



## Sermon Transcript October 13, 2019

### We Believe! The Holy Spirit: Under the Spotlight John 16:4-15

This message from the Bible was addressed originally to the people of Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church on October 13, 2019 at 511 Maple Street, Wethersfield, CT, 06109 by Dr. Scott W. Solberg. This is a transcription that bears the strength and weaknesses of oral delivery. It is not meant to be a polished essay. An audio version of this sermon may also be found on the church website at [www.wethefc.com](http://www.wethefc.com)

**Sermon Text**  
**John 16:4-15**

<sup>4</sup>But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you. “I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. <sup>5</sup>But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ <sup>6</sup>But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. <sup>7</sup>Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. <sup>8</sup>And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: <sup>9</sup>concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; <sup>10</sup>concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; <sup>11</sup>concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

<sup>12</sup>“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. <sup>13</sup>When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. <sup>14</sup>He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. <sup>15</sup>All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

**Doctrinal Statement**

Holy Spirit: We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that he does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equip and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

## Introduction

Jesus spoke these words to his disciples the night before he went to the cross. Huddled with his disciples in the Upper Room, Jesus knew his hour had come. He was leaving them. He was returning to the Father who sent him. We are familiar with the progression of events that are about to unfold. The next day, Jesus would be crucified and buried. On the third day he rose from the dead. And then, forty days later, the disciples watched as Jesus ascended to heaven right before their eyes. That is what Jesus was referring to when he said in verse 5, *“But now I am going to him who sent me.”*

Of course, this announcement of Jesus leaving the disciples was received with much sadness. Jesus acknowledged the mood of the room after he told them he was going to be leaving them. He said, *“But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.”* We can appreciate why the disciples would be saddened and possibly even confused. Why is the one they thought was the promised Messiah now leaving them?

But then Jesus said something that seemed incomprehensible to them at the time. He said that *“it is to your advantage that I go away.”* Perhaps this even seems like a puzzling statement to you as well. How could it be better for them if Jesus left them? What could possibly be better than to be with Jesus? And so, Jesus tells them why it would be better for them if he left. His leaving them is what enables the Holy Spirit to come. In fact, you get an inkling in John 7:39 of what is to come once Jesus goes to the cross and returns to the Father in Heaven. Here it speaks about the anticipated work of the Holy Spirit whereby we are born again and indwelt by the Spirit. But then John says, *“Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not yet been given.”* Why? *“Because Jesus was not yet glorified.”* And so now Jesus tells them in the Upper Room the night before he goes to the cross why it is better for him to return to the Father, *“for if I do not go away, the Helper [the Holy Spirit] will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.”*

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. We believe in one God, made of three persons: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a person. The Holy Spirit possesses all that attributes of God. The Holy Spirit is present everywhere. David said in Psalm 139:7, *“Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence.”* And in a very real sense, the Holy Spirit dwells within the one who believes in Jesus. Paul tells us that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

So why is it to our advantage that Jesus leaves and the Holy Spirit, the Helper, comes?

Abraham Kuyper's book on the Holy Spirit is considered a classic. In it he says, "The Holy Spirit leaves no footprints in the sand."<sup>1</sup> It is a statement that draws a comparison to Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, who took on human flesh. The disciples could see Jesus. They could touch Jesus. They walked in the sand with Jesus. He made footprints in the sand. But the Holy Spirit is not of the flesh. He is like the wind. Jesus compares the Holy Spirit to the wind in John 3:8. He says, "*The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.*" You can't see the wind or control it. But you see the effects of the wind. When the wind of the Holy Spirit blows upon you, your life is transformed. And so we pray, "Breathe on us." The Holy Spirit brings order out of chaos. The Holy Spirit changes our lives.

R. C. Sproul came to faith in Christ when he was engaged to be married. He was excited to share his new found faith with his fiancé. But she did not share his enthusiasm. They had both grown up in the church. They sang together in the church choir. So his fiancé was puzzled when he said that he had just become a Christian. In her mind, he had always been a Christian. And yet, though they had been baptized and confirmed, they had never been *born again*—that point where they personally came to faith in Jesus.

As Sproul grew in his faith, he was convicted that if she didn't share his faith he wouldn't be able to marry her because Scripture tells us to not be *unequally yoked*. He knew that it was important that he marry someone who shared his faith in Jesus. She was coming to visit him while he was at college and he knew that he needed to make a decision about marrying her that weekend. So the morning that she was to arrive, he locked himself in his room and he prayed like he never prayed before. Against her wishes, he took her to a prayer gathering that evening. In the middle of the prayer meeting, she couldn't explain it but her heart was "strangely warmed." Something was coming alive within her. Sproul said, "After the meeting, with an excitement that exceeded my own, she said these exact words: "Now I know who the Holy Spirit is."<sup>2</sup> "*The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.*"

What happened to this young lady that R. C. Sproul eventually married? What is the work of the Holy Spirit? While Jesus is explaining to his disciples why it is better for him to leave and for the Holy Spirit to come, he tells them what the Holy Spirit will do when he comes. He basically tells them that the Holy Spirit functions like a spotlight. In this passage Jesus says that the Holy Spirit throws a spotlight into three areas that he uses to transform our lives.

## The Holy Spirit Throws a Spotlight onto Jesus

I am going to start with the end of the passage and work my way backwards this morning. The reason I am doing this is because it is at the end of the passage that we discover the primary role of the Holy Spirit. If I were to ask you, “What is the Holy Spirit’s primary work?” - I wonder what your answer would be. Perhaps you might think that the primary work of the Holy Spirit is to dispense spiritual gifts that enable us to function as a church. No doubt, that is an important work of the Holy Spirit. Maybe you are more inclined to go immediately to the miraculous works of the Spirit—the “signs and wonders” we see on display in the book of Acts. And so you might say, “now that is the work of the Holy Spirit and we need more of that!” Or, you might say that the primary work of the Holy Spirit is the transformation of our lives, where the “fruit of the Spirit,” namely love is formed in our hearts. For sure, all of these works are attributed to the work of the Holy Spirit. But they don’t quite get to identifying the primary work of the Holy Spirit.

In John 16:14, Jesus gets to the primary work of the Holy Spirit. Here he says, “*He will glorify me.*” He says it this way in the previous chapter, John 15:26. “*He will bear witness about me.*” The primary task of the Holy Spirit is to throw a spotlight onto Jesus. This servant nature of the Holy Spirit is seen in the title Jesus gives him in our passage; he is “*the Helper.*” In fact, Jesus describes the servant nature of the Holy Spirit by saying two times at the end of our passage that “*he will take what is mine and declare it to you.*” James Boice says, “The Holy Spirit will not speak of himself but of Jesus.”<sup>3</sup>

I like the way J. I. Packer illustrates it. He writes, “Think of it this way. It is as if the Spirit stands behind us, throwing light over our shoulder, onto Jesus, who stands facing us. The Spirit’s message to us is never, ‘Look at me; come to me; get to know me,’ but always, ‘Look at *him*, and see his glory; listen to *him*, and hear his word; go to *him*, and have life; get to know *him*, and taste his gift of joy and peace.’”<sup>4</sup> That is the primary role of the Holy Spirit. He is throwing a spotlight onto Jesus. Kevin DeYoung says that “we must not think that we can focus on Christ too much, or that when we exalt Christ to the glory of God the Father that somehow the Holy Spirit is sulking off in the corner [because he is not getting his due] . . . If the symbol of the church is the cross and not the dove, that’s because the Spirit would have it that way.”<sup>5</sup> When we make much of Jesus, we are giving evidence to the work of the Holy Spirit among us.

I say this in a church context where we can be guilty of diminishing the work of the Holy Spirit. This can be seen in our more cautious approach to some of the miraculous gifts

of the Spirit. Or we may not be well schooled in how to discern the prompting of the Spirit when he is speaking into our hearts and giving us a word to be shared for the encouragement of others. So I am not suggesting that we shouldn't strive to understand what we need to know about the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives and within the church. And yet, at the same time, I caution against the other extreme that elevates our attention on the Holy Spirit above that of Christ. The Holy Spirit is not waiting in the wings to be noticed or lauded. His primary work is not to shine his light upon himself, but on Jesus. When we make much of Jesus we are truly walking in the Spirit. He has come to throw a spotlight onto Jesus.

### **The Holy Spirit Throws a Spotlight onto Truth**

One of the ways that Holy Spirit throws a spotlight onto Jesus is by throwing a spotlight onto the truth of the Word of God. The Bible is a spotlight that comes to us from the Holy Spirit and it is through the Bible that we see Jesus. Jesus said to his disciples in verse 13, "*When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth.*"

As the disciples are sitting in the Upper Room taking in the news that Jesus is about to leave, their minds are spinning. They don't understand why Jesus has to leave. At this point, they don't understand what would become the central message of the church: Jesus Christ crucified, dead, buried and risen again for the forgiveness of our sins. Even though we know from the four Gospels that Jesus told them on numerous occasions that he would be handed over to the authorities, suffer and die and then rise again; they were as surprised and bewildered as the next person when it all happened. Jesus says to them in verse 12, "*I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.*" (I can't help but hear the voice of Jack Nicholson in the back of my mind from the movie *A Few Good Men*. Like Nicholson, Jesus is saying to the disciples that at this moment "you can't handle the truth.")

But, in John 14:26 Jesus says that when the Holy Spirit comes "*he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.*" This is specifically a word to the disciples, the apostles. What he is saying here is that the Holy Spirit will unpack the things that Jesus taught them and they will come to understand the significance of the death and the resurrection of Jesus and how God will restore all things through Jesus. As a result, the apostles will record for us the testimony of Jesus—as they are carried along by the Spirit of God—in what we call the New Testament. We just read this morning with our first graders that "*all Scripture is breathed out by God*" and therefore it "*makes us wise for salvation.*"

You can't separate the work of the Holy Spirit from the ministry of the Word of God. From time to time, someone suggests to me that some Sunday I ought to come and just share what is on my heart. And often it is couched with this phrase, "just let the Spirit lead." It communicates that what is extemporaneous is of the Spirit but what is studied and carefully delivered is not. But that is not the case. What I am doing right now is not antithetical to being led by the Spirit. This is "Spirit work!" This is "led of the Spirit." It is here—the proclamation of the Word of God—where the Holy Spirit shines the light of Jesus to us. Kevin DeYoung says that "the Bible is the Spirit's book."<sup>6</sup> After his resurrection, Jesus sits down with his disciples and he tells them that this book—both the Old and New Testament—is all about Jesus. In Luke 24 it says that Jesus opened up their understanding of the Scriptures—namely the truth of his death on the cross and his resurrection from the dead—and as we proclaim Christ to the world people will come to know the truth and their sins will be forgiven. That is why Paul tells Timothy to "*Preach the Word.*" The Spirit of God shines a spotlight on the truth of the Word of God and it shows us Jesus.

### **The Holy Spirit Throws a Spotlight into our Hearts**

The final place where the Holy Spirit throws a spotlight is very personal and very powerful. We have already seen that the Holy Spirit first throws a spotlight onto Jesus. He wants us to see Jesus. How does the Holy Spirit show us Jesus today? He throws a spotlight onto the truth of God's Word. As the word of God is preached, taught, read and studied, the Holy Spirit then takes that spotlight and redirects it and he shines that spotlight right into your heart. Like the two men that the resurrected Jesus encountered on the road to Emmaus, after Jesus opened the Scriptures to them they said, "*Did not our hearts burn within us . . . while he opened to us the Scriptures.*" That is the personal work of the Holy Spirit shining the light of Jesus into the heart of a person.

Jesus says in verse 8 that when the Holy Spirit comes, "*he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.*" That is the very personal work that the Holy Spirit does in our hearts. As the Holy Spirit shines the light of Christ through the Word of God into your heart you become awakened to several truths that will forever change your life. You come under the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Jesus says in verse 8, "*when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.*"

The Holy Spirit is doing the work of a prosecutor. The first thing he throws a spotlight onto in our heart is our own sin. He says in verse 9 that the Holy Spirit convicts us

*“concerning sin, because they do not believe in me.”* Packer says that the Holy Spirit is “working in heart after heart the verdict, ‘I was wrong; I’m guilty; I need forgiveness’ as he brings home the enormity of rejecting Jesus or at the least not taking him serious enough.”<sup>7</sup> Being aware of your guilt is a work of the Holy Spirit.

But he doesn’t leave us there. In verse 10 we see that he convicts us *“concerning righteousness, because I [Jesus] go to the Father.”* This is a statement about Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus vindicated Jesus. It demonstrated that though he died and took on the curse of sin, he himself was not sinful. His resurrection proved that he was able to atone for our sin. Because he goes to the Father, we can go to the Father. And then Jesus goes on to say that the Holy Spirit will convict us *“concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.”* Satan has been defeated at the cross and the empty tomb and so when the Holy Spirit turns our hearts to Jesus, we can know that we have been delivered from death and that Jesus is the ruler and judge of the world. Or as the Heidelberg Catechism puts it, “we have been set free from the tyranny of the devil.” Sin and death and the devil no longer have a hold of our lives. Coming to understand these things about Jesus is not simply a matter of reason. It is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which we are born again.

St. Augustine was worldly and as profane as they came, prior to his conversion to Christ. He was a philosopher and a professor of rhetoric in Milan. He started attending a church where Saint Ambrose, the Bishop of Milan was preaching. At first, he attended the church because of his love for rhetoric, St. Ambrose was a masterful communicator. But in time, while sitting under the preaching of Ambrose, he gained a new understanding of the Bible and the Christian faith. One day, while enjoying the outdoors, he heard the voice of a child singing, “Pick it up and read it. Pick it up and read it.” At first he thought this was a common children’s song and game, but then realized he had never heard such a thing before. So he took it as a command from God to open and read the Scriptures. The first passage he saw was Romans 13:13-14 where it spoke directly to him, *“Not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual excess and lust, not in quarreling and jealousy. Rather, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh.”* Right there he felt as though his heart was flooded with light. The spotlight of the Spirit pointed him to Jesus. He saw him through the light of God’s Word. That light was personally and powerfully applied to his heart.

John Wesley had been serving as an Anglican priest for 18 years before he knew Christ. At a point of despair, he wanted to quit the ministry. But through the encouragement of some Moravian friends he began earnestly searching the Scriptures. One evening he



attended a meeting in Aldersgate. Someone was reading from Martin Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. At about 8:45 p.m. while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, Wesley testified, "I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and as assurance was give me that He had take away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death." He went on to become the father of the Methodist movement.

I think of Eric Metaxas, who grew up in the Orthodox church, but when he went to Yale, he adopted more of a New Age philosophy of life—ascribing to the view that there was some kind of sub-conscious world we needed to connect to. It was a Christian co-worker who was the first person to ever place a hand on him to pray for him when someone in his family was ill. This rocked his world and began a dialogue about Jesus and the Bible. As he was being drawn to faith, one night he had a dream where he was ice fishing. Fishing was a favorite hobby of his. He said the water under the ice represented to him the "sub-conscious" world where he was trying to find meaning. Out from the hole in the ice, in his dream, he caught a huge golden fish. The Greek word for fish is "ixthus" which became an acronym for Jesus: Jesus Christ God's Son Savior. You often see the symbol of a fish on the back of a car signifying that the driver is a Christian. When he pulled that fish through the ice in his dream, he knew immediately that it was Jesus. He went into work and told his co-worker that he believes! See, the Spirit of God threw the spotlight of Jesus in a very personal way into his heart. He is dynamic.

## **Conclusion**

The role of the Holy Spirit is to shine the spotlight on Jesus because it is Jesus who can deliver us from our sin and bring us into relationship with God. How does he shine the spotlight of Jesus so that we can see Jesus? He shines the spotlight of the Word of God where we learn of our sin, the righteousness of Jesus and that there is victory over the grave through Jesus. And then, he knows how to bring it home to our hearts. If he is speaking to you, turn to him. If your heart is being strangely warmed, turn to him. Has something happened recently that was so personal that the only way you could explain it is that it had to be God. If you are searching, ask him to show himself to you. If that is the case, turn in faith in Jesus.

I know of a college student who was in his dorm room searching and crying out to God to show himself and no sooner did he pray that prayer there was a knock on the door and someone from CRU was asking if he could share some information about Jesus with him. I know of man in Connecticut who was attending a church so he could play bass

on the worship team. He was being paid \$100 a week. He was not a Christian, but as he sat in the service he couldn't explain why he was crying during the sermon and the closing song. He started reading the Bible to understand what he was hearing and one day when he was wrestling with these things he went to a gas station to put some gas in his car, he put his hand in the handle of the pump and felt something strange. Someone has stuffed a gospel track there. He took it as a sign that the Spirit was casting a spotlight onto his life and he went back to the church and met with the pastor and gave his life to Christ.

The Holy Spirit casts a spotlight onto Jesus. He casts a spotlight onto the truth of God's Word which points us to Jesus. And then in a very personal and dynamic way, he casts a spotlight straight into your heart.

Do you want more of the Holy Spirit? Then get more of the Bible and make much of Jesus. Do you want to see the Holy Spirit work? Be bold and proclaim the hope we have in Jesus to those around us. The Holy Spirit is in the business of shining the spotlight of Jesus on others. We get to shine that light by telling others about Jesus. Since the Holy Spirit has no footprints—since he is like the wind—he can go into places that no one else can go. He can't be controlled. He can't be stopped. He is alive and active. May the Holy Spirit freely move among us and use us to shine the spotlight of Jesus to those around us. May it be so!

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<sup>1</sup>Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956)

<sup>2</sup>R. C. Sproul *The Mystery of the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1990) 14

<sup>3</sup>James Boice *Foundations of the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1986) 381

<sup>4</sup>J. I. Packer *Keep in Step With the Spirit* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1984) 66

<sup>5</sup>Kevin DeYoung "Three Surprising Ways to Grieve the Holy Spirit" [www.thegospelcoalition.org](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org)  
October 18, 2013

<sup>6</sup>Ibid

<sup>7</sup>Packer, 65

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**COMMUNITY  
GROUPS**

## **Getting To Know Me Questions**

1. Share with the group one way you saw God at work in your life this past week.
2. Read the doctrinal statement on the Holy Spirit on page 2 of the transcript. What stands out to you about the ministry of the Holy Spirit?
3. Why do you think it is to our advantage that Jesus left and the Holy Spirit has come?

## **Diving Into The Word**

4. Read Ezekiel 36:26-27; John 14:15-17. Why do you think we need the Holy Spirit?
5. Read John 15:26-27 and 16:14-15. What is the chief ministry of the Holy Spirit? What does this tell you about the Holy Spirit and how we view the our relationship with the Holy Spirit?
6. Read John 16:8-11. Describe the kind of conviction that the Holy Spirit brings into the life of a person (talk about the three things mentioned in the text). How have you experienced this kind of conviction?
7. Read Titus 3:4-7. Thinking back on your story, what is one personal way you experienced the Holy Spirit shining the spotlight of Jesus into your heart?

## **Taking It Home**

8. How does this conversation of the Holy Spirit give us confidence when it comes to doing evangelism? Spend time praying about this.
9. How can you make more of Jesus in your life this week?