

Date: 14th February 2019
Talk: WOW – The job of the Holy Spirit
Passage: John 16: 7-15

Well I don't know about you, but I'm really excited by the theme we've picked for this year

The Holy Spirit

But in a way I'm surprised I'm excited

After all I've known about the Holy Spirit probably since I was about 12

Back when I went through confirmation classes

(no, not a white dress – Dad hated that idea

so anyone prepared for confirmation by him wore their school uniform)

I must admit though

I don't really remember much about what I was taught in confirmation classes

But that wasn't the only opportunity to hear about him

After all the Holy Spirit is threaded throughout our Sunday liturgy

Have you noticed this more recently? I have

I always knew he was in there but now –

Every mention jumps off the page - or at least it does for me

I'm paying much more attention,

Thinking much more about what our words and songs on a Sunday say about the Holy Spirit

So it's not as if we don't talk about him

And then I know that the Holy Spirit lives in me

so it's not like he's remote or anything

But I don't think I've ever before really stopped to think about who the Holy Spirit is and what he does

Not to the depth and in the way we're focusing now

And as I've prepared for this talk

I've loved the greater understanding I've developed

Both in reading different bible passages

and also reading different commentaries and thoughts on the Holy Spirit.

And so I hope I can excite you about this too

as we explore together this morning

The Job of the Holy Spirit

Let's start by thinking about the passage we just heard

Where does it fit?

Well Jesus and his disciples are in the upper room

It's just after the last supper.

Judas has gone off to betray Jesus

And this is John's account of Jesus' final teaching to them

Think about that

These chapters cover the final instructions the apostles received from the Son of God

Now these final instructions take up 4 chapters of the Gospel of John

And throughout them Jesus returns to the topic of the Holy Spirit over and over and over again.

We can only draw one conclusion from this

This matters

It matters that we understand who the Holy Spirit is and why he's here.

Lesley's talk last week was so helpful in explaining the Trinity

And putting firmly into our minds the fact that the Holy Spirit is as much God as is God the Father and Jesus

And that the Holy Spirit isn't some ethereal being

But is as much a person as is Jesus

Lesley also talked a bit about the role of the Holy Spirit

and that's what I'm going to expand on today

But quite frankly it's been hard to know how to shape this talk

Where to start and where to stop

I've read commentaries that talk about the 3 main functions of the Holy Spirit

Some found seven

One even talked about 30

So in answer to the question "what's the job of the Holy Spirit"

I'm almost tempted to answer Everything

But in fact I think the real answer is that the Holy Spirit has just one job

One mission

Of all the things that the Bible says the Holy Spirit is sent to do

the ultimate one — the one that unifies all the others in one great purpose

is to reveal and glorify Jesus Christ.

Jesus said in the passage we've just read, in vs 14,

When the Spirit of truth comes He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you

The Holy Spirit does many things in the world and in our lives.

some of which I'll cover in the final talk of this series

But all of them serve this ultimate purpose

To reveal and glorify Jesus.

Now before I get into this in more detail

There is one more thing I want to say about who the Holy Spirit is

Something which is a key part of Jesus' teaching in these final hours

Look at what Jesus says in John 14 vs 16 (it's on your handout

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth.

I want to pick up on that phrase "another advocate"

The original Greek word is paraclete – some of you may have heard this word before

and there are actually a number of translations for this, depending on what bible you use

Comforter, Helper, Advocate, Intercessor

But I think the NIV's word Advocate is right here

because of it's legal connotations

An Advocate is typically someone who helps when you are in trouble with the law

and aren't we all in need of this sort of help

because we break God's holy laws time and time again

But, I hear you ask, isn't Jesus our Advocate?

Quite right – John tells us this in one of his letters

and we hear it quoted so often in our Sunday services, don't we

But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

So, according to John, Jesus is our Advocate

And yet Jesus is telling us he'll send an advocate when he goes away

That's why I don't want to gloss over the word "another" in vs 16

And this is why I love to read commentaries

And why I wish I could read the original languages of the bible

Because what I've learnt is that there are two greek words for "another"

One means another "of a different kind"

and one means another "of the same kind"

and yes, the word used, where it says in vs 16 "another Advocate"

means another of the same kind

another the same as Jesus

Just think about that

The Holy Spirit is another Advocate just like Jesus

And this is why, as Jesus is preparing to leave his disciples

He tells them that it's is a good thing he's going

Why

Well because he's going to send an Advocate just like himself

but one who will be with us forever

Praise God for the Trinity

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But I think I've strayed off my topic a little

so let's move on from talking about who the Holy Spirit is

and get back to thinking about the job of the Holy Spirit

Which, as I said earlier, is to reveal and glorify Jesus

And be warned

you need to switch your brains up a gear now

because I'm going to talk about three theological concepts

and use three words that don't trip off the tongue easily

But they encompass all that the Holy Spirit does to reveal and bring glory to Jesus

Revelation, Conviction and Sanctification

Let me repeat, Revelation, Conviction and Sanctification

So, starting with Revelation

The work of the Holy Spirit in revealing Christ to us

We can understand what this is all about as we look again at these last instructions of Jesus

3 times in these chapters in John's gospel

Jesus calls the Holy Spirit the "Spirit of truth"

Truth is at the heart of all the things the Spirit brings us

And what is this fundamental truth

Well Jesus spelt this out clearly

right near the beginning of his final instructions to his Disciples:

In ch 14 vs 6 he says

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

This is the Truth with a capital T

This is the truth that the Holy Spirit is here to reveal

But what part does the Holy Spirit play in the Revelation of this truth

Look with me at verses 13 and 14 from our reading

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you.

Now remember that Jesus is speaking here to his disciples

So, stop a minute and think what's happening

in effect Jesus is promising to them

the New Testament.

Jesus is promising that he, the Holy Spirit, will guide you, my disciples, into all the truth.

He will not speak his own words but only what I, Jesus, tell him to tell you

And he won't just reveal what's already happened

He will also tell you what is yet to come.

Jesus himself is promising that the Holy Spirit will guide the disciples into all truth

So, from the gospel accounts,

Right through to the book of Revelations – what is yet to come

All this comes straight from the Holy Spirit.

In our current sermon series Mark is teaching us about being certain

Well this, right here, gives us incredible certainty about the whole of the New Testament

This whole scripture is God-breathed,

Breathed by the Holy Spirit, the breath of God.

But the Holy Spirit doesn't reveal the truth about Jesus just to the writers of the New Testament

In a letter that John himself wrote to some early believers

A letter which appears later in the New Testament

He writes

20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth.

John here is talking about **us** receiving the Holy Spirit when we become Christians

We too, like the apostles, have the Holy Spirit in us

And the Holy Spirit is the one who reveals to each of us the truth about Jesus

You and I today have heard about and believe the truth about Jesus

Only because of the work of the Holy Spirit in revealing this to us

And as we read our bibles or indeed are taught by others,

It's The Holy Spirit who enables us to understand and to believe what the bible says

The Holy Spirit is the one who reveals Jesus to the world today.

But now I come to my second big word

Conviction

Now this word doesn't actually appear in this passage in our NIV version

But, where it says in vs 8 "prove the world to be wrong"

The version I prefer is the one that says "convict the world"

because this I think is more descriptive of the role the Holy Spirit has

Conviction

It makes us think of a trial and of what the prosecution does when they argue their case

They pile up the evidence against the defendant.

Fact upon fact upon fact upon fact,

until finally, the enormity of the evidence is so over-whelming

that the judge is forced to say,

I find you guilty beyond any reasonable doubt.

And where hopefully even the defendant is compelled to step up and say,

I admit it, I confess. I am guilty.

That word “convict” tells us what the Holy Spirit is actually doing in the world today.

He is convicting men and women of their guilt before God

Look back at our passage at vs 8-11

The Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgement

And Jesus goes on to explain what he means by this

Firstly the great sin of the world is to not believe in Jesus

And this is the first work of the Holy Spirit in convicting people of their sin

Because without the Holy Spirit at work, none of us would even see our sin

We’d stay exactly how we were

Our natural inclination is to be sinful and to reject the truth

not one of us has turned around and believed in Jesus all by ourselves.

It’s the Holy Spirit who has to break through our natural love for sin.

Second Timothy 2:25 says, “It is God, through the Holy Spirit, who grants repentance.”

It’s only because the Holy Spirit reveals to us and proves to us how sinful we are

That we accept our guilt

And then, as our passage goes on to say, the world must also be convicted of righteousness

Righteousness is when you are in a state of being right with God

So what can we be convicted of here

Well it comes back to that thorny question of

“will you go to heaven when you die”

Well I'd like to think so

I mean I know I'm not perfect

But I try to do the right thing

I try to help others

And I've never really broken any of the 10 commandments

Guilty!

I stand convicted

Because now I'm standing on my own righteousness

But my standard just is not good enough for God

Jesus is the only standard of righteousness that is acceptable to God

And it is only through him and what he has done, in his righteousness

That we can be made right with God

So convicting the world of unbelief is only a part of what the Holy Spirit does

He is also the one who shows us that we cannot do it ourselves

We cannot make ourselves right with God

We need Jesus

The world needs Jesus

And finally convicting the world of judgement

This is an uncomfortable topic isn't it?

It's perhaps the topic about which we have the greatest difficulty in talking to non-Christians

But if there's no judgement well then what's the point, what does it matter

And Satan wins

But we know that Satan has not won

He stands convicted and condemned

And it's the Holy Spirit who convinces or convicts us that it does matter

That there is a consequence to living without Jesus

The world is facing judgment,

There is a day of reckoning scheduled

a day when God will mete out justice and rid His creation of sin.

The world needs this warning and the Holy Spirit is the one who brings this knowledge

But I need to be careful here

Because all of this sounds as if it's the Holy Spirit who stands in judgement of us

No – we know that when Jesus comes again he is the one who will judge the world

This is where the role of the Holy Spirit as Advocate comes into the fore

Remember what I said about an Advocate

The one who helps people when they are in trouble with the law

The Holy Spirit whom Jesus sends is the one who helps us

By showing us the extent of our sin

By guiding us to the only way to be right with God

And by showing us clearly the consequences if we reject his help

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Now I remember a while ago

standing up to teach maybe at WOW, maybe somewhere else, I'm not sure

and I said

there is something we need to do ourselves in all this

We need to choose to believe

Oh dear – this is where I curl up in embarrassment and mortification

Because the more I studied this passage in John

The more I understood

There is absolutely nothing that I bring to this

Not even my belief

Because even the fact that I believe is not the work of Ruth Craven

It's the work of the Holy Spirit

It's the Holy Spirit who has convicted me.

Yes, how ever long we have been Christians

Even if like me you were born into a Christian family

and for a long time took it all for granted

There did come a time for me and I hope for you too

When the penny finally dropped

When the Holy Spirit spelt it out to me

The Holy Spirit convicted me that I am a sinner

The Holy Spirit convicted me that Jesus is the only way to be right with God

And the Holy Spirit convicted me that there are consequences if I reject
Jesus

I have absolutely no role in saving myself

It's all the work of our great and glorious triune God

So , like me, be blown away by the fact that even before you were a Christian

the Holy Spirit was working on you

Conviction of our need for Jesus – it's all the work of the Holy Spirit

I think this quote from John Piper really helps explain

that as much as our salvation is impossible without Jesus,

it's also not possible without the Holy Spirit.

He says

The Father conceived and planned salvation; the Son came and purchased salvation; and the Holy Spirit was sent to spread and apply salvation.

Spreading and applying Revealing and Convicting

It's all the work of the Holy Spirit

But, if the Holy Spirit is the one who was sent to spread and apply salvation

Does that mean we can leave the work of making new disciples all to the Holy Spirit

Well yes and no!

despite what is written on all our slides, our flyers, our website

You know, where it says...

“We exist to glorify God by making disciples as we love and serve Noosa”

Let's be clear

We don't make new disciples.

Only the Holy Spirit can turn an unbeliever into a believer

But that doesn't let us off the hook

Because it's the Holy Spirit that puts us in the right place,

at the right time

in the right way,

with the right words

To share the gospel

We are the tools that the Holy Spirit will use

We just need to be clean and sharp and ready for when he calls on us

We need to be ready for him to use us to reveal and glorify Christ

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But this of course doesn't cover all that the Holy Spirit does to reveal and glorify Christ

He doesn't stop work once someone accepts Jesus into their lives

So now we move onto my third big word – Sanctification

What does this mean?

Well, throughout the bible,

to sanctify something means to set it apart for God's special use and purpose.

But most of the time when we hear the word Sanctification

it means to make a believer more like Jesus.

But whilst we may in an instant come to believe in Jesus

we certainly don't become like Jesus overnight.

A radical transformation is needed

and I hate to tell you but it involves a lifelong process

And it's impossible without the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit goes on with his work throughout our lives,

transforming us day by day into being more like Jesus

and if you're anything like me then sometimes

it's one step forward and two steps back

But reassuringly

If I look back

I can see that there is a transformation taking place in me

All thanks to the Holy Spirit;

I hope that you can see this of yourselves as well.

But I'm not going into this any further now

because this really is what I want to talk about in the final WOW this month

– The Holy Spirit in action

So, let me wrap up talking about the job of the Holy Spirit

As I said earlier – really I think he has one job

To reveal and glorify Jesus

By revealing to the world the truth about Jesus through the things that are written in scripture

By revealing to us the enormity of this truth as, with his help, we read and understand scripture ourselves

By his convicting work in our sinful world

to bring people to see their need for a saviour

and that their only saviour is Jesus

And by his sanctifying work in us

so that our lives too reveal and glorify Jesus to the world around us

I'm a great fan of John Piper because I think his teaching is so clear and helpful

So I'm going to finish with some words I lifted from one of his sermons

He starts by quoting from Philippians

God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9–11)

Piper then says This is the ultimate reason that the Holy Spirit was sent into the world, that the name of Jesus would be valued above every name, and his glory desired and admired above every good, every glory, every god in the universe. That is the great work of the Holy Spirit. That is what this era of history is about since Jesus returned to heaven and poured out the Holy Spirit for the sake of his mission.

Amen