

## **Another Counsellor**

### **The Substitute**

**John 14:11-25**

**Preached by Andy Bousfield at Ascension Church Westdene 2 April 2010**

Imagine the scene the Lord Jesus with his Disciples, in a room on first floor. Eaten supper. Next day Jesus will be arrested and taken to his Crucifixion. Have shared bread and wine as bread was passed around table he said take and eat, 'this is my body do this in remembrance of me', passed cup saying 'do this in remembrance of me'. Shortly after this Judas had left, went to chief priests to betray the Lord Jesus.

Then Jesus began to speak.

What is known as the last discourse.

John 14,15,16 gives us what Jesus said to those Disciples on that momentous occasion.

Began speech 13: 33 imagine how you'd have felt if you were Disciples hearing him.

V.33.

Now that was devastating news. They'd left everything to follow the Jesus. They'd been convinced he was the one who was going to be the messiah,... fulfilling all the OT promises,... who would introduce the Kingdom of God and put everything right. And now he was saying that he was about to leave them and they could not join in where he was going. In other words they would be left here on earth to continue the Christian cause on their own. Now what hope did they have? If any movement was a one man band, it was the Christian movement.

□ It would be like the Glitter band without Gary Giltter. Had you heard of them? Some of you are too young, and some mercifully are too old. Or if Richard Branson left Virgin. I'd imagine the whole thing would slowly unravel.

Surely that's what's going to happen to the Christian movement. How could they survive without him.

Well you and I might ask the same question. How could we survive without him?

We actually live in that situation that the disciples anticipated. Called to live for the Jesus in this present world whilst – he is in heaven with his heavenly father. We hear he's coming back in the future. But what about us here and now. How are we going to survive? How will we spread the good news of Jesus kingdom without him with us.

Because we know ourselves there is very little hope – as a church, were tiny. And frankly Westdene thinks we're a little strange, quaint even, still going to church in this day and age. We don't cut much ice in 21C Brighton.

And as individuals we know how hard it is to live the Christian life. Just to keep going day by day and be distinct and then to invite others to think about Christ. Very very hard to do it. What hope is there for the kingdom of God once Jesus has left.

Yet of course we know the Christian movement was not snuffed out: the moment Jesus left this earth – it continued and spread, remarkably to be the global phenomenon it is today.

Why?

Well not because of the brilliance of the individuals who make up the church.

But because of the Holy Spirit.

And he is the theme of the talks today and for the next few weeks as we lead up to the celebration of Pentecost. (I'll have our programme card out by next Sunday.) We're looking at the Holy Spirit in John's Gospel – and specifically in the Jesus' final discourse. This momentous occasion on which he was about to leave this earth and was preparing his followers for the time after he is gone. When he said – I am going to send my holy spirit to be with you.

Today. 3 questions of this passage.

Who is the holy spirit?

What does he do?

Who receives him?

### **First. Who is the Holy Spirit?**

v.15

READ v.15-16-17a ...the Spirit of Truth

Jesus seeks to reassure his disciples. That's how he begins his speech. Having said he's going to heaven to prepare another place for them. And we've heard quite a bit about that the last couple of weeks. But that's not his only word of comfort. He doesn't just say hold on, you've got a great long-term future I'll take you with me when I come back. It's a great reassurance.

But there's more – there's something for now too.

v.16 "I will ask the Father and he will give you another counsellor to be with you forever. The Spirit of Truth."

And that promise was fulfilled shortly after he ascended into heaven when he sent the Holy Spirit on all his followers on that day of Pentecost.

Now who is the HS?

I was using the BCP this morning on which many Anglicans grew up - in which the Holy Spirit is referred to as the Holy Ghost. When I first heard this I didn't like the idea much, sounded spooky. But 'holy' I knew meant it had something to do with God. So who is the Holy Ghost? Or the Holy Spirit?

There are clues in that verse 17.

In the pronoun that it uses. ...cannot accept Him.... Sees him. But... him... for he.

Not an it.

Not an impersonal force.

Like electricity. You can't upset electricity. Please remember to turn it on because the electricity will be very upset if we don't use him.

Electricity can't get upset, but the Spirit can be upset. Paul says 'don't grieve the spirit'. The spirit is personal. And he is personal because he is God.

We believe in one God. Who has always been one God from the beginning of the world. But has always been one God in three persons. Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There is a very close connection between Jesus and the Spirit.

v.16 he speaks of “Another Counsellor”. It implies that there has been a counsellor who has been with them. Must be Jesus. He is about to leave, but he says don’t fret in the gap before I return, I’m going to give you another counsellor. In other words – one of the same kind.

What Jesus was when he was on earth with his disciples the HS will be in his absence. So his disciples were not abandoned and we today are not abandoned, although Jesus is not physically present here on earth.

Whenever 2 or 3 are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them.

There are a few dozen of us here gathered in his name and he is here with us. Not physically but by his holy spirit.

Jim Packer – theologian – calls the HS Jesus’s other self.

So who is the Holy Spirit?

He is divine, he is personal, he is the substitute. Which is the title of today’s talk. Jesus’s other self. (Yes he is self-effacing in pointing us to the Father and Son. But he is to be to us what Jesus was to his first disciples. Let us worship Him and be thankful.)

## **Second**

### **What does he do?**

v.17

Striking prepositions. He will be both with us, and in us.

Those 2 words with us, in us, sum up the Spirit’s work for us. He provides God’s support ‘with us’ and God’s presence ‘in us’.

Let’s think about those a bit more.

#### **a) God’s support with us**

It’s never good to engage on a difficult task or perhaps a difficult journey on our own.

□ perhaps you’ve got a dentist’s appointment coming up and you’re nervous about it. Or there is a potentially explosive meeting at work. And you don’t like the thought of facing it on your own. What a relief it is when a friend says, ‘Look, I’ll come with you’ It doesn’t take the fear away but what a difference it is. None of us likes to be on our own, especially when difficulties come around.

And for Christians the great news is that we are not on our own. We were seeing that earlier. Christ is with us by his Spirit.

See v. 16

READ

We’ve thought about that word ‘another’ now let’s think about that word Counsellor.

Its translated in all kinds of ways in different bibles, they find it difficult to translate this word. Some speak of Advocate, another speaks of Helper, another speaks of Comforter, and one version of the bible just gives up and calls him the Paraclete which is the Greek word.

It is a composite word. Para ‘alongside’ Cletos ‘called’. It is one who is called alongside. The word was often used in a legal context of someone who went to court as your supporter. Maybe there to speak on your behalf as a witness, or maybe as a representative who’s argue your case. Like a counsel for the defence, I suppose. He would be your right hand man, there for you spurring you on.

Jesus said I'm going to send you another Counsellor. I've been that Paraclete that one who has been alongside you as you have sought to live for me. I'm about to Go. But I'm going to send you another Counsellor, supporter, helper, advocate, paraclete, the Holy Spirit.

□ Think of it in terms of tennis. I hear there is a tournament in Rome at the moment and Andy Murray has managed to get past the first round at last, with a back to usual pumping performance. One of the great things with tennis is that it is head to head. One against one. There's just one person in that court. But if you watch a game of tennis you'll notice how often the tennis player looks up to the galleries and to his coach in particular. And the coach is going – come on, come on, come on. Urging him on, or perhaps mouthing a code. All the time he is conscious of the coach.

And it is as if the Holy Spirit is the coach who is alongside, urging us on, guiding us, supporting us, strengthening us as we seek to live the Christian life.

Now what an encouragement that is.

We couldn't hope to live for Jesus without the HS.

That is also true of us as a church.

He comes alongside. He helps us to be not just a congregation of individuals gathered on a Sunday but a community bound together as a family – a body seeking to live for Christ.

It is hard because of my sinful nature. I'd love to just go it alone. Don't really need you, except a few of you. And I might choose those who are like me. But those who aren't particularly like me I'll leave on one side.

It's hard too because of the nature of our lives. We are very busy.

Hard because of the nature of our church – we're scattered around, different ages, different mobility. There is no way that by our effort alone we will forge one body, one family working together. It is only possible by the Holy Spirit. So we need to be praying for this.

A beautiful things, but we can also become too inward focussed without his help. We need the holy spirit to drive us towards one another in love and also to drive us into the world in love. We need the Spirit as a Christian church, we need the Spirit as individuals as we face this coming week.

What does he do? He is with us provides God's support with us.

And next 'in us'

**b) He provides God's presence in us.**

v.17 again.

Now that is amazing. This is the Lord God. God himself coming to live within you and me. God the creator of the universe. God the holy one. In whom there is no sin. Coming to live in sinful people like you and like me. That is breathtaking.

For many people God is a distant figure.

And they vaguely think that God might be out there somewhere, but he is just distant.

But the wonderful truth we know is that he has made himself known TO us. In his Son Jesus in the incarnation. And now in US by the Holy Spirit. God is not a distant figure.

v.20

read

bit deep. Hard to grasp. Jesus is in his father. Father and son united in a bond of intimacy, and we are in Christ if he is in us.

So God is not distant, he has entered our lives by the Spirit. And the spirit has brought that intimacy that has existed in eternity between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. That amazingly we've been brought into that deep intimate love within the Trinity.

So v. 23b Jesus said

READ

God doesn't live in special buildings, this is not God's house. This is not God's home. God lives in people. Amazingly, in those who put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh one day we'll be taken to our Father's house in heaven. But in the meantime, God has made his home with us on earth. As he's come into our lives by the Holy Spirit.

So what does the HS do? He is with us and is in us. He provides God's support with us, and God's presence in us.

### **Finally, who receives him?**

**v.17**

READ

Notice that distinction between the world, and you. As Jesus puts it.

The world as Jesus speaks of it in John's gospel almost always refers, not to the physical earth, but to humans in rebellion against God. God so loved the world he gave his one and only son... He loved the sinful rebellious world that he didn't want to perish but have eternal life.

But notice, the world cannot accept the Spirit of Truth, it neither sees him or knows him. But, in contrast says Jesus, you know him.

Who is the you today. Who is it that receives the HS?

Three striking verses.

v.15 READ

v.21 READ

v.23 READ

If you love Jesus and out of that love you are obeying him – you're trusting him. To this person the Holy Trinity comes and makes their home.

You don't need to be sorted first.

At every level we could acknowledge we are not as we should be – we don't trust enough, we don't love perfectly, often our love for Jesus is very faint, we don't obey fully – time and time again we sin. But the Christian does believe, and does love (however faintly), and does obey (however feebly), that is the Christian. And God is saying to this person the HS comes.

□ not sure I ever met my postman in all the time I was a student – back in those days they used to come so much earlier – 9.30 or so – well I never saw him, but I'd see the evidence his existence each day at my front door.

I've never seen HS but don't doubt his existence because I've seen the evidence of his work. You've seen the evidence.

You've believed in Jesus – we couldn't do that without him. The HS opened up our eyes to recognise the truth. And however faintly I do love him, feebly sometimes well I couldn't love him at all if wasn't for the HS at work in my life.

But hate sin. We sin but we long to obey. That is the HS. Changing our lives.

These are the privileges of being Christian.

If for any reason you're holding back. Well don't keep holding back. Put your trust in Jesus

Let's make the most of these amazing privileges

Whenever we face challenges as individuals or as a community. Let's at least under our breath say – I am not alone. We are not alone.

Who is the HS, well God himself, the substitute, Jesus' s other self

What does he do? He provides God's support with us and God's presence in us.

And who receives him? Christians those who believe in Jesus and however feebly and faintly love Jesus and seek to obey Jesus.

[Sources - Vaughan Roberts at St Ebbe's Church, Oxford]