

The Day Jesus Got Out of the Way?

I don't know whether anyone has noticed, but the title of today's sermon is designed to make you scratch your head and say "huh?" How could Jesus Christ, who **is** the way, ever be **in** the way? Why would he ever need to get **out** of the way?

But before you conclude that I have sniffing too many gasoline & exhaust fumes from my old Studebakers, turn in your Bibles with me to John 16:5-7: *"Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you."*

What is it about the coming of the Holy Spirit that is so important that the disciples should be glad about Jesus going away, and why should we prefer the company of the Holy Spirit above the physical presence of Jesus? What can we expect to receive when the Holy Spirit is come upon us?

Part of the answer can be found in the phrase, "**direct access**." The goal of Jesus, coming in the flesh, was to reconcile sinful man with God through the cross. Our sin and the memory of our sin separate and alienate us from our Heavenly Father. Like Adam and Eve, being aware of our sin, we try to hide from God; we feel uncomfortable in His presence. We know He is Holy and that we are unholy, stained sin. But when Jesus offers Himself for us on Calvary's cross, our sin is paid for--the debt is canceled--the shame is washed away. The curse of Eden is overturned.

The symbol for this is the tearing of the veil of the Temple which occurred when Jesus died. Matthew 27:50-51 say: *"And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split."*

The curtain or veil of the temple was that which divided the inner sanctum of the temple from its outer rooms and courtyard.

2

The inner sanctum, known as the "Holies of Holies," was thought to be the dwelling place of God. The only one allowed in there was the high priest. He was allowed only once a year and only after he had been ritually cleansed. The high priest purified himself and brought an offering of blood for his own sins and for the sins of the people. And even then, his fellow priests would tie a rope around his ankle, so that if the presence of God should kill him, his body could be dragged back out for burial. The God of Israel was known to be holy and nothing unholy or un sanctified could come into His presence.

But the sacrifice of Jesus opened up the holy of holies for all believers, and the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was and is the sign and substance of that completed transaction. Jesus gives us direct access to the Heavenly Father once again. Just as God, before the fall of Eden, visited regularly with Adam and Eve, so now God desires to visit with us. Where once sin caused us to be alienated from God, now through the cross our relationship with God is now restored.

The coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost is the spirit of sonship and daughterhood for all who trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord. The Holy Spirit is our direct access to the Father.

A second thing the Holy Spirit brings to the followers of Jesus is unlimited potential. In our scripture lesson this morning from John 14, Jesus says in verse 12: *"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father."*

There is a part of us that protests against Jesus' promise here. We want to say, "surely not--we'll never be able to do the things Jesus did, and we certainly could never do anything greater." But, Jesus insists that it will be so. The Holy Spirit within us takes the lid off our potential. *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.* The Holy Spirit is alive and well. God desires to work his miracles in us and through us. And what God desires to do in and through us He can do and will do if and when we will respond to Him in faith and obedience. Would

3

And what God desires to do in and through us He can do and will do if and when we will respond to Him in faith and obedience. **The age of miracles is not over.**

A third thing the Holy Spirit brings to the followers of Jesus is unlimited power in prayer. Look at John 14:13-14: *"And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."* An interesting feature in this promise is that Jesus is willing and anxious to glorify the Father through granting answers to our prayers. He wants us to ask for great things because He desires to do great things for us. For, when he does great things for us, he enhances the reputation of His Father, and that's what brings Him joy. Timid, unbelieving prayers do not bring glory to God; whereas bold prayers, offered with bold faith in an awesome God, honor Him and delight Him. God wants nothing more than for his children to trust Him and to honor Him with believing prayer. **The Holy Spirit in us is the Spirit of believing prayer.**

A fourth thing the Holy Spirit brings to the followers of Jesus is an ever present Counselor, Comforter, and Guide. Jesus says in John 14:16 & 17 say: *"I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever--the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you."* The Holy Spirit is our Counselor in trouble, our Comforter in sorrow, and our Guide who helps us discern between truth and deception. Are we hungry for truth? Do we want to know the will of God for our lives? Do we want to be able to sense and stand against the lies of the Devil? Then let us pray to be filled or refilled with the Holy Spirit. Let us pray: **"Come, Holy Spirit; we need You."**

A fifth and very precious thing that the Holy Spirit gives us is holy communion with the Father and with the Son. It is really more than direct access--it's not just a matter of being able to come into the presence of God any time we want to--it's a matter of us being in God and having God in us **all the time**. Look at John 14:18-21: Jesus says: *"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see Me*

anymore, but you will see Me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in Me, and I am in you. Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show Myself to him." Look also at verse 23: Jesus says: *"If anyone loves Me, he will obey My teaching. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him."*

The truth of the Holy Trinity is that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit cannot be divided. When we have the one we have all three, but Jesus in his human flesh is hindered by human flesh. While in the flesh He cannot be everywhere at once and while in the flesh he cannot get inside our flesh. That's why it was necessary for Him to go away, for by going away He gets out of the way for the Holy Spirit to come. And, it is better for us for the Spirit to come because when we have the Holy Spirit we also have the Father and the Son. Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit we are in the Father and in the Son, and Father and Son are in us. **By sending the Holy Spirit Jesus fulfills His promise: "I will never leave you or forsake you; I will be with you even to the very end of the world."**

We rejoice that we live in the age of the Holy Spirit. For, incredible as it may seem, having the Holy Spirit is better than being in the physical presence of Jesus. In and through the Holy Spirit we have unlimited potential as the children of God, we have unlimited power in prayer, we have an ever-present Counselor, Comforter, and Guide, and we have the Holy Trinity abiding within us.

And yet with all this there is one thing more: There is **peace**. Look at John 14:25-27: Jesus says: *"All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."*

I wonder, if we could put it in pill form, how much would this be worth? I'm talking about peace of mind. I think if we

could put it in pill form or in liquid form and sell it, none of us would have to work another day in our lives. People already pay millions and billions of dollars on drugs both legal and illegal and millions and billions of dollars on alcohol trying to silence the fearful voices within them. They are looking for some peace. They are trying to still the jitters in their hearts. This lack of peace is an awful thing. Billions of people are afflicted with this infirmity. Where can you, I, and they find peace?

Jeremiah 6:16 tells us that real peace will not be found in any new pills or beverages. Jeremiah says: *"This is what the LORD says: "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls."* Jesus says in Matthew 11:29: *"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."* Humble obedience to God, is always rewarded with the gift of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit within us is our peace.

This is what it means to be Spirit-filled followers of Jesus Christ: When we have the Holy Spirit, we have unlimited potential as the children of God; we have unlimited power in prayer; we have an ever-present Counselor, Comforter, and Guide, we enter into community with the Holy Trinity, and we have a supernatural peace to surpass all human understanding. All of this is ours this morning-- just for the asking.

I think of the promise of Jesus, when he said in Luke 11:13, *"If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

Want joy? Want peace? Want communion with God? Want the heavenly Counselor, Comforter, and Guide? Want power in prayer? Want to live up to your full potential as a child of God? Pray and keep on praying until you know you have received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus returned to heaven (got out of the way) so He could send us the Holy Spirit.

The Fourth Street Church of God

4thstcog.com

2001 Fourth Street
Altoona, PA 16601
942-1007/946-4110

Sermon for June 10, 2017

The Day Jesus Got Out of the Way

Matthew 27:50-54;

John 14:12-31

Jon R. Neely, Pastor
neelyjon@gmail.com