

 **Main Street**
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



John 14:15-21, 25-26, 15:7-11, 26-27, 16:1-4a, 13-15
“The Genius Of The Holy Spirit”

May 24, 2015
(Pentecost Sunday/ Aldersgate Day)

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“Following Christ From City Center!”

JOHN 14:15-21, 25-26, 15:7-11, 26-27, 16:1-4a, 13-15

"THE GENIUS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT"

		14:15-21 Discourse Of Jesus: Love, Commandments, And The Holy Spirit.	Before Departing, Jesus Makes Provision For A New Link In The Spirit
Love/Obey 15	a)	v.5 Love And Jesus' Commands (Echoes Dt. 6:4-9).	1 Jn. 5:3, Obedience Not Popular In Our Day Part Of <i>Follow Me</i> Is <i>Love Me</i> , New Center Of Emotion/Loyalty/Attachment
		"If you love me, you will keep my commands;	Plural <i>you</i> , 1 Jn. 2:26, Love = Obedience To Jesus, Gratitude, New Covenant Demands 13:15, 34-35, Future Tense, Obedience Is Love Enacted, Covenant Fidelity Plural = All The Revelation Of Jesus, 1 Jn. 3:23-24a
Promise 16	b)	vv.16-17 Holy Spirit Sent, World And Church Contrasted.	No Adequate Translation Thru Son's Prayer, Spirit Given By Father, // Mt. 1:9-11, Lk. 3:21-22, Mt. 3:13-17
	1	And I will pray the Father, and he will give you <i>another</i> Counselor (Gk. <i>Paracletos</i>) to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth,	Trinitarian Reality - Son Prays/ Father Sends/ Spirit Given Legal Assistant/Advocate/Intercessor/Consoler 1 Jn. 2:1, Source Of Jesus' Works In Us, Trinitarian Cooperation, Presence Communicates Truth: Son Prays, Father Gives, Spirit Dwell/Fills/Remains
Difference 1 17	2	whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him <u>nor knows him</u> ;	14:15-17, 26, 15:26, 16:7-11, 13-15, Character Of Jesus Is The Test Of The Spirit Hard Edge: The Church Differs From The World Trinitarian Mystery, Only Christians Have Holy Spirit [Only Disciples Experience Resurrection, Gift Of Spirit, Abiding Father/Son]
	2'	<u>you know him</u> ,	Seen Him In Jesus' Words/Deeds, Spirit Defined In vv.16c-17 Disciples Had Some Knowledge Of Spirit Before Pentecost
	1'	for he dwells (abides) with you , and will be in you.	Change Of Relation To The Holy Spirit: <i>With</i> → <i>In</i> Plural <i>you</i> , 7:39, At Easter/Pentecost, Permanent Abiding Presence <i>Paraclete</i> = Spirit Of Prophecy, Words From God

		14:25-31 Discourse Of Jesus: Peace And The Holy Spirit, //14:15-21.a	Function = Consolation, 4x
25	a)	vv.25-26 Things Spoken, Holy Spirit Sent.	He Abundantly Provides For Their Future Spirit Is Guarantor Of Personal Continuity, Form Of Presence Changes
		"All these things I have spoken to you, while I am still with you.	<i>Filioque</i> Controversy, "and the Son" In Creed New Light On Old Revelation, Key Idea!
26		But the Counselor (Gk. <i>Paracletos</i>), the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you and bring to your remembrance	//14:16, <i>Paraclete</i> = Spirit Of Prophecy, Advocate, Trinitarian Statement Only Place In N.T.! Trinitarian Speech, Comes In 20:22-23, 2 Titles, 1 Source, 2 Parallel Functions 15:26, 16:7 (Son Sends), 14:16, 26 (Father/Son's Prayer), Spirit Is Jesus' Agent Consolation 1 = Not Left Without A Living Teacher The Living Memory In The Church, No Innovator Future Clarification: 2:21-22, 12:16, Lk. 24:25-28, 44-45, Jub. 32:25
		all things, all that I have said to you.	

		15:7-11 The Coming Of The Holy Spirit And The Three-fold Ministry To The World.	Spirit After Glorification, Spirit's Relation To The World //14:16-17, 26; 15:26-27
7		Nevertheless, I tell you the truth:	Only With Spirit Do Disciples Understand Jesus In Depth Over Time With Them Always! Hard For Them To Believe
1	1	it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away,	
	2	the Counselor (Advocate) will not come to you;	<i>Paraclete</i> = One Who Comes Alongside, 7:39, 11:4
1'	1'	but if I go,	He Goes In Cross, Resurrection, Ascension, Session = Glorification Of Jesus
	2'	I will send him to you.	Prosecutor In Cosmic Trial: 3 Counts 20:22, Risen Jesus Sends Spirit, Born Again 3:5 Benefit 1: Prosecutes The World
8	1	And when he comes he will convince (expose) the world concerning sin, concerning sin,	3:20, 12:45-47, 14:24 Cosmos In Hiding 14:24,
	2	and righteousness, 3 and judgment:	Sin = Problem, Righteousness = Cure, Judgment = Spiritual Warfare Continues The Revealing/Judging Work Of Jesus
9	1'	concerning sin, because they do not believe <i>in me</i> ;	Legal Ethos, Trial Language, Grounds Of Conviction, Revelation Exposes Unbelief In Jesus = The Very Essence Of Sin, 12:48a, 8:44-47
10	2'	concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more;	Jesus Vindicated (Shown Righteous) By Resurrection/Glorification 1 Jn. 2:20, 3:7, 1 Tim. 3:16
11	3'	concerning judgment, because "the ruler of this world" (i.e. Satan) is (already) judged.	12:31, 1 Jn. 2:13-14, 5:18 14:30, 8:44, Exorcism Sin Is Rejection Of Jesus, Justice Is God's Verdict On Jesus, Evil Is Routed

15:26-27 THE COMING AND WITNESS MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Shift From Difficulties With *World* To Divine Resource = Spirit

a) v.26 The Sending/Coming Of The Spirit Who Bears Continuing Witness To Jesus.

2 Titles: Paraclete, Spirit of truth

26 1 But when the Counselor (Gk. *Paracletos*) comes, 14:16-17, 25-27, 16:7, Easter Evening In Jn. 20

2 whom I send to you from the Father, Trinitarian Action, Jesus Sends, Acts 2:33, Eph. 4:8,11

3 even "the Spirit of truth," Bears Witness Regarding Right/Wrong, t. Judah 20.1-5, 1QS3

2' who proceeds from the Father, Proceeds From Father, Sent By Son, *Filioque Question*

he will bear **witness** to me. Acts 5:32, Mt. 10:19-20, Revelation Continues, Words & Deeds

Bear Witness With Ones Life, Pneumatology Always Subordinate To Christology

b) v.27 The Witness Of Historical Eyewitnesses To Jesus.

Tradition About Jesus Norms Later Prophetic Witness, 1 Jn. 4:1-2

27 And you are also **witnesses**, Chain Reaction, Spirit Bears Witness *Through* Disciples As Custodians

because you have been with me from the beginning. Jews Required Two Witnesses

Valid Historical Eyewitnesses, Whole Story, Continuity, Acts 1:21-22

16:1-4a EXPULSION OF DISCIPLES FROM SYNAGOGUE: NOT KNOW JESUS/FATHER

a) v.1 What Jesus The Prophet Says To Avoid Apostasy.

All This = 15:18-27

1 I have said all this

to keep you from falling away (stumbling). Scandalized, Common Theme In Testamentary Tradition, Lord's Prayer

Some In John's Community May Be Falling Away, Defecting With Shaken Faith

b) v.2 Expulsion and Killing For Christological Witness: Service To God.

2 They will put you out of the synagogues; 90's AD? Confess Christ. Expelled, 9:22, 34; 12:42-43

Indeed, the hour is coming Excommunication & Martyrdom, Their Crosses

when whoever kills you will think that he is offering (cultic) service (*latreian*) to God. Gal. 1:13-14, *Jihad*

90's? *Birkat ha-Minim* In Benedictions

b') v.3 Not Know Father Or Jesus (Strong Charge Against God's People).

3 And they will do this Spiritual Blindness Continues

because they have not known the Father, nor me. //15:21, Mk. 13:9, Mt. 10:17, Lk. 6:22

a') v.4a What Jesus The Prophet Says For Encouragement.

4 But I have said these things to you

As Part Of The Farewell Speech

that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them."

Prepared For A Difficult Future

16:13-15 The Coming And Teaching Ministry Of The Holy Spirit.

Relation Of The Holy 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 Is Preserved

-2 for he will not speak on his own authority; The Deposit Of Revelation Is Already Present

+2' but whatever he hears he will **speak**, The Holy Spirit Is The Son's Agent, Another Jesus

1' and will **declare** to you the things that are to come.// Spirit Is Son's Marketing Director!

(3x) Announce, Spirit Interprets Past, Predicts Future

14 1 He will **glorify** me, Pneumatology Is Subordinate To Christology

2 for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 3:32-35, 7:16-18, Just As Jesus Did, 5:19-30

14:26, Holy Spirit Is The Son's Agent

15 1' All that the Father has is mine; The Spirit Does Not Offer New Revelation Independent Of Christ

2' therefore, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. Astounding Personal Claim, Given All By Father: 1:18, 5:22, 26, 13:3, 17:2, 7

Benefit No. 2 = Keeps Church In Truth 15:15
Spirit Gives Gifts For Service (1 Cor. 12-14), Grows Jesus' Character In Us (Gal. 5)

THE GENIUS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

“And you are also witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning.”

The apostles- full of the Spirit- were the living archives of the risen Jesus.

JOHN 15 : 27

Have you ever been stopped in your tracks? There you are, cruising along, running on auto-pilot, when- all of sudden- you’re riveted. Something unexpected crosses your path. Insight floods in, “This is wrong; I must do something!” or “This is amazing; I must pay attention!” or “This is bewildering; I must think about this!” or “This is beautiful; I must remember this moment!” or “This is holy ground; I must stop!” All your powers of attention come together in a focused beam of awareness. You’ve stumbled across something, been stopped in your tracks. And the question is, Is God interrupting life? Is light shining on my path?¹

This common phenomena is- to me- one of the regular experiential verifications of the mysterious and comprehensive work of the Holy Spirit, who in John’s Gospel is regularly and rightly called *the Spirit of truth*.² The Holy Spirit-

¹ On God’s communication through directly perceived *natural signs* (e.g. cosmic wonder, purposive order, a sense of moral accountability, inherent human dignity, a longing for transcendent joy), see C. Stephen Evans, *Why Christian Faith Still Make Sense* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2015), Chapter 4, “Natural Signs for God and Theistic Arguments,” 39-58.

² 14:17, 15:26, 16:13. For a summary of the person and work of the Holy Spirit in John’s Gospel, 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 and 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 change the Spirit works, see Gregory S. Clapper, *The Renewal of the Heart is the Mission of the Church* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010); also Beth Felker Jones, *God the Spirit: Introducing Pneumatology*

third person of the Holy Trinity— equal in deity with the Father and the Son³- is God indwelling a follower of Jesus with what’s needed when it’s needed. And remember: there is no such animal as a believer in Jesus who does not have the Holy Spirit within.⁴ While they may be living in rebellion against God and rejecting the reminders of the Spirit, while they may be dull-spirited and ignorant of their Great Friend, there the Spirit resides within them, unflustered, sitting in a neglected corner of the soul— like some room in your house you rarely visit— waiting for and creating openings to bring light into darkness, life into dead spots, and bright truth into a world of attractive half-truths in which are immersed as citizens of this fallen world. The Holy Spirit always perseveres. The Spirit may be— in a limited sense— caged by our ignorance and sin and inward resistance and blocked by strongholds, but there the Spirit remains in the midst of our mess, waiting to be acknowledged and welcomed back into awareness and conscious cooperation. God is incredibly strong and unlimited in creativity, but God is not a bully. The Spirit invites, the Holy Spirit offers, the Spirit of Jesus teases awareness and stirs curiosity, the Spirit of God stirs and hovers and broods, then rushes into a crack of awareness. The end of Gerard Manley Hopkins’ poem *God’s Grandeur* captures this never-ending 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

in Wesleyan and Ecumenical Perspective (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014). See John Wesley’s Sermon No. 141, “On The Holy Spirit,” www.umcmission.org/Find-Resources/John-Wesley-Sermons/Sermon-141-On-the-Holy-Spirit.

³ See the U.M. 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).

⁴ 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.*” To belong to Jesus by faith is to have the Spirit within, period; the Trinity is not partitioned or passed out in pieces. In the baptism of the children of confessing parents, the fullness of salvation is present in seed form, as an acorn to an oak tree.

World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.”⁵

What a brilliant line! *Because the Holy Ghost over the bent World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.*” The great passion of the Spirit is to lead us deeper into knowledge of and cooperation with the risen Jesus and to remind us his teaching fits every occasion. The Holy Spirit dwells within as a living divine link so we can perceive the actions of God and be addressed through Holy Scripture.

One of the Spirit’s favorite phrases– one that startles me each time I hear it– is this, “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; the time is right. Open your mouth!”

Another is, “Let me show you something you’ve not seen before.”

Another is, “Let’s open the Book together and let me instruct you.”

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.”

Another is, “Listen to this person. I have something to say through them.”

Another is, “That thing you’ve been hiding from, let’s talk about it.”

Another is, “Here’s a spiritual gift for someone else; it’s *from* me and *through* you. 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.” After a while you learn to distinguish between the flow of your own thoughts and those of the Holy Spirit who dwells within. Jesus said, “My sheep know my voice,”⁶ and the voice of the Holy Spirit is the echo of the voice of Jesus; they are in the deepest agreement.

I do not know how to understand my experience of such penetrating communications apart from the Holy Spirit’s multiple roles as teacher, protector, defender, reminder, and living link with the invisible resources of kingdom of God.⁷

⁵ www.bartleby.com/122/7.

⁶ John 10:27.

⁷ The Greek *Paracletos* is difficult to translate because of its wide 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*

John 14:15-21, 25-26, 15:7-11, 26-27, 16:1-4a, 13-15 7

It's a good thing for the lights to be on in your soul. I like being startled out of the fog of amnesia into sharp spiritual awareness. We were designed to hear God's voice, and if what you perceive matches up with the character of Jesus as shown in the four gospels, then perhaps you need to take the risk of obedience! But if it doesn't cohere with the written revelation about Jesus as nestled in the Scripture as a whole and unfolded in the church's faith, put it back in the cooker for a bit. But if it's like Jesus, if it's loving and a bit risky, if it goes against the grain of worldly thinking, if it surprises you with its truth and possibilities, go for it! If you're wrong, you're a step closer to getting it right next time. God loves it when we try to obey! It shows heart!

The Holy Spirit is the agent of divine revelation who brings light to bear at ground level. God the Father remains near but transcendent; God the Son comes a step neared as embodied in the flesh of Jesus, but he remains a person separate from us, a powerful but still outside influence— as in any relationship between two human beings. A boundary is fixed; a gap remains. You may follow him as the disciples did, mimic him as they did, but what remains lacking is an *internal presence* that keeps us attuned to Jesus. So when his work on earth is done— and when the memory bank of his first followers is topped off with the cross and resurrection, the appearances and ascension— the Son and the Father cooperate in sending the Holy Spirit to set up camp in the depths of who we are, as Jesus promised over and over:⁸

“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*,”⁹

With you now; *in you* later- an important change of location.

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

⁸ The exact nature of this cooperation is a matter of major dispute over the Latin *filioque* clause in the otherwise-Greek Nicene Creed. For a defense of the theology, if not the specific formulation see Avery Dulles, S.J., “The Filioque: What Is At Stake?” www.ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/dullesthefilioque. John says that the Father sends the Spirit in answer to the Son's prayer, sends the Spirit in the name of the Son, and that the Son sends the Spirit. As in all Trinitarian action, it's clearly mutual; what they do they do together.

⁹ 14:16-17a, d.

And again:

“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom *the Father will send in my name*, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you,”¹⁰

The Holy Spirit’s job is to keep reminding us of Jesus and his words.

And again:

“It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, *I will send him to you.*”¹¹

During his lifetime, Jesus— like us- could only be in one place at a time, but the Holy Spirit can indwell many at the same time, and that’s a great advantage if God is going to scatter witnesses around the world.

And again:

“... but when the Counselor comes, whom I send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me,”¹²

The one who comes from the Father and the Son is also God; therefore the lights stay on undimmed and the work continues unabated.

And yet a fifth time:

“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

¹⁰ 15:26.

¹¹ 15:7.

¹² 15:26.

it to you.”¹³

The Holy Spirit knows it all and has full authority to tell it all, as long as its centered in the story of Jesus.

Over and over in his last, long preparatory speech before going away in resurrection and ascension,¹⁴ Jesus spoke of the One who was to follow him in the historical unfolding of the identity of the Triune God. In Jesus’ life- the whole of it- the data has been downloaded to his followers as a group of self-correcting witnesses. Now the task assigned to the Holy Spirit is to keep the memory of Jesus alive and available, inside each follower and between us all as God’s new people. Because when there is Jesus-quality life on the inside, there will be light on the outside, as he said it would be, “And you are also *witnesses*, because you have been with me from the beginning.”¹⁵ To know the Jesus story in Scripture, and to have it alive within as a map of reality, is to be his witness, not as a duty but as a delight. The first followers knew his stuff by heart;¹⁶ they’d been marinated in his juices for three years.

Now for Jesus to say something even once renders it important as a word from above, but to emphasize the coming of the Spirit from so many angles indicates extreme importance. The presence that was in Jesus is now to be deposited within the disciples.¹⁷ It’s where the program’s been headed all along, to create *a new kind of human being* for a new community of divine agents, persons who live out of a healed relationship with God: sins forgiven, demons banished, truth lived out in relationship

¹³ 16:13,15.

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ 15:27.

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); for an introduction to the gospels, see Michael F. Bird, *The Gospel of the Lord: How the Early Church Wrote the Story of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014).

¹⁷ John 20:22 clearly indicates that the Holy Spirit is the gift of the risen Jesus.

to Jesus' word and deeds, knowing you are loved by no less than the Great Creator, and now- to cap it off- life from God in the heart. An artesian well within; joy the world did not give and circumstances cannot take away; peace with God in the midst of all manner of conflict; life centered around the One who matters. Truth is now going *inside the disciples* because the *Spirit of truth from Jesus and the Father* is to inhabit and live through them. Yes, it's messy and uneven because of kind of raw materials we are, but this is what it's about, that Christ be reflected through us together, as through a thousand broken prisms because the light and life of the Spirit of Jesus have now come to dwell within.

Friends, this faith is not just a ticket to the next life because I say *Jesus is my Savior*, and not just a code of conduct– necessary as that is to give us boundaries and keep us out of ditches.¹⁸ It's more than correct beliefs and acceptable behavior. It's bigger than that, it is Jesus living his life through us with the aid of an 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 the radio so the receiver of the signal is now inside and the songs coming out of your mouth! The vision is God the Holy Spirit on the inside of a surrendered human personality: light within, life within, truth within, navigation within, access to power within, love within, all lived in a community where we serve to correct and encourage one another in the savvy of living out the new reality in dialog with the Scriptures.

Think of it this way. God the Father *above* as a wise and strong provider, “Our Father *who art in heaven*,” as Jesus taught us to pray. The Son Jesus *beside* us as a living memory through the stories of the apostles. The Holy Spirit- however- is now to be *within* as a vital presence, the activator of all divine realities. The Spirit grows the fruits of mature character,²⁰ pushes spiritual gifts through us,²¹ and keeps our

¹⁸ For a critique of the *reduced gospel*, see Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), especially Chapter 2, “Gospel Culture or Salvation Culture,” 28-33; also N.T. Wright, *Simply Good News* (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 2015), Chapter 4, “Distorted and Competing Gospels,” 57-88.

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).

²⁰ Galatians 5:22-26.

²¹ 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, 28-30; Romans 12:1-8, Ephesians 4:1-11.

hearts lit with the holy fire of love for God and people.²² 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 all the ambiguities and tragedies of history— keeps the church from defecting and leaving the faith. We wobble and stumble like a drunk, but something— rather someone— keeps us upright and moving forward. All you have ever understood and experienced of the Father and the Son is funneled through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the go-between member of the Triune God, the press agent and publicist for God Almighty.

The Holy Spirit is always present, often hidden, forever arranging divine collisions, making connections, shining light from Scripture, bringing resources to bear, offering fresh possibilities and constantly deflecting attention to Jesus and the stories about him. “Because,” says Hopkins, “...the Holy Ghost over the bent World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.” Hopkins felt heat from the warm breast and saw the bright wings flash. We already live within the force field of the loving circle of the Triune God; to appreciate the distinctives and commonalities of their divine work is part of our maturity.²³

But now back to the common experience we introduced earlier, that 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 the art of Christian peacemaking, and I use his insights often.²⁴ One day Sande was jolted:

“One day during my morning 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. The dog paused and gently pressed his shoulder against the woman's leg, signaling her to turn so they could go

²² Acts 2:1-21.

²³ For an introduction, See Michael Reeves, *Delighting In the Trinity* (Downer's Grove, ILL: IVP, 2012).

²⁴ His introductory text is *The Peace Maker* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004).

around the car.

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 square 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."²⁵

Sande was stopped in his tracks, his attention riveted by the tragedy and beauty of what was before him, a living parable of stubborn human sin and the gift of true repentance leading to reconciliation. Guess who grew in trust that day?

Is this not what we have done to the Holy Spirit? Not listened, thought we knew better, gotten angry- even mean, rejected divine counsel and faithful help, thinking we could make our way all on our own? We need the shock of recognition, to feel the grief of our offenses and ask forgiveness from our divine partner. Paul gives a clear 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 miss out on *the goodie* we might have enjoyed, God hurts for us. Parents hurt when their kids miss out on something good because of stupidity and stubbornness. This is the grief of God's Spirit.

But John is also a realist about our world, albeit a hopeful one. A second item that grieves the Spirit is when people, even other branches of God's people, resist our witness about the beauty and truth of Jesus Christ. His light, and our reflected light— he the sun and we the moon— always shines in the darkness. And remember, this

²⁵ *Resolving Everyday Conflict* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 99-100.

darkness is not just privation, not just an absence of light as the night but an active darkness, teeming with fierce and determined opposition. Hide your light, and the darkness rejoices. Let it shine, and the darkness will come out to meet you! So in today's next to last paragraph, Jesus issues a warning about what's ahead for his people, at least in fits and spurts. Jesus' followers will one day be booted out of their home synagogues, no longer welcome because they claim to know the name of God's Messiah; it's Jesus, the crucified and risen one who came among us years ago and was missed by so many. A few will even think in killing you they are offering an acceptable sacrifice to God by purging his people of your dangerous ideas. So forewarned is forearmed, as Jesus said in chapter 16, verse 4: "But I have said these things to you that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them."

I leave you with a question and a silly image you will not likely forget. "To be filled with the Holy Spirit," says Pastor James Emery White of Charlotte, "means we allow him to occupy and control every area of our lives." Then a question, "How much of you does the Holy Spirit have? Then a story:

"When teaching seminary students, I bring in two glasses of water and two packets of Alka-Seltzer. I drop a packet with the wrapper still on into the first glass, and an unsealed packet into the second and watch it fizz. I then say, 'Both have Alka-Seltzer, just as all Christians have the Holy Spirit. But notice how you can have the Spirit and not his filling. Our goal,' he concludes, "is to live in such a way as to unwrap the packaging around the presence and power of the Holy Spirit within."²⁶

Any fizz in your soul? Any outbreaks of divine life? Any deep desires for God? Any dream and visions, prophecies or revelations? Any call to witness? Any hunger for God's Word? Any secret times of prayer and fasting? Any passion for justice? Anything that breaks your heart?

We Christians were designed to be indwelt and filled with the creative, potent, multi-dimensional, tough and tender Holy Spirit. Lady Margaret Thatcher— whose father was a Methodist preacher I might add— was right when she said:

"When Christians meet, their purpose is not- or should not be- to

²⁶ Adapted from his *Long Night's Journey into Day* (Colorado Spring, CO: WaterBrook, 2002).

John 14:15-21, 25-26, 15:7-11, 26-27, 16:1-4a, 13-15 14

ascertain what is the mind of the majority, but what is the mind of the Holy Spirit- something which may be quite different.”²⁷

Could it be that today– Pentecost Sunday– the desire of the Holy Spirit is to immerse us in his reality and to set our hearts on fire with love for Jesus Christ. Only one way to find out, and that is to pray and to wait to see what happens. It’s experimental, but then so is the whole of this faith. It’s meant to be lived into and lived out of.

As your pastor and fellow traveler, I invite you to open the deepest part of who you are– your heart– to a fresh and deeper work of this amazing and fruitful Holy Spirit. Welcome Jesus’ gift, and then bring us back a report.

²⁷ PreachingToday.com search under *Holy Spirit*.
