

Sermon Passage: John 16:5–15

[5] But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' [6] But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. [7] Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. [8] And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: [9] concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; [10] concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; [11] concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

[12] "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. [13] When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. [14] He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. [15] All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. (ESV)

We are continuing our series on the Nicene Creed this morning. A creed is simply a statement of beliefs. The Nicene Creed was written about 1,700 years ago to clearly state what the core Christian beliefs are. Since then, it has become a benchmark of historic Christian faith. Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant churches all recognize it as a foundational statement of Christian belief. We are on the line in the creed that reads:

**And we believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life.
He proceeds from the Father and the Son,
and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified.
He spoke through the prophets.**

Here in **John 16**, Jesus is staring down the barrel of His crucifixion. He knows He is about to bear our sins under the wrath of God. And yet, Jesus is concerned about His disciples. And as He gets closer and closer to His arrest, He takes more time to encourage them, prepare them, and tell them what is coming. We can see this in the progression of this larger section.

- In **John 15:18–25**, Jesus tells them the world is going to hate them.
- Then in **15:26–27**, He tells them the Spirit is coming and will testify about Him.
- And then in **16:1–4**, He warns them again about the persecution that is coming.
- And then He dives into telling them about the coming Spirit again.

So this isn't just a random teaching about the Holy Spirit. Jesus is preparing His disciples for life and mission after He leaves.

And the disciples naturally see Jesus' departure as a loss. But Jesus tells them it is actually going to be a gain. That's why **verse 7** is so striking. Jesus says, "**It is to your advantage that I go away.**"

Why? Because His departure means the Helper - the Holy Spirit - will come. That word "Helper" is translating the Greek word - *Paraclete*. Which has a wide range of meanings. It's basically like having a family friend who is a lawyer. Which is why some English translations have "Counselor" or "Advocate" instead of "Helper" here.

And what is the Spirit coming to do? **He is coming to continue Jesus' work.** Not to draw attention away from Jesus. But to continue to make Jesus known. Jesus is leaving, but His work is not stopping.

Jesus accomplished the victory over sin and death through His death, resurrection, and ascension. And then Jesus sends the Spirit to reveal and apply that victory, and continue Jesus' work through His people.

So, Jesus' departure is not defeat. It is part of His victory. It is the next progression in God's plan to cover the world with His glory. Giving His Spirit to His people so that He can bear witness to and through them. And that brings us to the big idea of this passage: **The Spirit Continues Jesus' Work In And Through Jesus' Church.**

And this morning, Jesus gives His disciples three ways in which the Spirit will continue this work of His in and through the church. Three ways the Spirit will bear witness to and through us. And we see them all in verses **8-15**. The first way the Spirit will continue Jesus' work is:

1. The Spirit Convicts The World (16:8-11)

When the Spirit comes, Jesus says He will "**convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.**" To convict means to prove that we are in the wrong. "To expose" is another good way to think about it. And Jesus gives us three areas where the Spirit exposes the world's wrong thinking.

1. Sin. Jesus says the Spirit will convict the world concerning sin "**because they do not believe in me.**"

When we think about sin, we usually want to keep it surface level and merely think about the things we do. And when we do that, it's easier to justify ourselves. We can defend ourselves. *It wasn't my fault. Something happened to me. They did wrong to me first. I was hurt. I was angry. I'm not that bad.* We have all kinds of ways of explaining away our sin rather than admitting, "**I am wrong.**"

But the Spirit comes and goes deeper than that. He shows us the heart of our sin. The sin beneath all the wrong things we do. The ultimate sin, in other words, is: You have

rejected God and God's own Son. You are not accepting the reality of what God has done in sending His Son into the world...and that has warped you.

2. Righteousness. Jesus says the Spirit will convict the world concerning righteousness “because I go to the Father.” Now, what does that mean?

Think about it with me. How does Jesus going to the Father expose the world's wrong understanding of righteousness? I think there are at least three ways.

First, it means the world was wrong about Jesus. The religious leaders said His power came from the Devil. That He was a blasphemer. But His resurrection and ascension vindicate every single word He said and displays His full righteousness before the world.

Second, We tend to highlight the best parts of ourselves while ignoring the worst. We compare ourselves to other people and think, *I'm doing pretty well*. But Jesus' resurrection and ascension have made Him the standard. And compared to Him, we are not nearly as good as we claim to be.

Third, Jesus is now before the Father. He is our Advocate, our Helper. And our only hope of being declared righteous before God is through Jesus. Listen to the apostle Peter puts it in **1 Peter 3:18**: “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God.”

The righteous One died for the unrighteous so that He could bring us to God. So the Spirit exposes our false righteousness and shows us the true righteousness of Jesus.

3. Judgment. Jesus says the Spirit will convict the world concerning judgment “because the ruler of this world has been judged.”

We don't take the judgment of God very seriously. We assume God will take it easy on us. We assume He will overlook our sin. But Jesus says the ruler of this world has already been judged.

Through Jesus' death and resurrection, God has inaugurated His kingdom, and His judgment has already begun. In other words, **don't waste your time pretending judgment isn't coming**. Judgment has come, and judgment is coming.

The Spirit therefore reveals the truth about Jesus and exposes the world's false assessment of Jesus and themselves. And He still does this today.

- We still justify our sin.
- We still delude ourselves into thinking we are better than we really are.
- And we still take the judgment of God lightly.

We don't think we need a Helper, an Advocate to defend us, to teach us, to help us out. And that's because we often don't see ourselves rightly. *But just sit down and honestly assess*

everything you've done, said, and thought over the last 24 hours. How many of those things would you want everyone in this room to see or know?

But it's more than just failing to see ourselves rightly. **We don't see God rightly either.** We diminish His holiness. We diminish His righteousness. We diminish His justice.

God is like a perfectly pure, white wall. And for Him to simply allow sin into His presence without punishing it would be like allowing a black smudge onto that perfectly white wall. Once the smudge is there, the wall is no longer perfectly white. In the same way, for God to simply overlook sin would mean He is no longer perfectly holy and just.

So we need the Spirit to show us how sinful we really are so that we will take our sin seriously. We need the Spirit of God to show us how unrighteous we really are, and how good Jesus really is. We need the Spirit to convict us that God's judgment is real, and that Jesus Christ is the only Advocate who can save us from the punishment we truly deserve.

And when the Spirit does this, we need to understand what a gift it is. **This is God's grace to you.** He doesn't want you to remain consumed by your sin. He doesn't want you to continue living under the deception of sin. He doesn't want you to face His judgment without Christ Jesus by your side.

And this was the kind of ministry Jesus Himself had. Jesus confronted people with the truth about their sin, their righteousness, and their judgment. And now the Spirit continues that ministry.

So when the Spirit confronts you, **fight the urge to immediately defend yourself, explain yourself, or blame someone else.** Instead, ask: **"What is the Spirit showing me about my heart?"**

Conviction is not condemnation. It is God's grace exposing what needs to change. The Spirit is not seeking to condemn you. He is showing you how much you need Jesus. And this is what Jesus is saying as He continues talking to His disciples. They will bear witness about Him and the Spirit will work through that to convict the world.

The Spirit will convict the world of its sin, expose its false righteousness, and warn of coming judgment. He will reveal our need for Jesus. And that is the work the Spirit continues today.

The Spirit Continues Jesus' Work In And Through Jesus' Church...this is the first way He does this, second way he continues Jesus' work is:

2. The Spirit Guides Us Into Truth (16:12-13)

Jesus acknowledges that the disciples aren't yet capable of bearing everything He wants to tell them. There is still more they need to know. But they aren't ready for it yet. So they need the

Spirit. The Spirit will come to teach the apostles so that, after Jesus leaves, they will faithfully speak the truth Jesus has given them. Jesus says the Spirit will “[guide you into all truth.](#)”

That word “guide” is used in a similar way in **Acts 8**. [There’s an Ethiopian man reading the Old Testament book of Isaiah. And Philip—one of the disciples who is sitting in this room with Jesus in John 16—comes along.](#) Listen to what happens in **Acts 8:30–31, 35**:

[“So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ And he said, ‘How can I, unless someone guides me?’ And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him... Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.”](#)

The Ethiopian needs someone to help him understand what he is reading—to guide him and teach him. That’s the same kind of ministry Jesus is promising here from the Spirit.

And notice something important here. The Spirit isn’t going to speak on His own. The Spirit speaks what Jesus gives Him, and Jesus speaks what the Father gives Him. The Spirit relays the message of Jesus; Jesus relays the message of the Father. All of this is coming to the apostles.

And that matters because these verses help explain why we can trust the teaching of the apostles. The New Testament was written by the apostles, and Jesus promised that the Spirit would guide them into truth, reminding them of what Jesus said and revealing what they needed to know after He was gone.

Now, you might say, “But Paul wrote most of the New Testament letters, and Paul wasn’t sitting in this room with Jesus.” That’s true. But the apostles who were in that room recognized Paul as a true apostle of Jesus, just like them. His teaching was received as the teaching of an apostle of Christ. And Paul actually gives us a little more insight into this role of the Spirit in **1 Corinthians 2:11**. There Paul asks:

[“Who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.”](#)

[Think about your own mind. Your thoughts are deep within you. Nobody outside of you can know everything you are thinking unless you reveal it to them.](#) Paul says it is the same way with God. No one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. The Spirit knows what is in God because He is intimately united with the Father and the Son. And then Paul says in **1 Corinthians 2:12**:

[“Now, we have received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.”](#)

The Spirit in God is also in us. And it's like He opens a direct connection from our heart to God's. The Spirit who knows the depths of God makes those things known to us. And His being in God is the guarantee that the knowledge He brings to us is true.

So why does this matter for you and me tomorrow? Because we regularly interpret life according to our feelings.

- "God has abandoned me."
- "I deserve this."
- "This sin isn't that serious."
- "I know what's best."

But **John 16** shows us how limited our natural understanding really is. First, the disciples don't understand what Jesus means when He says it will be good for Him to go away and send the Spirit. Second, the world is wrong about sin, righteousness, and judgment. Our natural instincts are not reliable guides to reality.

We need the Spirit of truth. So when you feel something, don't simply trust your feelings. When you think something, don't simply trust your thoughts. Bring them under the authority of God's Word. Ask:

- Does what I feel align with the words of Jesus?
- Does it align with His promises? His commands? His desires?
- Does what I think align with God's Word?

And this is one of the great values of discipleship and Christian community. This is one of the reasons I love our Gospel Communities. They put us in rooms with other people who know God's Word and can help us interpret our world through the lens of truth and reality. They help us see life in light of the reality of the true God.

And when you put these first two points together, you should expect our Gospel Communities to be places where you hear the truth. And that truth is going to cut both ways.

Sometimes you're going to be shown that you're wrong. So show up knowing that eventually you're going to have to apologize. You're going to have to backtrack. You're going to have to say, "I was wrong about that." Everyone will. Nobody in this room has all the answers.

But you can also expect to be guided into the truth. You can expect to be helped to see reality more clearly. To understand what is true about life with God. You can experience the grace and kindness of God's Spirit revealing to you the very heart of God.

So there will be conviction when you are wrong. There will be encouragement when you are on the right track. And behind it all is the Spirit of God.

Because ultimately, He is not giving us something new or different from Jesus. He is continuing Jesus' ministry. Jesus came from the Father and made the Father known. Jesus has gone to the

Father and sent the Spirit. And now the Spirit takes what belongs to Jesus and makes it known to us. **The Spirit Continues Jesus' Work In And Through Jesus' Church.** And ultimately He does all of this for one ultimate goal:

3. The Spirit Glorifies Jesus (16:14-15)

Jesus says in **verse 14**, “**He will glorify me.**” That is the Spirit’s goal. He glorifies Jesus. But what does “glorify” mean? I think there are two parts to it.

First, to glorify something is to show its importance. It means you communicate its value. You increase its stature in someone else’s eyes.

For instance, you have a friend who shows you this old pistol. It doesn’t seem like much at first. But then your friend starts telling you its story. It’s not just a pistol. It’s the pistol his great-grandfather carried in **World War II**. In fact, one night his great-grandfather and a few other soldiers were surrounded by the enemy, and this was the pistol he used to help protect them. Then it was handed down to his grandfather, then to his father, and now to him.

Now what do you think about that pistol? You probably handle it a little more carefully. You might even be a little nervous to touch it. Why? Because its importance has been communicated. **It has been glorified.**

And in a similar way, the Spirit communicates the importance of Jesus to us. Jesus may seem like just another man. But the Spirit reveals His wisdom and His teaching. His actions and His kindness. His sacrifice and His resurrection. The Spirit creates a sense of awe at the reality of who Jesus is. He glorifies Jesus by communicating His importance to us. But that’s not the only thing “glorify” means.

Second, glorifying something means displaying its beauty. For instance, I remember the first time I went to the beach as a kid. We got there and it was really dark outside, so we couldn’t see the ocean—even though our cabin was right there on the beach. It must have been a moonless night or maybe it was cloudy. But I remember my dad calling me into his room. He opened the windows, and I could hear the waves beating against the coastline. I can still hear it. You know that sound. Waves crashing over and over again. And then I went to bed.

Because there were so many of us - aunts and uncles and cousins - we kids slept on the living room floor. And my grandma loved getting up early and going for walks on the beach. So when she woke up, she woke me up and let me go with her. And I remember her opening the door and walking out onto the deck. And suddenly I could see this bright blue water stretching for what seemed like miles and miles.

It overwhelmed me. And honestly, it still does. What had been concealed from me the night before was suddenly revealed by the brightness of the sun. But I wasn’t fixated on the sun—as

impressive as the Sun is. I was fixated on what the light allowed me to see. The beauty and immensity of the ocean.

And that is something like what the Spirit does for us. The Spirit is impressive in His own rights. But the Spirit's message is never, *"Look at me. Listen to me. Come to me. Get to know me."* It is always, *"Look at Him, and see His glory. Listen to Him, and hear His word. Go to Him, and have life. Get to know Him, and taste His gift of joy and peace."* The Spirit's ministry is to make Jesus increasingly important and increasingly beautiful to us.

And so, think about what this means for our personal relationship with Christ. The Spirit is at work in us to glorify Jesus. That means all of our spiritual disciplines—Bible reading, prayer, solitude, silence, fasting—become more fruitful when they align with the Spirit's goal: to glorify Jesus.

I've always wondered how so many people can read the Bible, study it, even teach it, and yet not believe it. Not love the Jesus it reveals. I think part of the answer is that their heart's goal isn't aligned with the Spirit's goal. They're looking for self-help tips. Or an academic reward. Or personal glory. And in doing so, they are actually working against the Spirit of God. When we approach God with a self-seeking, self-glorifying heart, we will miss Jesus. But what if you came to God with a desire simply to know Him? To see Him. To know His heart.

What if instead of asking: **What's this got for me?** You start by asking the question like: **What does this tell me about God?** How does He describe Himself? What pleases Him? What does He hate? What has He done? What has He promised?

And then: **What does that mean for me?** How should I respond to this God I've come to know?

Those questions align much more closely with the Spirit's own work. And as you seek to live with your eyes on Jesus - to take His presence seriously in every part of your life - you will grow in your commitment to Him and your love for Him.

I think of it like this. I celebrated my 16th wedding anniversary this past weekend. And when I saw Nancy walk down the aisle on our wedding day, I am not ashamed to admit that I was a blubbery mess. I was overjoyed to be marrying this woman.

But something strange has happened over the past 16 years. As important as Nancy was to me that day, she is far more important to me today. Her opinion carries far more weight in my life. Her desires have a far greater priority in my life.

Why? Because I've gotten to spend more time with her. I've gotten to know her by spending day after day with her. I've walked through seasons of incredible joy with her, and seasons of despair and heartbreak. I've lived life with her. And because I've lived life with her, she has become more important to me.

But not just more important. She has also become more beautiful to me.

I know age comes for all of us. None of us look as youthful as we did 16 years ago. That's impossible. But I also know that my wife is more beautiful to me today than she was when she walked down that aisle 16 years ago. And your opinion about that doesn't matter to me one bit.

Why? Again, because I've gotten to live life with her. I've gotten to see her beauty unfold. I've gotten to see things about her that I couldn't have known on our wedding day. And over 16 years, that beauty has been revealed to me.

Now, in a similar, and far greater way, the importance and beauty of Jesus grow in our minds and hearts as we live our lives with Him. And there's only one way to experience that. You have to live with Him. You need intentional time with Him, empowered by and aligned with the Spirit of God. The only way to create the effects of a 20-year relationship with Jesus is to have a 20-year relationship with Jesus.

- You live life with Him.
- You listen to Him.
- You seek Him.
- You walk with Him through the joys and the storms of life.
- You trust Him when you're angry with Him.
- You love Him when you don't understand Him.
- You pray and talk to Him when you're exhausted and just want to curl up and do nothing.

That's what the word "discipline" means in spiritual disciplines. You keep going. And you keep going not because they are ways to earn God's love. But because they are ways of living with Jesus, who already has declared and displayed His love for you. So that, through the Spirit, His importance and His beauty become increasingly clear to you.

The Spirit's goal is to glorify Jesus. And when we live in step with the Spirit, Jesus becomes more precious to you. And as that happens, you will find yourself bearing witness and remaining faithful and fighting sin in your life.

And so...lean on the Spirit to keep turning your eyes toward Jesus. The test of Spirit-filled Christianity isn't simply that we experience something supernatural. The Spirit "will glorify me" (v. 14). So, do you want to be in step with the Holy Spirit? Ask regularly: **"Is this helping me know, love, trust, and obey Jesus?"**

And that's the question that we should ask as a church too. If we want to be a Spirit-filled church, then we must make Jesus the center of everything we do. The Spirit glorifies Jesus. Therefore, a healthy church should continually ask: **"Are we making much of Jesus?"**

- Not, "Did people like the sermon?"
- Not, "Does this church check all my personal preferences?"
- Not, "Did we get the numbers we wanted to get?"
- Not, "Does this church seem hip and cool?"

But: **“Did they want people to see Jesus more clearly and follow Him more faithfully? Is He the hero?”** Is He our north star guiding us through the waters of life? Is He the light at the end of the tunnel for us?

And if Jesus is truly becoming more important and more beautiful to us, then we should also see a growing desire for **mission**. We should want to bear witness to Jesus. Because we talk about the things we love, right?

But even here, Jesus is calling His disciples to relax and breathe. Yes, the world will hate us. Yes, there will be opposition. But we are not responsible for changing people's hearts. We are responsible for faithfully proclaiming the gospel to the people around us. And we must trust the Spirit to do what we cannot. He will convict the world concerning sin. He will guide people into truth. So proclaim the gospel, and then pray and trust the Spirit to do what you cannot.

You can explain the gospel perfectly, and someone can still reject it. You can love someone faithfully, and they can still refuse Christ. Because you may be filled with the Holy Spirit, but that does not make you the Holy Spirit. You cannot convict someone's heart. You cannot open someone's eyes. You cannot make someone love Jesus. So faithfully proclaim Jesus while praying: **“Holy Spirit, open their eyes to see the truth about Jesus.”**

And this will take courage. But God has given us His Spirit to continue the work of Jesus in this world. So let's live our lives depending on Him. Depending on Him to show us the glory of Christ. Depending on Him to declare the glory of Christ. Depending on Him to display the glory of Christ in the world. Because, yes, Jesus is not here physically walking among us. But His ministry has not stopped.

The Spirit Continues Jesus' Work In And Through Jesus' Church