

Main Street

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



John 16:4b-15 **“The Ignored Advantage”**

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(Pentecost/ The Gift Of The Holy Spirit)

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“Following Christ From City Center!”

JOHN 16:4b-15 "THE OFT-IGNORED ADVANTAGE"

Part Of Farewell Discourse, //15:26-27, 2000 Years

2') 16:4b-15 THE COMING AND MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT// 14:1-31.

Trinitarian Revelation In Stages Through Agents, Father = Transcendent

a) vv.4b-6 What Jesus Says And Does Not Say In Stages. (1-2//2'-1') Revelation Unfolds

4b 1 I did not *say these things* to you from the beginning, *because* I was with you. //14:1-31: Departure, Spirit, Challenges
 5 2 But now I am going to him who sent me; 1)Father/Spirit Send Son, 2)Father/Son Send Spirit,3)We Are Sent
 2' yet none of you asks me, "Where are you going?" Jesus Present → Jesus Absent → Spirit Within
 6 1' But *because* I have *said these things* to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. Correct Question, Departure //13:36a, 14:5-8?
 Change Relationship: Weaned Away
 Dreams/Illusions Crumble, Not Comprehend His Departure

b) vv.7-11 The Coming Of The Spirit And His Ministry To The World (2 Parts).

7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: (1-2//1'-2') Spirit After Glorification, Spirit's Relation To The World
 Solemn Asserivation + Promise //14:16-17, 26; //15:26-27
 (Part 1: Presence) Only With Spirit Within Do We Understand Jesus In Depth Over Time
 1 it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, Act 4:31, 5:41, Hard To Accept/Believe!
 Spirit Will Now Be Within, Everywhere
 2 the Counselor (Advocate) will not come to you; Paraclete = One Who Comes Alongside, 7:39, 11:4
 Not A Modern Therapist, A Legal Term
 1' but if I go (cross over), Goes In Cross/Resurrection/Ascension./Session = Glorification Of Jesus
 Not Until The Deposit Of Revelation Is Completed Does The Spirit Come
 2' I will send him to you.// 14:16, 26, 20:22,Compensatory, Risen Jesus Sends Spirit, Born Again 3:5
 (1-2-3//1'-2'-3') BENEFIT 1= PROSECUTE THE CASE
 (Part 2: Tasks)
 8 1 And when he comes he will convict (expose) the world 3:20, 8:46, 12:45-47, Hostile Cosmos In Hiding
 concerning sin, 14:24, 2 Tim. 4:2, Broken Relationship, Spirit Creates Personal Crises!
 2 and concerning righteousness, Sin = Problem, Righteousness = Cure, Judgment Of Evil = Hope
 3 and concerning judgment: Continues Revealing/ Judging/Victory Work Of Jesus
 9 1' concerning sin (error), Legal Ethos, Grounds Of Conviction, Light Exposes
 because they do not believe *in me*; Issue = Unbelief In Jesus = Essence Of Sin, 12:48a, 8:44-47
 10 2' concerning righteousness, Jesus Justified (Shown To Be Righteous): Resurrection/Glorification
 because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more; 1 Jn. 2:29, 3:7, 1 Tim. 3:16
 11 3' concerning judgment, World/Its Rule On Trial! 12:31, 1 Jn. 2:13-14, 5:18
 because "the ruler of this world" (i.e. Satan) is judged. 12:31, 14:30, 8:44, Exorcism
 Sin = Rejection Of Jesus, Justice = God's Verdict , Judgment = Evil Routed

a') v.12 What Jesus Says And Does Not Say In Stages

12 I have yet many things to say to you, Still More To Come As Revelation Is Applied
 but you cannot bear them now. //v.4b, Jesus Promises To Continue Speaking
 Pre-Cross, Weak And Frail: More In The Future, Living Voice In The Church
 Father/Spirit Sent Son, Now Father/Son Send Spirit = Trinitarian Revelation In Time

b') vv.13-15 The Coming And Teaching Ministry Of The Spirit To The Church (2 Parts).

(Part 1: Agency) Relation Of The Spirit To Believing Community, 14:26
 13 1 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all (the) truth Lead Way, 3:3, Church Preserved
 The Deposit Of Revelation Is Already Present
 -2 for he will not speak Divine Speaking, Final Statement On Spirit In Farewell Discourse
 -3 on his own authority; Spirit Is The Son's Agent, Marketing Director, Another Jesus
 +3' but whatever he hears //5:19, 30, Trinitarian Communication, Not An Independent Agent
 The Holy Spirit Has A Distinctive Voice
 +2' he will speak, Pneumatology Subordinate To Christology, No New Independent Revelation
 3:32-35, 7:16-18, Just As Jesus Did, 5:19-30
 1' and will declare to you the things that are to come.// (3x) Announce, Spirit Interprets Past, Predicts Future
 Spirit Is The Communications Link With The Risen Jesus
 (Part 2: Promote)
 14 1 He will glorify me, The Spirit's Delight = Shine Light On Jesus The Son, Spirit Is The Son's Agent
 Relations Are Not Severed! //Odes Of Solomon 3:10
 2 for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 5:19, 30, *Speak // Declare*, 14:26
 Spirit Does Not Offer New Revelation Independent Of Christ
 15 1' All that the Father has is mine; Astounding Claim! Given All/Gives All : 1:18, 5:22, 26, 13:3, 17:2, 7
 Jesus = God At Ground Level, BENEFIT 2 = KEEP CHURCH IN TRUTH
 Trinity In Action 2' therefore, I said that he takes what is mine and will declare it to you. 15:15, Gifts/Fruit

THE IGNORED ADVANTAGE

“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth.”

J O H N 1 6 : 1 3

Ever been stopped in your tracks? There you are, cruising along, running on auto-pilot, when something unexpected crosses your path. “This is wrong; I must do something!” or “This is amazing; I must pay attention!” or “This is beautiful,” or “This is holy ground; I must look and listen!” or “This is a God-sized need; I must pray.” All your powers of attention come together in a focused beam of awareness.

This phenomena is one of the experiential verifications of the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit, who in John’s Gospel is regularly called *the Spirit of truth* because the Spirit’s job is to lead the church deep into the truth that is Jesus, his person and work, how he intersects the world’s habits with a new agenda.¹ The Holy Spirit- the third person of the Holy Trinity, is fully God, equal in deity and honor to the Father and the Son and not an impersonal force or power.² The Spirit is God indwelling and filling the followers of Jesus with what’s needed when it’s needed, what manufacturers call *just-in-time delivery*, and remember: there’s no such thing as a believer who does not have the Holy Spirit.³ While they may be living in rebellion

¹ 14:17, 15:26, 16:13. For a summary of the person and work of the Holy Spirit in John, see Craig R. Koester, *The Word Of Life: A Theology Of John’s Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), Chapter 6, “The Spirit,” 133-160. Also Ben Witherington, Laura Ice, *The Shadow Of The Almighty: Father, Son, and Spirit in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI; Eerdmans, 2003), Chapter 4, “The Powerful and Prophetic Spirit,” 101-148. For a Wesleyan spin on the heart-level change, see Gregory S. Clapper, *The Renewal of the Heart is the Mission of the Church* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010).

² The United Methodist Articles of Religion, “Article IV- Of the Holy Ghost: The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God” (*BOD 2012*, 64).

³ Romans 8:9, “But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. *Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.*” John 14:17c, “... for you know him, for he dwells with you, *and will be*

and rejecting the reminders of the Spirit, the Spirit patiently resides, unflustered, sitting in a neglected corner of the soul, creating openings to bring light into darkness, life into dead spots and the brightness of truth into a world of attractive half-truths and out-right falsehoods in which we're all immersed as citizens of a fallen world under alien management, the one Jesus bluntly labeled *the ruler of this world*.⁴ Now that's an impressive title for a Jesus who sees what we do not to give to a fallen angel: *the ruler of this world, the programmer of its cultures, the blinder of its eyes*. If you've said Yes to Jesus, the Spirit is already within as a neglected resource, waiting for your acknowledgement and cooperation in the great adventure of this faith and the spiritual conflict it entails.

The Spirit may be- in a limited sense - caged by our ignorance and resistance. But there the Spirit sits in the midst of our mess, an artesian well waiting to be uncapped to flood a parched soul with living water.⁵ God is strong and unlimited in creativity, but not a bully. The Spirit invites and offers, the Spirit even makes some shake and rattle,⁶ the Spirit hovers, then rushes into a crack in our awareness. The end of Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem *God's Grandeur* captures this newness:

“And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs-
*Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.*”⁷

The great passion of the Holy Spirit is to lead us into deep cooperation with the risen Jesus and remind us his teaching fits every occasion. This dove has warm heart and bright wings, and his work can be *felt* and *seen*.

in you.” To belong to Jesus is to have the Spirit within; the Trinity is not partitioned.

⁴ 12:31, 14:30.

⁵ John 7:37-38.

⁶ For an historical account of manifestations, see Dr. Frank Billman, *The Supernatural Thread Of Methodism* (Lake Mary, FLA: CHP, 2013)

⁷ www.bartleby.com/122/7.

One of the Spirit's favorite phrases - one that startles me each time it crosses my mind is "Phil, do you remember what Jesus said about this?" To which my answer is, often with a chuckle, "Apparently not; thanks for the reminder." Another is, "Why don't you speak up now? Don't be afraid; open your mouth!"

Another is, "Let me show you something you've not seen before."

Another is, "Let's open the Book together."

Another is, "I wouldn't do that if I was you! It doesn't lead where you think."

Another is, "Let me fill you and help you worship. It will refresh you."

Another is, "That thing you've been hiding from, let's talk about it today."

Another is, "Here's a spiritual gift for someone else; it's from me through you to them. Deliver it and watch what happens."

Another is, "Don't spend that on yourself; let me show you where to make an investment in someone who needs to know I've heard their prayer. Can you help?"

As Jesus said of the Spirit his press agent and interpreter, "He will glorify me. He will take what is mine and declare it to you," so pay attention to those *holy hunches* and *sideways thoughts* and *unexpected opportunities* that cross your intuition. Apparently the Spirit is quite talkative. In today's passage we learn he not only *guides* as we move forward but also *hears* and *speaks* and *declares* and *glorifies*. It's not that the Spirit's not guiding; it's that we're skeptical of his nudge and resistant to where he leads. It's not that the Spirit's mute; it's that we're not listening. Here's my rule of thumb, "If my day is surrendered, and if what comes my way does not contradict what I know of Jesus from the Gospels- however odd it may be, then it's probably the Spirit arranging things, but only in following through will I know for sure." Every day the Spirit's number one mission is to reveal our need and to illumine the fullness of Jesus Christ as God's answer, an answer that includes the cosmic defeat of evil and the comprehensive liberation of human beings. The *ruler of this world* has been exposed, and his kingdom is now to be plundered.

I do not know how to understand my experience of such communications apart from the Holy Spirit's multiple roles as teacher, protector, defender, reminder, counselor, and living link with the invisible resources of the kingdom of God.⁸ It's

⁸ The Greek *Paracletos* is difficult to translate because of its range of meanings. It may be Comforter, Counselor, Advocate, Strengthener, Helper, Someone to stand beside you, even *Jesus alter-ego* ("another Comforter"), and is parallel to the *Spirit of Prophecy* (the verbal manifestation of the Spirit). During his ministry Jesus is the prophetic voice of the Holy Spirit (1:33, 3:34; i.e. the Spirit descends and remains on him;

a good thing for the lights to be on in your soul. It's a good thing to be a secret agent for a divine government with major designs on planet earth. We are designed to hear God's voice echoing in our heads and hearts, and if what you think you hear matches up with the character of Jesus, perhaps you need to take the risk of obedience! But if what you think you hear or intuit doesn't cohere with the written revelation in Four Gospels as nestled in the Scripture as a whole and unfolded in the church's faith, then ask for help and clarification. But if it's like Jesus, if it's loving, if it's risky, if it goes against the grain of conventional thinking, if it surprises you with its truth and possibilities, go for it! And if you're wrong, you'll be a step closer the next time. God loves it when we try to obey! Remember what he said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."⁹ It is possible to learn his voice.

It's June 5, 1944. I'm an old man living near the beaches of northwest France, sitting before a secret wireless in the corner of my attic, fiddling with the dials and trying to hear a message through the maddening static. There are rumors among the partisans something big is coming. Liberation, they say, is on the way, just over the horizon. *The ruler of this world*, the angelic equivalent of Hitler, is about to be dethroned with a fatal blow. So I keep listening at my small post, and what I hear, I act on. This is how we live, as part of something greater and grander and more enduring in which we are given a stake because his voice is still heard.

The Holy Spirit is the agent of divine revelation, the one who brings life and light at ground level. God the Father remains transcendent; God the Son comes to us embedded in the flesh of Jesus- what we call *the incarnation*- with the Savior's human nature built in the factory of Mary's previously unused womb, but he remains separate from us, a powerful but still outside influence- as in any relationship between two human beings. They are not you; a boundary is fixed, and when someone can't tell where they stop and you begin, psychiatrists have a name for it: *borderline personality disorder*. A gap always remains which is why we're a mystery to one another, even in the closest relationship. I love Lori and delight in her, but with each new insight there's a new mystery since persons are made in God's image and thus unfathomable. The disciples followed Jesus, mimicked him, asked questions, and learned his ways from front-row seats. But what's missing is an internal power source, an internal presence that keeps them attuned to Jesus. His reality remains

he gives the Spirit without measure); now there is *another Paraclete* in/among believers.

⁹ John 1:27.

outside them and *external*. So when his work on earth is done, and when the communal memory bank of his first followers is topped off with the contents of divine revelation, then he and the Father cooperate in sending the Holy Spirit to pitch a tent and set up camp in the depths of who they are, as Jesus promised.¹⁰ Jesus blows his Spirit into them. The sendings are multiple: the Father and the Spirit first send the Son into the world; now that the deposit of revelation is completed, the Father and the risen Son send the Spirit into all the disciples so they in turn may be sent into the world as empowered witnesses. We serve a sending and empowering God. This is a Trinitarian reality into which we are invited, and Jesus spoke of it ahead of time:¹¹

“And I will pray the Father, and he will send you another Counselor- or Advocate- to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth.... for he dwells *with you* and will be *in you*.”¹²

With you to *in you* is a big difference; companionship and indwelling are not the same. A Spirit-filled Jesus speaking truth and working miracles is a potent example for three years, but a risen Lord who sends his Spirit to dwell within many at the same time is a new reality. It’s why Jesus said, “... it is to your advantage that I go away....” Someone is coming to live inside to offer a link with the invisible world! And for that to happen, Jesus has to go, “It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not cross over, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.”¹³ It hurt to anticipate their friend’s departure and their being left behind after three years of being a team at the cutting edge of God’s kingdom. How it could be better made no sense. But to lose Jesus externally was to soon regain him internally, with many benefits they could not now understand. The Jesus who as a person was in one place at one time will now be freed through resurrection to inhabit them all at the same time through his alter-ego, the Holy Spirit, as he promised:

¹⁰ The exact nature of this is a matter of dispute over the Latin *filioque* added to the Nicene Creed. For a defense of the theology, if not the formulation, see Avery Dulles, S.J., “The Filioque: What Is At Stake?” www.ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/dullesthefilioque.

¹¹ For a fresh treatment, see Dallas Willard, *Living In Christ’s Presence* (Downer’s Grove, ILL: IVP, 2014), Chapter 4, “Experiential Knowledge of the Trinity,” 94-113.

¹² 14:16-17a, d.

¹³ 15:7.

“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth, for he will not speak on his own authority; but whatever he hears he will speak, and will declare to you the things that are to come.... All that the Father has is mine; therefore, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”¹⁴

Over and over in his long preparatory speech,¹⁵ Jesus spoke of One who was to follow him in the historical unfolding of the life of the Triune God. In Jesus’ life the data has been downloaded to the followers who lived with him in close observation; it’s been burned on the hard disk of their communal memory. Now the task of the Spirit is to keep it alive and available. The first followers knew his stuff by heart;¹⁶ they’d been marinated in it for three years. Jesus was full of the Spirit at all times, and it overflowed on them like a waterfall. But now the presence and light of the Holy Spirit is to be deposited in them.¹⁷ It’s where the program’s been headed all along, to create a new kind of human being in a new community of divine agents, persons who live out of a healed relationship with God: sins forgiven, demons banished, drenched in Jesus’ words and deeds, and now- to cap it off- life from God in the heart, an artesian well within; peace in the midst of conflict; life centered on what matters. Truth is going deep inside because the Spirit of truth is to inhabit and live through them as a community. Yes, it’s messy and uneven because of the kind of warped and damaged raw materials we are, but this is what it’s about, that Christ be reflected through us together, as through a thousand broken prisms, so the world can see God’s alternative to the way things are now run.

Friends and fellow disciples, classic Christian faith is not just a ticket to heaven because I say Jesus is Savior and assent to a few doctrines, and not just a code of

¹⁴ 16:13,15.

¹⁵ On the genre of the Farewell Speech, John 13:31-17:26, and its standard topics, see Charles Talbert, *Reading John* (New York, NY: Crossroads, 1992), 200ff.; Jo-Ann Bryant, *John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 208-211.

¹⁶ On the reliability of the oral traditions about Jesus as controlled by a community of multiple eye-witnesses, see Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006).

¹⁷ See John 20:22 where it is clear that the Holy Spirit is the gift of the risen Jesus.

conduct- necessary as that is to keep us out of ditches.¹⁸ It's more than correct beliefs and good behavior. It's bigger; it's a living Jesus doing his thing through us with the aid of his amazing internal representative- God the Holy Spirit.¹⁹ It's the difference- if you accept my crude analogy- between listening to a radio on a table and swallowing it so the receiver of the signal is now inside you and the songs coming out your mouth! The vision is God the Spirit inside surrendered personalities: light within, life within, truth within, navigation within, access to power within, love within, all lived in a community where we correct and encourage one another in the savvy of living out the new reality Jesus gives as recorded in Scripture and in the midst of a broken world. We are to be a genuine alternative.

Think of it this way. God the Father *above* is a wise and strong provider, "Our Father *who art in heaven*," as Jesus taught us to pray honoring the Father's transcendence. The Son Jesus is *beside* us as a living memory through the stories of the apostles recorded in the Gospels. The Holy Spirit- however- is now to be *within* as a vital presence, the activator of divine realities. The Spirit grows the fruits of mature character, pushes spiritual gifts through us, and keeps our hearts lit with the holy fire of love for God and people. I find this a helpful picture- God above, God beside, God within, the Triune God as our comprehensive environment- not the whole truth, but a good start. The Spirit of Truth is now our inner companion, our living link with the Son and the Father. It is the Holy Spirit who- amidst the ambiguities and tragedies of history- keeps the church as a whole from defecting and leaving the faith, though parts of it sometimes do depart and wither, as is even now happening around us. We wobble like drunks, but something- rather someone- keeps us upright and moving forward. All you've ever experienced of the Father and the Son is funneled through the Holy Spirit, the go-between member of the Triune God, the press agent and publicist for Jesus. The Spirit is always present, often hidden, forever arranging divine collisions, making connections, bring resources to bear, offering fresh possibilities and deflecting attention to Jesus and his story. "Because," says Hopkins, "the Holy Ghost over the bent World broods with warm breast and with ah!

¹⁸ For a critique of what has come to be recognized as a *reduced gospel*, see Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), especially Chapter 2, "Gospel Culture or Salvation Culture," 28-33. Search *YouTube* under *Scot McKnight* for many of the lectures that underlie this book. I found them helpful.

¹⁹ For a fresh treatment of the Holy Spirit, see Mark Galli, *Chaos and Grace: Discovering The Liberating Work Of The Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011).

bright wings.” Hopkins felt heat from the warm breast and saw the bright wings flash. We live already within the force field of the loving circle of the Triune God.

Now back to the common experience we introduced earlier of being stopped in your tracks. You may have wondered where I was going with this long aside on the Holy Spirit, so now I tell you: it’s all about a dog. Ken Sande is probably the best teacher we have on Christian peacemaking, and this is his story:

“One day during my run I noticed a blind woman walking the other side of the street with her Seeing Eye dog, a beautiful golden retriever. As I was about to pass them, I noticed a car blocking a driveway a few paces ahead of them. The dog paused and gently pressed his shoulder against the woman's leg, signaling her to turn so they could go around.

I'm sure she normally followed his lead, but that day didn't seem to trust him. She'd probably walked this route before and knew this wasn't the normal place to turn. Whatever the cause, she wouldn't move to the side and instead gave the signal to move ahead. Again he pressed against her leg. She angrily ordered him forward. When he again refused, her temper flared.

I was about to speak up ... when the dog once more put his shoulder gently against her leg. Sure enough, she kicked him... then impulsively stepped forward and bumped into the car. Reaching out to feel the shape, she realized what happened. Dropping to her knees, she threw her arms around the dog, and spoke sobbing words into his ear.”²⁰

Sande stopped, his attention riveted by a living parable. Is this not what we’ve done to the Holy Spirit? Not listened, thought we knew better, gotten angry, rejected divine counsel? We need the shock of recognition, to feel the grief of our offenses and ask forgiveness from our divine partner. Paul gives a warning about this particular sin in Ephesians 4:30, “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

Grief is the pain of loss, and some losses are just not necessary. The grief of the Spirit is over what could have been had we obeyed. God was not diminished, but we missed out! And when we create losses that did not have to be and miss out on *the goodie* we might have enjoyed, God grieves. Parents hurt when their kids miss

²⁰ *Resolving Everyday Conflict* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 99-100.

out on something good because of stupid stubbornness. How much more....

God was patient in revealing the relationships of the divine life lest his people be overwhelmed. Even near the end Jesus said there were things they could not yet comprehend, verse 12: “I have many things to stay to you, *but you cannot bear them now.*” Every decent parent knows not to give children more information than they can handle. It took time for the divine life to be revealed in history so as to be remembered. First the Father in the long haul of forming Israel, with the Son and Spirit in the shadows. Then, in a much-compressed space of a bit over thirty years and three in the public eye, the display of Jesus the Son showing the Father’s kingdom with the Spirit as the invisible source of guidance and power. Finally, based on Jesus’ teaching at the end of his life, the Spirit was put on full display at Easter and Pentecost as our link with the risen Jesus and the ground-level superintendent of the church’s operations.²¹ The immense burden and privilege of the church is that we know God’s story and God’s name because God showed us. We didn’t go looking for it; God dumped it on us, and then we had to deal with it! My proper name is Phillip Carlisle Thrailkill, and to it I answer. God’s revealed name is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the one and true, the only and living tri-personal God, and here we take our stand and make a case in teaching and preaching and worship and reasoning and service because we believe it’s true for all peoples.

To the church is given the revelation of the rich interior life of the one God of the Jews, Yahweh the Lord, one God with a relational heart of three persons who indwell one another so that the work of one of the work of all, whoever gets the headlines that day. When the Father is named as the actor, the Son and the Spirit are his two invisible hands;²² where the Son is named, the Father wills the action and the Spirit provides the energies; and where the Spirit is highlighted, there the Son and the Father are fully implicated. One God and three gods is a contradiction; one person and three persons is a contradiction, but *one God in three persons* is not a contradiction but a verbal pointer to the mystery of interpersonal love that is within the one God and which was there when there was no creation but only God, never alone and fully blessed in joy. Then the stage was set in creation for the emergence of folk like us, that in all our wandering ways and broken lives East of Eden we might be found and restored to share in a love which creates but not controls and which

²¹ P. Kreeft, *Fundamentals of the Faith* (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1988), 141.

²² A favorite image of the Eastern churches.

frees and restores all who respond. The secret of the divine life is now out and entrusted to the church in a Book and a vision of faith like no other. Having been alienated, and having believed a great lie about our Maker and come under the authority of *the ruler of this world*, we are called back into the circle of the Holy Trinity, there to learn the lessons of love and delight in their company forever.

It seems odd because it's so obvious, but Jesus is not with us; no one's seen him except in dreams and visions for two thousand years. He is- as the Gospels teach- risen from the dead, ascended into heaven, glorified at the right hand of the Father, the place of cosmic rule and authority. He's been certified and declared to be *in the right* by the highest authority, and he is present to us through his Spirit as a living link. What you know of Christ you know through the teaching office of the Spirit, even if you don't know how you know. No one can come to faith and confess *Jesus is Lord* without the aid of the Spirit.²³ All knowledge of Jesus is mediated. Our companion is the one Jesus sent as our Helper in his absence. The Holy Spirit is the spirit *of* Jesus and the Spirit *from* Jesus and with us for multiple purposes:

- to guide us towards good and away from evil,
- to inspire us to moral courage in the face of injustice and lies,
- to illumine Scripture so we hear God's address to us in the Bible,
- to push us towards speaking of Jesus and into his mission,
- to disable the patterns of sin which have cut deep grooves into our habits,
- to built into us the new habits and virtues we call the fruit of the Spirit,
- to give us his multiple gifts and empowerments for service,
- to inspire and guide our prayers when we are in the dark,
- to enliven and inspire our worship with divine energy and holy love.²⁴

We are about to pray a dangerous prayer. It means handing the keys of your life and this church back to its owner. Who knows what might happen? He might just unleash a fire of love from which we would not recover. It's happened before. I need a fresh visitation and drenching, and I think you do too. There's work that needs doing, and we cannot do it in our own strength.

²³ 1 Cor. 12:3.

²⁴ For a summary of the Spirit's work as highlighted in Scripture, see Luke Johnson, *The Creed* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2003), 219-223; Gerald O'Collins, S.J., *Christology* (Oxford, England: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009), 151-155.
