The Spirit shows people they cannot make themselves righteous but they can receive righteousness through faith in Jesus. 3) It describes what Jesus expects of believers. The Spirit reveals the difference between righteous and sinful living.
If the Spirit’s job is conviction, what is our role in leading people toward Christ? Should we point out sin when we see it? Explain.

What happens if we assume it’s our job to convict and condemn sinners? How can we share the gospel message with hope and grace, not anger and condemnation?

The Spirit’s work allows sinful people to see they need to be reconciled to God. To be sure, this benefit did not apply directly to the Twelve in terms of their salvation. It did apply, however, to their gospel work. The Spirit prepares others to hear and urges them to respond to the gospel. The Spirit makes us aware of all our sins including unbelief, showing us we are in the wrong and need God’s forgiveness. He convicts us so we can be set free. We share the gospel with our lost friends and the Spirit convicts and brings redemption.

APPLICATION

In our study, we’ve sought to gain a broad understanding of the promise of the Holy Spirit and the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

What would it look like if you trusted the Holy Spirit’s guidance in your life as much as you would trust guidance from Jesus Himself?

Part of the Spirit’s role is to reveal our need. What spiritual need has the Spirit most recently revealed in your life? How can we help one another respond to His conviction?

What opportunities do you have to declare truth about Jesus to people where you work and in your neighborhood with the help of His Spirit? What would you like these people to know about Jesus?

PRAY

Thank God for the gracious gift of His presence in the person of the Holy Spirit, and eternal freedom for those who trust Him. Pray that you would be obedient to the Spirit’s prompting in your own life.

MEMORIZE

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. -John 14:26
COMMENTARY

JOHN 14:12-17

14:12. This is one of the most interesting verses in the Bible. Interpreters have pondered what Jesus meant by telling his disciples that they would do greater things than he, the Son of God, had done. But perhaps the best way to understand the verse is to take it literally, exactly as Jesus said it. Jesus’ earthly ministry was limited in time and space. He served the Father for three and one-half years and never outside the boundaries of Palestine. The disciples, on the other hand, as Acts clearly attests, carried out ministry that was greater geographically, in terms of numbers of people reached and long-lasting effect.

We find a leadership principle here as well. All parents should be able to say to their children; all pastors should be able to say to their staffs; all leaders should be able to say to their followers: “You have the potential to do greater things than I have done.” To empower and develop followers whose ministry exceeds the impact of their mentors is to follow the model of Jesus.

14:13. In this verse we find one of the great prayer promises of the Bible that focuses first on the purpose of prayer. Jesus answers prayer in order to bring glory to the Father. Our praying, therefore, ought to be directed toward that goal and end. But we have to pause at the dramatic implications of words like whatever you ask and “ask me for anything” (v. 14).

Perhaps a word of caution is in order here. No theology should be built from a single verse or even a handful of verses in the Bible. The Bible contains huge blocks of information on prayer, and this is one of them. Jesus had already taught the disciples much about prayer, and here we have only a final reminder, not everything that applies to the subject. Nevertheless, this promise of prayer we cannot ignore. In fact, what we see here is a New Testament formula of asking in the name of Jesus, something new to the disciples though they would hear it again before Jesus finished his teaching.

Notice the similarity between this teaching and chapter 16: “In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, 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” (John 16:23–24).

14:14. Obviously, just saying “in Jesus’ name” creates no magic potion for prayer. The culture in which these words were spoken took names very seriously, so much so that they equated one’s name with the character, spirit, and power of that person. That is why the Jews never spoke the name of Yahweh.

14:15–17. How do people know that they are Christians? How do you and I gain confidence that we are born again by the regenerating power of God’s Holy Spirit? The world cannot know because the world cannot accept the Holy Spirit. But the disciples were told that the Holy Spirit lives with you and will be in you. Pentecost was still in their future, so at the present time the Holy Spirit was constantly with them. But after Pentecost, he would actually be in them and in every other believer since that day. Consequently, they were identifiable (as we are) as God’s children, not orphans.

JOHN 16:7-11

16:7-8. Many evangelistic sermons have been preached with three points prominently displayed—sin, righteousness, and judgment. We will look at these words in the following verses, but here we want to concentrate on the central verb convict that translates the Greek word elegcho. What did Jesus mean when he said the Holy Spirit will convict the world of guilt? Translations have handled the word differently, choosing English words like reprove or convince. In the Septuagint, we see the word primarily focused on correction (Job 5:17; Ps. 141:5; Prov. 3:11–12).
Since the New Testament speaks often of the Holy Spirit’s work in the lives of believers, we find it a little more difficult to understand what the Spirit does in the world (kosmos). We must not miss the important words “to you” at the end of verse 7. The Holy Spirit does not float around the cosmos like Casper the friendly ghost, spreading general feelings of conviction. The New Testament makes it plain that conviction and awareness of sin come through the hearing of Scripture.

The reference to world, as we have seen repeatedly in this Gospel, centers in the unbelieving society which will be challenged and shaken in its devotion to sin by the power of the Word and the Spirit working through God’s people. John centered on the Spirit’s work to unbelievers in verses 8–11 and then switched to his work in believers in verses 12–15.

16:9. The last part of verse 9 offers the key to this section. The work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians convicts unsaved people because their message radiates Christ. Unbelief is the condemning sin that closes the door to heaven and opens the door to hell. People do not go to hell because they smoke, drink, or curse but because they reject faith in Christ. Furthermore, this sin characterizes every unregenerate person. God is not looking for perfect people but people who are willing to accept atonement that he has already provided.

16:10. The Holy Spirit also convicts the world in regard to righteousness. This element of the message is connected to the ascension which completed the glorification process and therefore proved the righteousness of Christ (Pss. 17:1, 15; 24:1–4). It is not that the world does not believe in righteousness; unbelievers and believers alike magnify the work of people like Albert Schweitzer and Mother Teresa. But the world only believes in relative righteousness, and Christ’s righteousness is absolute.

These chapters tell us how the Counselor, the Spirit of truth, can produce God’s righteous fruit in our lives that is patterned after the life and righteousness of Jesus himself. People do not see their need for Christ and do not believe in him (v. 9) because they have a confused view of righteousness unformed by the truth. Justification is a central issue in salvation, and it has everything to do with righteousness. God declares believers righteous on the basis of the death of Christ who paid the penalty for sin.

16:11. Here is where so much preaching on this passage goes awry. A discussion of sin and righteousness seems to lead almost automatically to a warning about judgment for those who reject Christ. But the word because that appears after each of these key words indicates that the Lord was not talking about “judgment to come” as he did in 12:31–32. The final judgment of this world and Satan was accomplished at Calvary. That great enemy of truth is now living on borrowed time. Judgment will come, but the focus here is on an awareness that the prince of this world now stands condemned.