

Reflection



- Showing love
- Giving hope
- Bringing peace

The Church of St John & St Leonard

John 14: 15-17 & 22-27

Sunday 24th May 2020

Waiting for the Holy Spirit

¹⁵ “If you love me, keep my commands. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be^[c] in you.²³ Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. ²⁴ Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me....

²⁵ “All this I have spoken while still with you. ²⁶ But the Counsellor, 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. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (New International Version)

Last Thursday, only 4 days ago, was Ascension Day. The day when we remember that Jesus was taken from the world where He had lived in human form, to Heaven, where He reigns. His return had been promised to His disciples, and they were under instruction to stay in Jerusalem and wait for an unknown length of time. Luke tells us that they spent the time in the temple, praising God. Jesus' last words had been the promise that the Holy Spirit would come with power.

A strange time, I would suggest. A time of waiting. Over the past few weeks we have learned a great deal about waiting, I should think. When will we be able to meet people face to face again? When can I go back to work? When can the children go back to school? Then there are all the questions about what will things be like when we can move around freely again. When will promises given be fulfilled?

No doubt the disciples' minds went back to the upper room when Jesus gave the promise about the Holy Spirit and explained a bit more. Now they had time to think. What or who is this Holy Spirit, and what would this all mean? So what can we learn, and apply today from Jesus' teaching?

The first thing that stands out is how our experience of the Holy Spirit is so closely associated with our relationship with Jesus. If we love Jesus, we will walk in His ways (keep or obey His commandments). Furthermore, we are promised that we shall know the Holy Spirit because He will

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live both with and in us. In a clear picture of the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) Jesus promises that He, in conjunction with the Father and the Spirit, will come and make His home with us.

So who is the Spirit? The word used to describe Him, “Paraclete” in the Greek, sometimes translated “comforter” can mean an advocate who will speak on our behalf, or someone who stands alongside, a helper or brings strength. All with power. As the disciples thought about Jesus teaching they were already experiencing that promise of being reminded of what Jesus had said, and as the days went by they would be taught, as the Spirit continues to teach, how to apply what Jesus taught in new and challenging situations.

This was not, however some dry intellectual form of distance learning as we might call it today. This is a gift of love, an expression of God’s Grace. A gift which we can experience in so many ways, each adapted to our own experiences and personalities as we live to be more like Jesus.

As you have been sitting at home, maybe looking outside have you had a sense of wonder or peace? Was God speaking to You in those moments?

Have you ever had the experience of feeling that Jesus is right there alongside you, maybe helping you in a difficult task, encouraging you, providing the right words to speak to someone, or giving you a sense of confidence. These are some of the ways we can see God working through His Spirit.

On Ascension Day, around the world, the initiative “Thy Kingdom Come” was launched for the 4th year running. The aim to call God’s people to prayer and witness to Jesus, and to share the Good News of God’s Kingdom with those who do not yet recognise Jesus as their Lord and saviour.

On Thursday the Archbishop of York reminded those watching the launch of this year’s “Thy Kingdom Come” that God is not in lockdown, or shut up in isolation, and His steadfast love endures for ever. Let us hold tight to that thought. He also gave a wonderful description of the work of the Holy Spirit being like a river in full flood, and we are able to be caught up in that rush of power (but protected by Jesus) if we are prepared to step into the flow..

So, as we await the easing of restrictions on our lives; as we await the celebration of Pentecost next week; are we prepared to open ourselves up further to God’s love-gift of himself? Are we willing to allow Him to live in our every part, to actively walk alongside Him, knowing that He is already with us. That He is strengthening us, leading us into all Truth.

Let us remember, whatever our situation at this time, we are defined by Jesus and our relationship with Him. With the Holy Spirit dwelling in all who love Him. So let us be open to the Holy Spirit, follow His prompting and not allow our hearts to be troubled, or be afraid.

David Lambert

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