

Series: What Jesus Would Say

VBC

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John 16:5-15

Nov 23-24, 2013

What in the World is the Spirit Up To?

This week I was in Baltimore at theological meetings—I'm sure you wished you were there

-because each year—some of the most mind expansive papers are presented—here are samples—

“Did Sennacherib, King of Assyria, Worship God from Noah’s Ark?”

“Immanence as Ontology and as Mystery: Why Pantheism is Almost Right”

“Cannibalism and the Possibility of Bodily Resurrection: A Revised Approach to Reassembly”

“Wailing Walls and Fearful Flocks: Non-human Emotion as Portrayed in the Hebrew Bible

“Information and the Mind Body Problem”

-sometimes you look at the offerings with dazed eyes

-looking something like the disciples in the upper room

-as Jesus presented His paper—“I AM LEAVING”

-and either they didn't get it—that Jesus was leaving this world via the cross—or they were living in denial

-but Jesus knew that hostility was coming to a head

-unbelief is the real opponent—John traces this from chapter 1

-there would soon be the cross, the resurrection, and ascension

-His mission would be complete

-theirs would just be starting

-so with each conversation He was preparing them

-the disciples were filled with questions—questions which betrayed their lack of comprehension

-Jesus told them they will be hated with the same hate that hated Jesus

-but as much as this troubled them—it was Jesus' imminent departure, leaving them to fend for themselves—this was the worst news

-how can Jesus' leaving be to anyone's advantage—especially theirs?

-all they could think about was how under resourced they would be

ILLUSTRATION—8 yrs old—riding alone to Littleton to see my grandparents

-but odd as it seems, Jesus likened His leaving to great opportunity—read verses 5-

7

-He is going to prepare a place for them—but He is not leaving them (nor us) as orphans—14:18

-He will return to abide in them in Spirit

-but they are not getting the Spirit—and don't know what to do with the Spirit (and maybe some of us don't either)

-for some, the Holy Spirit is the Cousin Eddie of the Trinity—*He is in the family, but you don't know what to do with Him*

-His movements are unpredictable—like the wind—John 3:8

-He shows up in the OT, seeming randomly—rushing upon certain people—clothing people like Gideon and Sampson with power—and filling Daniel with wisdom

-acting a bit like a Divine Free Agent—a Maverick—you don't know where He is going next

-and if we are not careful, we start getting wrong ideas

-like Maria Woodworth-Etter—an evangelist in the 1800's, who regularly drew nearly 8000 people to hear her

-there was mystery and magic in her trances

-she opted for inspiration apart from preparation—she would take a text into the pulpit and trust the Spirit to lead

-which she believed was a sign of the work of the Holy Spirit

(I once attempted this but discovered that left to myself, there is just not enough material for God to work with)

-but this is NOT how the Spirit works—here's HOW the Spirit works—

1. HE COMES TO TAKE UP RESIDENCE IN US

-“He will remain with you and will be in you”—14:17

-with Jesus' departure—the Spirit is making a radical shift

-up till now, the Spirit came as a divine Visitor from outside, coming suddenly upon OT saints

-but no longer is He with—like some hotel guest coming for a night—He now He is coming to move in

-live in us for the long haul—moving in all the nooks and crannies of life with the aim of taking over—claiming us for God's purposesⁱⁱ

-meaning—there will no longer be momentary rushes, sudden divine enablements from outside

-He is coming to make His habitation in them—as He did in Jesus—*working no longer from the outside in—but inside out*

2. HE COMES TO INFORM US

-“He will teach you all things, reminding you of everything I have taught you”—14:26

-He is not merely coming to take up space—like some in-laws

-He is coming to continue the same vocation of Jesus—TEACH

-and note this—His main work is to teach by reminding

-building upon what we already have—what God has already put in place

-"The quintessential expression of the Spirit's effects is an expansion of skills that have been cultivated in a lifelong pursuit of excellence"—Levison, Inspired

POINT—the Spirit does not work with blank slates—*sorry Maria!*

-Illustration—young man—Milwaukie

-NO! The Father sends the Spirit to continue the Son's work

-taking truth received and pressing it deeply within our souls

-taking what Jesus has already said about prayer and driving home the conviction we must pray

-taking what Scripture has already declared about God's will—and moving us to follow it

-taking what God has taught us taught about faith and opening our imagination!

-and ultimately transforming us—forming the resurrection life of Christ in us

3. HE COMES TO CONVICT US

-the Spirit is not coming to merely live within us and have us live in a perpetual classroom for the sake of accumulation

-He comes to indwell and teach us in order to send us out to make a case for God—hence the courtroom metaphors

A. THE SPIRIT COMES AS WITNESS

"He will testify about Me. You will also testify because you have been with Me"—15:27

-there's a reason we are called to be His WITNESSES—take the stand—Acts 1:8
-the Spirit's mission is to speak through us

B. THE SPIRIT COMES AS LEGAL COUNSELOR

-we will be accused—beginning with the evil one—who accuses us day and night—Rev 12:10

-the Spirit's mission is to defend us

C. THE SPIRIT COMES AS PROSECUTOR—read 16:8-11

-it turns out the Spirit's primary mission is not so much for us

-Jesus is sending Him to confront the world—much like Jesus

-engage in the same conflict Jesus faced from the beginning

-make the case it is not Jesus who is on trial—but the world!

1. the Spirit comes to BRING CHARGES—verse 9

-using the language of a courtroom—He is coming to "convict"

-penetrate the self-deceptions and defensive ploys and confront, expose, cross-examine, and prosecute

-just as Jesus came as a “troublesome voice” to “serve papers,” put the world on notice that it is sinful
-open the world to things it does not want to see—15:20

-so the Spirit is coming to bring forth the most damning charge—the charge of UNBELIEF

-this is the most characteristic sin—the classic sin—the deepest sin—the unpardonable sin

-rejecting God for another god—putting someone or something else at the center in front of God is a felony in God’s court of law

-for out of this sin flow all of the world’s evils

2. through His church, the Spirit comes to underscore DIVINE LAW—verse 10
-establish the rule of law—DIVINE RIGHTEOUSNESS
-make the case that God does not conform to a standard—He is the standard!
-it is an absolute righteousness that knows no degrees

-He is wholly just—He hates injustice—cannot dismiss sin

-hence His love is tough, blunt, fierce

-this is why Jesus must go to the cross

Hence—a Spirit led church pursues righteousness—lives righteousness—stands for righteousness

-speaks against evil

-exposes what the world masquerades as moral

-shows the emptiness of religious works

-they will not stand up in God’s court of law

-as Isaiah 64:6 declares—“all our righteous acts are like a polluted garment”

3. through His church—the Spirit comes to declare FINAL JUDGMENT—verse 11

-the verdict is in—the world’s case against God is already lost

-because of the cross and resurrection—the adversary has been decisively defeated

-he has been disarmed, and condemned—Col 2:15

-his works have been destroyed—I Jn 3:8

-he remains dangerous to our souls—but he is dethroned

POINT—the Spirit’s aim in all of this is not merely to force people to recognize the enormity of their sin—the consequences of rejecting God

-the lost cause of holding out against God

-for the prosecutor’s work is rooted in LOVE—aimed at calling people to repentance

-setting people free from the judgment that hangs over them

ILLUSTRATION—Kirsten Powers, Analyst, FOX News

-worked in Clinton admin surrounded by intellectuals who were atheists
-confronted with the question—Do you believe in Jesus?

-up to now she had derided Christians as anti-intellectual bigots too weak to face reality

-but she could not get away from the question—posed by one who was smart, intellectually curious

-then she went to church at Redeemer—and began to attend each week—though Keller left her frustrated—

“Why does he have to ruin a perfectly good talk with this Jesus nonsense?”

-but each week THE SPIRIT through him made the case for Christ—the case against atheism—exposed the weakness of human righteousness

-she began to read the Word—become exposed to the Spirit

-but she felt no connection—if people talk of experiencing God, they must be delusional

-until one night—in 2006, in Taiwan, she woke with a strange sense Jesus was saying “Here I am” (the wind moves where He will)

-I thought I was going crazy—I feared Christians would make me a Republican

-and then she realized—it is true—Christ is who He says He is

-“the Hound of Heaven pursued me and caught me—whether I liked it or not”

-this is the Spirit—witness, defender, prosecutor

4. HE COMES TO GUIDE US

-this is the last thing Jesus is going to say about the Spirit—it’s all they can handle—verses 12-15

-Jesus is calling us, the church, to position itself where the Spirit is moving, the pneuma is blowing

CONCLUSION—a Spirit test—

1. RESIDENT—are we aware of His presence—making room for Him—yielding to His fullness?
2. TEACHER—are we listening—giving Him material to work with?
3. COURT—are we standing for our faith, calling out sin, confronting assumptions, exposing the emptiness of the evil one?
4. GUIDE—are we following

ⁱ Idleman, Not a Fan, 87

ⁱⁱ Levison, inspired, 69