

John 14

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[0 : 00] Let's turn now for a few moments to the second passage that we read, John's Gospel, chapter 14, and reading at verse 16.

I will ask the Father, and he will give you another counsellor to be with you forever, the Spirit of Truth.

In the world in which we live, even in the Church, we are tempted to believe that Pentium is more powerful than Pentecost.

But what our Lord is telling us here is that he, in the gift of Pentecost and the gift of the Holy Spirit, has given to his Church the greatest power on earth.

And we need to be delivered from the prison house of the functional rationality which has become the operating principle of our society, especially of governments, of corporations, of science and technology, and of many institutions of learning.

[1 : 20] The spheres of our society have been infused with this preoccupation with rational controls.

And the world we know, we tend to think functions through the logic of cardinal numbers, rule-bound computation, and the probabilities of speculation. Now, what Jesus is saying is that there is a much greater power than the power of technology and the power of science and the power of computers.

And that is the power of the Holy Spirit. And we need to recognise that today. We live in a world which, in some ways, has been demystified by science and technology.

And we have therefore marginalised the spiritual realm. We have rationalised that area that we cannot understand, that is non-verifiable in a scientific way.

And Jesus is calling us to rediscover that there is a spiritual realm. That there is a spiritual reality.

[2 : 39] That reality is not simply that, those things that we can see and touch and feel. That's true, that is the real world.

But in and through and under the real world, there is a spiritual reality. And he refers to that spiritual reality when he speaks here of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We should make this affirmation in every generation. But I believe perhaps that it is especially necessary for us to do it in our generation.

Because we live in a world where a growing number of people are becoming disillusioned with the rationalisation of life that science and technology have imposed upon us.

A growing number of people are seriously looking for space in the modern world where they can experience wonder and awe and transcendence at a deep spiritual level.

[3 : 42] And some of these seekers, after what is sometimes called spirituality, are discovering that Pentecost can reach places that Pentium cannot.

So I think this spiritual quest in which so many in our generation have become engaged, demonstrates the relevance of the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ concerning the Holy Spirit.

And we need today to tell the world that there is such a person as the Holy Spirit. The average person today is like those early disciples in Ephesus when Paul found them and he asked them, Were you baptized by the Holy Spirit?

And they said, We did not even know there is such a person as the Holy Spirit. And that is the average position of so many people today in the society in which we live.

And we need to present the teaching of Jesus, which tells us not only of God the Father, and tells us not only of his own ministry as God the Son, but also tells us of the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

[4 : 58] Part of the good news of the gospel is that Jesus has promised his people his Spirit. And he tells us here in this passage that this Spirit which he has promised is the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of life, and the Spirit of love.

And I would like us for a few moments this evening to look briefly at this threefold ministry of the Spirit that is unfolded in this teaching of Jesus in this passage of the fourth gospel.

And as we do so, to seek to examine the potential of this teaching to transform our individual and family and church lives, as well as the corporate life of our community.

First of all then, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. Jesus so describes him in verse 17. In that verse, immediately after Jesus announces the coming of the Spirit, we read that he is the Spirit, the Spirit of truth.

Or, as some have paraphrased, he is the Spirit who reveals the truth about God. And not only the truth about God, but the truth about ourselves.

[6 : 27] Three chapters later in this gospel, in John chapter 17, verse 17, we are told that God's Word is truth. And so Jesus is telling us, first of all, that God's Spirit is the Spirit of truth, and that the Word of God is the Word of truth.

And thus we are reminded by these two great affirmations, that the principle means by which the kingdom of God comes in human affairs, are the Spirit of God and the Word of God.

And it's important for us to remember that. We're strong in our Reformed tradition in emphasizing the importance of the Word. But we also have to recognize the importance of the Spirit.

Because although the Spirit inspired the Word, unless the Spirit accompanies the Word, the Word goes forth as a dead letter. The Spirit who inspired the Word must bring it to life, and bring it, and make it a living Word, in the experience of men and women today.

And both the Word of God and the Spirit of God testify to Jesus. And that's what makes them powerful.

[7 : 53] They testify, they witness to Jesus. And when we preach the Word of God, when we seek to honor the Spirit of God, we do so in order that Jesus might be glorified.

We do so in order that He might be presented. We do so in order that men and women might meet with Him, and bow down before Him, and worship Him. Both witness to Jesus.

And so the Spirit has been given to us, to the people of God, in order that through us, who profess to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, He might advance the kingdom of God in the world.

And so, in anticipation of the gift of the Spirit, Jesus is recorded in verse 12 as saying to His disciples, I am telling you the truth, those who believe in Me will do what I do.

Yes, they will do even greater things, because I am going to the Father. when Jesus, of course, speaks about greater things, He's not thinking of things that would be more astounding, but of things which may be even more spiritual, because through the gift of the Spirit given after Pentecost, there is a spiritual dimension.

[9 : 25] I mean, Jesus during His ministry on earth could be present only in one place at one time, but after the gift of the Spirit, Jesus can be present wherever His people are gathered together.

And it is in that sense, it's a great difference of degree that He is speaking about here. And it is He, of course, who sends His Spirit and who sent His Spirit at Pentecost.

and the Spirit comes in order to glorify Him. And so, the Spirit is the Spirit of truth, because He can take the words of Scripture in such a way that they become the voice of Jesus Christ to us today.

He is the Spirit of truth. He is the Spirit who brings the Word of God to life, who makes it live, and enables us to hear it. The Spirit, if you like, is the animator of the text of Scripture.

The text was inspired by Him when it was first recorded. That the Spirit who inspired it is also present according to the promise of Jesus to bring that text to life today so that we can say what the writer to the Hebrews not only the Holy Spirit said, but the Holy Spirit says.

[10 : 52] And the Spirit of God works through the Word of God today in powerful ways. And never let us doubt that. And that's why it's so important that we distribute the Word of God and we share the Word of God and that we pray for that ministry of dispersing the Word of God that the Spirit of God might use it and own it and bless it as the Spirit of Truth because He is the Spirit who uses the Word of God.

He is the Spirit who points to the Lord Jesus Christ, points to Him who is the Truth. And so as we thank God tonight for the gift of the Spirit let us recognize the Spirit as the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit who uses the Word of Truth, the Word of God, and who points to Him who is the Way and the Truth, the One who has come to be the Savior of sinners.

But secondly, Jesus teaches us here that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Life. Not only is He the Spirit of Truth but He is also the Spirit of Life.

Jesus tells us this in verse 19. Before long the world will not see me anymore but you will see me because I live you also will live.

And He says that almost immediately after promising the gift of the Holy Spirit. And there seems to be a direct connection, a direct link that the Spirit is not simply the Spirit of Truth but He is also the Spirit of Life.

[12 : 49] In fact, in verse 21, Jesus speaks about showing Himself to those who love God.

He who loves me will be loved by my Father and I too will love Him and show myself to Him. The Spirit of Life is the Spirit that comes to bring life to the people of God.

It is through the Spirit of God that we are born again. It is through the Spirit of God that we who once were dead in trespasses and in sins are quickened or brought to life. It is the Spirit of God who does that.

It is not a question of us pulling ourselves up by our own bootlaces. It is not a question of ourselves through our moral earnestness improving ourselves. It is not a case of giving ourselves a spiritual makeover.

This is the work of the Spirit of God and it is He who can bring new life into our spiritual deadness. And that's the vision that was given to Ezekiel when he had that vision of the people of Israel of his generation like a valley of dead bones.

[14 : 07] And it was when he prayed to the breath of the Spirit and when that prayer was answered that cemetery became a living army. And so it is today in the life of individuals and in the life of the church it is only as the Spirit of God breathes upon the church that the church can live.

The church is not simply an institution it's not simply an organization it's an organism and without the life of the Spirit that organism dies and we see that from generation to generation a church that can be alive in one generation can be dead as the dodo in the next because the Spirit of God for some strange reason may have departed and left it and gone elsewhere.

It is the Spirit of God who brings life to the individual life to the church it is he who is the life of the people of God.

And truly this is a word for us living as we do in a country where churches are in decline although we live in a time when churches in many parts of the world are growing we live in a time when more people are becoming Christians than in any other time in history yet we here in this country and throughout Western Europe generally are in fact the exception to that rule we find ourselves a victim of decline a decline which is not simply gradual but a decline which is rapid we cannot become complacent we cannot be complacent in the light of the statistics that face us and we need to recognize that we need the Spirit of God as we perhaps seldom needed him before in the history of the church in this land and we need to pray that God will pour out his spirit that he will rend the heavens and come down and visit his people revive his church glorify his name in our land the spirit of life is a spirit who can do that he could raise a cemetery to life in the vision of

Ezekiel and that's what he can do today a friend of mine who's an evangelist cemetery when that was Ezekiel's experience that the spirit of God can bring a cemetery to life and we need the spirit of God today Jesus has said that if we ask God for his spirit he will grant his spirit and I want to ask you who are believing praying people are you asking God to pour out his spirit upon this generation are you asking God to pour out his spirit upon our nation upon our denomination upon all the churches in Scotland upon this congregation are we pleading with God are we earnest in asking God to rend the heavens and come down and to demonstrate his power his reforming power in this generation or have we settled for decline have we come to believe that we are living in a day of small things we have given up and our faith is minimal perhaps we need to hear again this word of

[17 : 29] Jesus about the gift of the spirit he is the spirit of life because I live you will live also Jesus is alive today because he is alive by his spirit his church can be brought to life surely we need to have a vision of the church of God being brought to life again in this generation and so this Holy Spirit is not simply the spirit of truth he is also the spirit of life but thirdly Jesus teaches us here that the Holy Spirit is the spirit of love the spirit is given says Jesus to those who love Christ and obey his commandments we look at verse 15 we see this if you love me you will obey what I command and I will ask the father and he will give you another counselor to be with you forever the spirit of truth again in verse 21 whoever has my commandments and obeys them he is the one who loves me he who loves me will be loved by my father and I will

I too will love him and show myself to him Jesus had already given his disciples a new commandment and that commandment was to love one another as I have loved you he said so you must love one another for if you have loved for one another then everyone will know that you are my disciples and Jesus has given the Holy Spirit to his church to enable his church to become a community of love a community that loves Christ and a community that loves its own members the church is called upon to be a community of love and it is the Spirit of God who enables the church to become what God has called it to be it's the gift of the Spirit who enables us to enter into new experiences of the love of God and of the love of

Christ and such new experiences of the love of God Jesus tells us in verse 21 God in in fact among to a new experience of God's mercy and God's grace here he says I too will love him and show myself to him and here Jesus is speaking about spiritual experience and he is saying that it is as we experience God's love poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit that he shows himself to us that we enter into a deep and intimate communion with him and we have this inner epiphany as it were in which he reveals himself to us and we know him as a friend as well as a saviour and so what

Jesus is doing here is that what he's doing here in verse 20 is he's saying that the gift of the Spirit in us facilitates a new and higher degree of communion with the Father and with Jesus and in the following verse he tells us that this intimate communion of mutual indwelling with God the Father and God the Son is opened to us by the Spirit he can enable us to experience the love of the Father and the love of Son to such a small hour he will show himself to us I wonder are we conscious of Christ showing himself to us Christ revealing himself to us in his love it's the Spirit of God who can do that this is not something that we can manufacture it is not something that we can generate it is only the

Spirit of God that can do that but Jesus is offering has confirmed his Spirit upon his people and he's inviting us to pray that the Spirit of God may be given to us in full measure again I come back to the fact that in our generation there are many people who are seeking for a spiritual solution unfortunately many of them are looking in the new age looking into themselves because that's what the new age is about it's a self religion as someone has said and you have a conflict between your ego and yourself the ego is wrong but the self is right because the self is in touch with nature and aligned with nature and you have to search for reality search for wisdom search for meaning in yourself but what Jesus tells us is that out of the heart of man comes evil there's no salvation in the self there's no salvation in oneself the self like the ego is sinful both are fallen although created by

[23 : 00] God they have gone astray they are fallen and Jesus tells us that we can find this revelation in Christ we we can find this intimate knowledge of God of salvation in Christ as the spirit of God is given to us we can find it in him and so we need to affirm not only the truth of the gospel but the experience that the gospel offers to men and women it is not simply a question of intellectual challenging people's minds it's also a question of telling them that there is available in Christ this great experience of God's love and of God's mercy and of God's grace salvation is not simply an intellectual formula it is a dynamic spiritual experience that transforms the personality and transforms the life there are many who are disillusioned by science by technology by capitalism by consumerism they're very concerned about the way in which life seems to be going in our society they have become refugees from what they perceive as the tyranny of functional rationality and are seeking a sense of spiritual freedom

I believe and I trust that you believe that that freedom can be found only in the gospel it will not be found in the new age the new age is the old slavery the old bondage this new freedom can be found only in Christ and we need to affirm that we need to demonstrate that that in the church of God there is love as well as life at this particular time of year we are aware in nature how nature is bursting into life in the spring we see the trees budding we see the daffodils flowering we are aware of the life that is in nature and there is a sense in which the church of God should be showing to the world the new symbols of the new life the fruit of the life that the spirit of God is giving and one of the fruits of that new life is that we love one another and that the church of

God is a community of love in which we care and share in which we have a concern one for another and we're not simply a series of individuals but we are members of a body and we care for one another and we minister to one another and we're concerned for one another and we pray with and for one another Francis Schaeffer used to say that love is the ultimate apologetic the ultimate answer to those who criticize and attack the gospel let the church demonstrate the love of Christ the church can only do that as the spirit of God the spirit of love is given to it and as the spirit of love is poured out upon it the church of God can become a community of love so the spirit is not simply the spirit of truth he's not simply the spirit of life he's also the spirit of love that love which

Jesus tells us will convict the world that he has been truly sent into the world it is as Schaeffer said the ultimate apologetic and surely we live in an age when we are granted a great opportunity to share the good news that men and women can indeed have an epiphany they can indeed have an experience of God in their souls an experience that is granted them by the spirit of God it does not come from the self it does not come from alignment with nature it comes from the spirit of God who is given to those who ask God for him and so we ought to pray that God may grant his spirit in full measure to his church in our generation that men and women may discover this spiritual transformation experience in the love of God being poured out into their hearts that's what Paul said writing to the Romans that the love of

God which was demonstrated historically at Calvary is experientially experienced as the spirit of God pours it out into our hearts Romans chapter 5 there we have the love of God objectively demonstrated in Calvary subjectively experienced by the power of the spirit of God and when we proclaim the gospel that Jesus died upon Calvary and demonstrated that God so loved the world that he gave the spirit of God who accompanies that gospel can bring that love which was demonstrated at Calvary and pour it out into our hearts not simply give us a few drops but pour it out Paul says he speaks in terms of a flood of an inundation a pouring out of the spirit of God all this is available and yet we fail to receive so much of it is it not true and we need to ask ourselves why why is God holding back the flood gates of blessing why is

[28 : 31] God not blessing his church in our land today we need to ask ourselves that question we need to come in the spirit of repentance before the throne of grace and to plead with God spirit upon us in full measure that he may glorify the name of Jesus again that he may bring the word of God which the spirit inspired centuries ago to life today in our generation that men and women through the scriptures and the gospel may hear God speaking to them that through the spirit of God they may meet with Jesus Christ and have a transformational experience of his love and of his grace so this is the gospel and the gospel is the gospel which the spirit of God brings to life and makes alive in our experience he is the spirit of truth he is the spirit of life and he is the spirit of love may

God grant that we may know what it is to be filled with that spirit both individually and as a congregation and that the fruits of the spirit may be seen in full measure in our fellowship and right throughout our land and that we may see God baptizing his church afresh with the spirit of God and that the church of God may become an expression of God's love of God's life and of God's truth that we may see it becoming a power in our generation not a power in itself not a power in the sense of institutional power but power as a force a spiritual force to bring the gospel to men and women to see these men and women being transformed and turned around their lives transformed families transformed communities transformed by the grace of God we're living in a terribly materialistic society in one sense in the other sense there are people who are looking for a spiritual answer somewhere but so many are looking in the wrong direction and surely we need to confront our generation to stand at the crossroads and lift up the name of the Lord

Jesus Christ and proclaim him bearing in mind that he has promised us his spirit and his spirit has the power to change the situation dramatically very little of the spirit's power can make a tremendous difference to the life of our churches here in Scotland and throughout western Europe how we need to have that vision that Ezekiel had how we need to pray as Jesus encouraged us to pray to pray for the Holy Spirit to be granted to us that he may indeed pour out the love of God into our hearts and touch the lives of men and women in our community convicting them of sin of righteousness and of judgment to come and bringing them to the foot of the cross where they might confess their sins and commit their lives to Christ may God grant it to be so and may we see it in our generation may you see it in this congregation may you see it as you witness among your friends and among your neighbours remember that the gospel that you share with them is a gospel which the holy spirit has promised to bless you may have given up and many of the people you have witnessed to but there's not one of them not one of them is beyond the power of the holy spirit not one of them is beyond the reach of the gospel of the

Lord Jesus Christ this is the gospel that has turned the world upside down and this is the gospel that we need to reaffirm our faith in and share with the world just let it out and let God the spirit do his own work may God grant it for his namesake let us pray our heavenly father we give you thanks again tonight for the gift of the spirit we thank you that he is the spirit of truth the spirit of life and the spirit of love and we ask oh God that we may indeed demonstrate all these ministries of the spirit that we may proclaim and witness to the truth that we may experience the love of God and demonstrate that love one to another and that we may indeed know what it is to show forth the life the new life that the spirit of God gives we ask oh Lord that you will bless this congregation in the weeks and months and years ahead that the spirit of

God may do through it and that he may be poured out upon it in full measure and that you will honour your work in this place and grant that through the witness of your people here many many people may come to know you and to love you and to serve you and be grafted into the body of Christ we ask these things in the name of Jesus and for his sake Amen and now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and always Amen