

Welcome: We're in a series of messages called *Encounters with Jesus*. Each week, we're looking at places in the gospels where ordinary people encountered Jesus Christ with all of their hopes, dreams, and questions about life and faith. And after spending time with Jesus, they walked away deeply changed!

If you're questioning who God is...or what God cares about, or what He thinks about you, begin by looking intently at the Person of Jesus Christ, begin by looking at Jesus, the One whom the gospel-writer John described as *"God, who became human and made his home among us!"*

One of the many reasons that it's important to keep our eyes on Jesus is because the moment we lose sight of Him, we'll come up with strange and goofy ideas about who God is and how we relate to Him! For example, there's a notion today in both the church and culture that a Christian is someone who is disciplined, morally upright, kind, generous, and good-natured. If you fit that bill, you get to be on Jesus' Varsity squad! Meanwhile, the rest of us who have sordid pasts and glaring inconsistencies, and don't always understand God, and even when we do, we don't always trust Him! We're the ones who get relegated to Jesus' JV team where we eek out a half-decent spiritual existence in hopes that at the end of the day God-the-judge wakes up feeling lenient, overestimates our goodness, and gives us a free pass into heaven. **Isn't this how we think?**

Please hear me! If you hold to this notion, the gospels are going to wreck you because even Jesus' first followers who He entrusted with his mission and church were absolute misfits! For three years, the disciples had a front-row seat to Jesus' life and ministry. Together, they took long walks and death-defying boat rides; they shared meals and stories around the campfire; and crashed on the same hard ground at the end of long, exhausting days. And yet, on the eve of his death, Jesus' small group included one guy who sold him out for a handful of silver, another who said, *"I'll die for you,"* only to then deny Him not once but three times, and several others who fled into hiding the moment He was arrested. ***You thought your small group was bad!***

"What exactly did Jesus see in them that caused Him to believe they would actually carry out his mission?"

We discover the answer in Jesus' final words to His followers before his death. (John 14-17)

Here, we also see how it is that we can become the men and women God designed us to be, confident that He is with us no matter what life may bring as we live out the gospel in our day-to-day lives!

Look with me at John chapter 14, beginning in verse 15.

"If you love me, obey my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him

because he lives with you and later will be in you. No, I will not abandon you as orphans – I will come to you.” John 14:15-18

In this brief conversation...Jesus tells his disciples about the Holy Spirit...whom He calls An Advocate! Jesus describes WHO the Advocate is...WHAT the Advocate does...and WHAT the Advocate Gives!

Advocate – The word *Advocate* comes from a Greek Word that is very difficult to translate into English, which is why some of your Bibles might use the name *Counselor, Comforter, or Helper*. It is actually made up of two different words.

Para – beside or alongside

Kaleo – to call or direct

Taken together, the *Advocate* is One who comes alongside us as followers of Christ to support, encourage, and call us to move in a specific direction.

Counselor – One image that can help us understand who the *Advocate* is, is that of a Counselor!

If you’ve ever been to a counselor, what does a counselor do? A good counselor doesn’t walk into the room and begin telling you what you need to do, how you must do it, and then send you out the door with nothing but a ‘good luck’ and pat on the back! No, an effective counselor comes alongside and listens in order to understand and comfort. Then, over time they help you move toward healing and growth by encouraging you to take a series of steps, decisions, and actions!

In the same way, the Holy Spirit is not a detached taskmaster or impersonal force that demands we think, act, or live a certain way, and then leaves us to our own effort and will power. Instead, the Bible describes the Holy Spirit as One who comes alongside us with our best interest at heart. He is personally committed to shaping us into the image of Christ inside and out!

How does the Holy Spirit do this?

In Galatians chapter 5, we have an incredible passage about the Holy Spirit. There, the Apostle Paul writes...

*“So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won’t be doing what your sinful nature craves...the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control...Since we are living by the Spirit, let us **follow the Spirit’s leading** in every part of our lives.” Galatians 5:16, 22-23, 25*

Two weeks ago, we said that a Christian is someone who allows Jesus to be the King over every area of our lives...King of our work and time, friendships and families, marriages and sexuality, our finance and romance. Everything! Paul goes on to say in Galatians 5 that it is the Holy Spirit who leads us toward a

whole-hearted devotion to Jesus Christ by stirring our affection for Jesus, and convicting us of sin, reminding us of God's Word and giving us a desire to trust and obey Him!

So...very practically! If you are walking in Christ, and you look back a season and see that you are becoming more kind, generous, patient, compassionate or forgiving. If the person you are today is someone you would have never been a year ago, that is evidence that the Holy Spirit is shaping your life! Thank Him for that! He's your Advocate...and He's committed to your beauty...

If you aren't seeing growth, don't be discouraged!

Children's growth – At home, we measure our children's growth with lines on a wall, which may seem strange! But when you're with your kids all the time you don't always recognize the growth happening right in front of your eyes!

My guess is that you spend most days with yourself! You won't always see your growth, so you need to invite trusted people into your life who you can humbly ask, "Are you seeing the character of Christ taking shape in my life?"

And if there isn't visible change or transformation, go to Jesus and simply say, *"Lord...let your Holy Spirit have His way in my life!"* Start there...and then before we finish I'll encourage you to take one more step...ok!

The first thing Jesus says about the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, is that He's our Counselor. He's committed to coming alongside us to lead us toward the fullness of Christ!

The second thing Jesus tells us is WHAT the Advocate does. Look closely at verses 16 & 18...

"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you...No, I will not abandon you as orphans – I will come to you." John 14:16, 18

What does the Advocate do? He stays beside us and never leaves us!

Annie: Do you remember the catchy tune in the movie *Annie, It's the Hard-Knock Life*? At the beginning of the film, Annie and her friends are lamenting their lives as orphans and their song gives us a window into an orphan's experience...

No one's there when your dreams at night get creepy!
No one cares if you grow...of if you shrink!
No one dries when your eyes get wet an' weepy!
No one cares for you a smidge
When you're in an orphanage!

It's the hard-knock life

We watch that movie and think, "*Oh...that's cute and fun!*" Sure it is...but outside of Hollywood, an orphan's life isn't always puppy dogs and happy endings.

In the Roman Empire, infants were often abandoned and orphaned because of physical deformity, illegitimate birth, or simply that the parents couldn't care for one more child!

As a result, orphans were incredibly vulnerable and lived past infancy only by the mercy of benevolent strangers...

So...when Jesus said to his disciples, "*I will not abandon you as orphans,*" He used powerful language to speak right to their hearts to address one of their greatest fears! That of being left alone and vulnerable!

You see, these men left their homes and villages and livelihoods to follow Jesus!

And now...three years in, at the prime of his life...Jesus says, "*I've got to die...and then I've got to go!*" And no doubt, they're sweating and despairing, and then He goes on to say...

I will not abandon you as orphans. I will ask the Father and He'll give you an Advocate who will never leave you!"

This was not only necessary for His disciples...it is necessary for you and me!

Isn't it true that many of our problems happen because we believe we're alone!

Some of you are experiencing intense loneliness, aren't you? You long for friendship or companionship. And while loneliness certainly hurts, there might be tendency for you to sink into self-pity or resentment and bitterness. Or, as young man or woman seeking companionship, to set aside your affection for Christ to gain the affection for a man or woman! If you're lonely...remember you're not alone!

Some of us have experienced rejection or criticism from those we love, and as a result we've become guarded to avoid being hurt again. This has created an impenetrable barricade around our hearts. If this is your story, how are you going to begin letting people into your life again? Listen to Jesus' words! Though the world may fail you, He stands alongside you to comfort you with a Fatherly love...

Some of you might be experiencing great temptation, or are caught up in a self-destructive habit or hidden sin...and you're convinced that God will never have you until you clean up! Jesus says

that you have an Advocate who is laboring for your freedom and wholeness! Be honest with Him...and rest in Him.

The disciples were anxious, afraid, and cowardly before Jesus' death. But following his resurrection, they became bold, courageous, world-changers. **Why?** Jesus Christ was still with them, working through them by His Spirit!

Jesus promised us a Counselor, who will never leave us! Finally, Jesus tells us WHAT our Advocate brings us!

Look at verse 25...

"I am telling you these things now while I am still with you. But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative – that is, the Holy Spirit – he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you. I am leaving you with a gift – peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid."

John 14:25-27

Jesus says that it is because of the work and presence of the Holy Spirit that we can experience true peace, which is different than the peace our world offers!

The world's peace is inconsistent, because it is based on circumstances. If people like you, job-security is high and you're getting paid on Friday, there's peace. If you're single, but you have a date on Friday, or if you're married with kids and they're not puking (I hate puke); if you own a home and don't have ice dams, or you have ice dams but you're going to Florida next week, that's when you feel peaceful, right!

But when about when the Nasdaq is down? Or you're getting criticism at work, or there's tension in your marriage, or you're single and don't want to be single? Very little peace, right? Some of you parents are in the middle of what I call the *RED ZONE* of parenting...multiple kids under five...ok. Let's be honest! There's a lot of joy, but very little peace, right!

If we're being honest, we tend to allow our peace to rest on circumstances!

But Jesus' peace transcends circumstances!

The Apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 4...that God's peace,

"...exceeds anything we can understand...and will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:7

Guard (Sentry) – This means that God’s peace stands like a Sentry over your heart, guarding you...and though things like loss and loneliness, criticism and rejection, financial hardship and illness, and even death come your way, those things will hurt, but they won’t crush you because there will be a deep, residing, inexplicable peace that blankets your heart!

Some of us need to rest in the peace of Christ tonight!

Is the peace Jesus is speaking about simply the knowledge that God is present in our lives! It is certainly that, but it is so much more!

If you’re going to understand the role of the Holy Spirit, you must understand something Jesus says earlier in verse 16.

*“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you **another Advocate**, who will never leave you.” John 14:16*

Jesus said that the Holy Spirit is another Advocate, which means that we have a first Advocate!

In 1st John, chapter 2...we read...

“My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous. He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins – and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.” 1 John 2:1-2

Jesus Christ is our first Advocate!

An advocate (especially in legal fields) is a person who stands in another person’s place, representing their cause or pleading on their behalf!

John writes that Jesus is advocating for us...pleading our case before our Heavenly Father! *What does this mean?*

The Bible tells us that each of us stands guilty before the judgment seat of God! It doesn’t matter whether you’re religious or irreligious, churchd or unchurchd...whether you love church or hate church, whether you’re good, bad, or somewhere in between. God created us to love and delight in Him with our whole lives! But we haven’t loved him fully...instead, we’ve denied, rejected, and ignored Him. We’ve tried to be our own gods! There will come a day when we stand before our Maker to give account for all our thoughts, attitudes, emotions, words, and actions! And there isn’t a single one of us who fares well in that place, unless someone advocates our case!

Some of you might be skeptical about the idea of a divine judgment! I would suggest that deep down we all know that there is a standard that exists which we're not meeting!

Children – Why do we run or hide when we do something wrong? Why do we keep things from our past hidden? We have a fear of being found out! It's the same fear that caused Adam and Eve to run and hide and sew grass skirts when they disobeyed God! They were trying to cover their nakedness? They were ashamed and guilty.

Deep down we have this same nagging sense of guilt that tells us something is not right!

Author Tim Keller writes...

"This is what the Bible teaches, that we all stand judged. There is a standard for our lives that we must all deal with. And here is our dilemma. If the Bible is wrong and there is no God, if there is no bar of justice, and violence and injustice are natural, then what hope is there for the world? But if there is a bar of justice, then what hope is there for you and me? No one lives us up to even his or her own moral standards, let alone God's. Look at the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Everybody agrees to that rule, and yet who's actually keeping it?"
Tim Keller

We're guilty, aren't we? Yet listen to this promise!

"(Jesus Christ) is the sacrifice that atones for our sins – and not only our sins but the sins of all the world." 1 John 2:2

Atone – In the Bible, to atone for someone is to stand in that person's place as a substitute, absorbing their punishment to bring them peace!

On the cross, Jesus Christ stood in our place and endured the judgment and wrath of God we deserved.

"For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ." 2 Corinthians 5:21

Jesus Christ atoned for your sins, and now pleads your case before the Heavenly Father! He testifies that He has paid the penalty to purchase our freedom. Before you can experience the peace of the Holy Spirit in your life, you must first rest in the peace that comes by knowing that Jesus Christ has made you right with God!

The Holy Spirit comes because Jesus first came in the flesh!

The Holy Spirit dwells in us because Jesus dwelled with us!

The Holy Spirit fills us because Jesus was emptied for us.

The Holy Spirit empowers us because Jesus gave up all power to take our weakness.

The Holy Spirit fills us with life because Jesus humbled Himself to the point of death on a cross!

The Holy Spirit's primary job in your life is to take this gospel deep into your heart so you don't simply think about it, but you believe it...you trust it...it changes you!

Can I ask you a question? Are you trusting in the work of Christ alone to make you right with God? Is there a confidence in your heart assuring you that Jesus is near? If you're unsure, do you see the fruit of the Holy Spirit in your life as He shapes the character of Christ in you?

If not...go to Jesus! Say, *"Please accept me on the basis of your goodness, not mine! If you've loved me like this, then I'm thru with running away from you! I turn my whole life over to you!"*

When you begin to understand that the Holy Spirit of God is living in you because the Son of God gave His life for you! It will give you a confidence, assurance, and a power to live for Jesus that nothing in this life can take away!

Application

As we close, I want to encourage you to put this into action! If you're walking in Christ, Jesus promises that His Holy Spirit is living in you! If the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ is alive in us...there are two things we should never say!

We'll never say...

1. **I'm all alone!** *You'll never say, I'm all alone because Jesus said, "I'll never leave you!"*

And because we are his dear children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, 'Abba, Father.' Galatians 4:6

Lydia: Sweep her up into my arms...

You have a Heavenly Father because of Jesus!

2. I'll never have effect! *You'll never say, I'll always be JV and never have effect for Christ!*

The disciples – before they met Jesus, there was nothing extraordinary about them...These men stumbled and grumbled and doubted and faltered yet they literally changed the world! **How?**

“And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God. The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you.” Romans 8:10-11

What can't the Spirit of God do in you? Fear – peace. Brokenness – wholeness. Anxiety – courage. Sin – restoration. Death – Life.