

John 16:1-15

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[0 : 00] Let's turn to that reading, John chapter 16.

And I'd like us to read from verse 7 again, John chapter 16 and verse 7. But I tell you the truth, Jesus said, it is for your good that I am going away.

Unless I go away, the counselor will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. Now, here's the bit that I want to think about in particular.

When he comes, the counselor, the Holy Spirit, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.

In regard to sin, because men do not believe in me. In regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father. Where you can see me no longer. And in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

[1 : 08] I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.

He will not speak on his own. He will speak only what he hears and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.

All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you. If it's hard for us to understand the Trinity, God being Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with 2,000 years of Christian knowledge, how much harder must it have been for the disciples in the year zero to get their heads around what Jesus was introducing to them?

It was hard enough for them to come to terms with the fact that he was now going to be leaving them. After three years in learning to trust Jesus and in coming to the discovery that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, in learning to love him and obey him and worship him, he was now telling them that he was going to be taken from them.

That was hard enough. They couldn't put the two things together. How can God be arrested? How can God be crucified?

[2 : 58] How can God be handed over to his enemies? It just didn't make sense for the disciples. Neither did what Jesus was now introducing them to by way of a comfort.

He was telling them that not only was there one person in the Trinity, not only were there two people, two persons in the Trinity, but there was now a third person.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It's easy for us who know our catechism, isn't it? There are three persons in the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

These three are the same in substance. They are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. How's that for having learned it when I was six years old? It's easy for us to rattle off our catechism, isn't it?

But that's 2,000 years of Christian knowledge. And you can read dozens of books that try to explain how on the one hand God is one God, and on the other hand God is at the same time three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit.

[4 : 08] It doesn't mean that He's one God divided. It doesn't mean that He is three gods. He is one and He is three. One God, Father, Son, and Spirit.

And it's taken us 2,000 years to come to the point where we still don't understand what that means. The poor disciples, I think I sympathize with them so much in trying to understand what Jesus was saying to them then.

And that's why Jesus was so careful and so gentle in using the kind of language He could never have said to His disciples, there are three persons in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Spirit.

These three are one God, same in substance, equal power, and glory. They could never have coped with that. But what He did was He introduced the idea of the Trinity so gently and so lovingly to them.

One day they would grasp more and they would come to live within the light of the Trinity more. But for the moment they must content themselves with what they didn't understand.

[5 : 17] And one of these was the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised His disciples that although He would be taken from them and they would not see Him in this world anymore.

Yet, they were not going to be orphans. They were going to be accompanied by God Himself in the person of the Holy Spirit.

Not only does He promise the presence of the Holy Spirit, but He describes to the disciples, and this is what I'd like us to look at this morning, the description of the work of the Holy Spirit and how it related to them, but also how it relates to us 2,000 years later.

And I want us to see that work in the three senses that Jesus describes for His disciples. He first of all works in the world.

Verse 8 tells us when He comes, He will convict the world. This is something that the Holy Spirit is going to do to the world. He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.

[6 : 25] We'll go into that in a few moments' time. That's the first area of operation that is carried out by the Holy Spirit. What He's going to do in the world and to the world?

Convict the world. The second area is what He's going to do in the disciples. Amongst the disciples.

You find that in verse 13. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you. This is what He's going to do to you. He's going to do amongst you. He's going to guide you into all the truth.

He's going to guide you in all truth. And again, we'll look at what that means in a few moments' time. But then there was a third area in which the Holy Spirit was going to work after Jesus was taken away from them.

And the third area was what He was going to do in relation to Jesus. He will bring glory to me. Verse 14. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.

[7 : 29] Now I want to describe these three operations in terms of three different lights. All right? Three different lights and what these different lights are used for.

The first area is what I'm going to call a blue light ministry. I'll explain that in a few moments' time.

A blue light ministry. Some of you know already what I'm talking about. A blue light ministry. Because He's going to convict the world of sin.

The second area is what He was going to do amongst the disciples. He's going to guide you into all the truth. I'm going to call that a headlight ministry.

We all know what headlights are from our cars. We all know how essential a headlight is or two headlights are when we're on a dark road in the winter on a dark night.

[8 : 32] We couldn't drive the car without the headlights. The third area I'm going to describe as a floodlight ministry. Because the promise was that He was going to bring glory to Jesus.

The same way as a floodlight brings glory to a lovely building in the nighttime.

We've often seen some of the great cathedrals dotted in various places all over the country. For example, York Minster. And how in the daytime there is a certain glory, a certain beauty and majesty in the sunlight.

But there's a different kind of majesty in the nighttime when it's floodlit. When the floodlights are on and when you can see it from a different kind of perspective.

Well, that's the kind of idea that Jesus is bringing to His disciples. Three lights. Three operations in which the Holy Spirit works in the world amongst the disciples and in relation to Jesus.

[9 : 42] Let's look at these then for a few moments. First of all, I'm going to call it a blue light ministry. I'm not trying to be facetious. I'm just trying to give you something by which you'll remember the work of the Holy Spirit.

And sometimes when we put things a little bit differently, we tend to remember that more effectively. And go back to that passage and when you read this passage again, you think of the blue light.

And of course, what I'm talking about here is the whole issue of law enforcement. We all know that we need law enforcement in order for any civilized society to operate.

There has to be the rule of law by which a person is found guilty by judicial process, if he is guilty. And by which an innocent person is found innocent by that same judicial process.

And that process has to be fair. It has to be equitable. And there has to be, it has to follow the rule of established law. But there also has to be law enforcement. You have to have a body of people that go out and look for criminals and catch criminals.

[10 : 51] And that's what I mean by a blue light ministry. That's what the Holy Spirit does. Look at what Jesus says. He says when he comes, he will convict the world of sin in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.

So there are the three senses in which God the Holy Spirit works in the world at this present moment. And what he was going to do at the time of the disciples, we can be absolutely assured that he, irrespective of appearances in an unbelieving world, he continues to do that today.

All over the world. The Holy Spirit has not stopped. God has not stopped pursuing people. That's his business in the gospel. To pursue people, not just to make himself.

You see, there's a lot of people out there that will tell you that the gospel is all about God making himself available for anyone who wants to be saved. Do you know what?

That's wrong. God does not make himself available for anyone who happens to want to be saved. I don't think I've ever met a single person in the whole world who wants to be saved.

[12 : 05] Do you know why? Because sin within us, it doesn't want to be saved. Because we think we're all right as it is. We think we're good enough as it is. That's the way we're born, into a corrupt way of thinking.

We think there's always someone who's worse than ourselves. And so as long as we think we're off the hook, then we think that at the end of the day, God's going to accept us no matter what.

It's all going to be all right. I wonder if there's anybody even here today who thinks along that way. You're here in church and maybe you're here just out of routine because you think it's a good thing to do.

That it kind of scores you some points with God. It doesn't. It's the right place for you to be. But there's only one way for you to be right with God. And that is through the gospel, through the Lord Jesus Christ.

God does not make himself available for anybody who wants to be saved. God goes after people. He pursues people in his love and in his mercy and he arrests people.

[13 : 07] That's why those of you today, those of us today who belong to Jesus and who follow Jesus by faith, none of us would ever say, well, it's my doing.

I saved myself because I happened to avail myself of what God had. No. The Bible tells me that I was dead in trespasses and sins and that anything that I have in my life is what God has done for me.

And therefore, we thank God today for what he has done in our hearts, in our beings, for pursuing us and for calling us and for bringing us into his kingdom by his own spirit.

And that's the way that God operates in his blue light ministry. It's a work of conviction. And that is why there are so many people in the world that don't want to hear the gospel.

It's not because the gospel is unreasonable. You go and tell a person, is the gospel totally irrational? Nobody will say that it is. It's not totally irrational at all.

[14 : 11] But you go and talk to somebody about the gospel and they will not want to know. They will not want to. Why is that? Why is there such a reluctance? Well, it's because the moment that we begin to think about God, it exposes what we are.

It's like God shining a spotlight into the darkest recesses of our hearts, exactly where we don't want anyone to go because we know the awfulness and the shame that lies within our hearts.

And we know that if God's one thing for us to put on a show for other people and have them thinking how good we are, but we know that God knows our hearts.

Maybe that's why David in Psalm 139 said, Lord, you have searched me and you have known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up. Even my thoughts are known to you.

You know, that's a really uncomfortable truth, isn't it? When we finally realize that God knows everything about us and there's no excuses with God. The same way as we can make excuses when we're caught by human law enforcement.

[15 : 28] This was brought home to me. I'm going to make a confession to you. It was brought home to me about maybe a year ago, maybe more than that. I was on this road. I was running my son to a bus just near the Dingwall area.

I was desperate because I had been waiting for him to get up early in the morning and I was running him desperately trying to get this bus in Garve. Garve's a little place just north of Inverness.

He was getting the bus to Ullapool and I knew I was late. And you know the rest of the story. So I'm driving along this road. There's nothing on the road. It's a stretch, very, very long stretch of road and yes, I was over the limit.

I wasn't that much over the limit, but I was over the limit. Next thing, the blue light comes on. I see in the distance, the blue light comes on and I was caught.

And I had to pull into the side and I knew that there was no chance of getting the bus now. That was it, which probably annoyed me more than anything else because I knew I was going to have to then travel to Ullapool, which is another 50 miles or so.

[16 : 33] But in any case, I stopped and just waited for whatever was going to happen. And the police officer got out and he came to me. And what I'm trying to say is the emotions I went through all within five minutes.

Here are the emotions. First of all, shame. I knew I was caught and I was dead scared that somebody in my congregation would pass in the car and see that I was being spoken to by.

That's the first thing that you think. I'm exposed. I am now, my sins have now been made public. And being a public figure as a minister always is.

You always feel more conscious about how that reflects on your job and the church and all the rest of it. So that's the first thing. But that sense of shame actually very quickly changed to annoyance.

And I began to think, I've never broken the law in my life. I've never done anything wrong as far as I know. I'm not, I haven't, I've always tried to keep the law.

[17 : 42] I've never stolen anything. I've never been violent. And there are loads of people in the world who deserve to be caught by the police more than I do. Started thinking of myself in comparison with other people and getting annoyed about it.

The third emotion was, I've broken the law. I have to listen to whatever the law enforcement officer is going to say.

And that's how we react to the Holy Spirit when He operates within the world, convicting the world of sin. And we fall at the first hurdle because men and women, because of their pride, they won't listen to God.

They'll always say something like, no, there are people who are worse than me. They deserve to be spoken to by God. Not me because I've tried my whole life to be decent and upright and respectable.

But the fact is, you know, as well as I do, that we haven't succeeded. We have broken God's law in our hearts. Let me just test that one for you.

[18 : 52] God's command, the first commandment is this. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and mind and soul and strength. Now, hands up anyone who has spent their whole life loving God with all your heart and mind and soul and strength.

We haven't done it. We've broken God's law. We've made an idol out of other things. We've made an idol out of ourselves. We've lived for our own pleasure and our own self-righteousness and our own pride.

And there's nothing that can break that until God reaches us by the Holy Spirit and breaks that pride within us.

And I'm going to ask you a very personal question. Are you prepared to have God break your pride? Because that's always what's got to happen before God can reach a person and save them.

God convicts. The Holy Spirit will convict the world in terms in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment. Now, notice what he says in verse 9.

[20 : 02] In regard to sin, because men do not believe in me. That's where the sin is. We're guilty of so many other things and thoughts and words and deeds.

But the people in Jesus' day, they were guilty of unbelief because they saw the kind of person that he was. And despite the overwhelming evidence that he was Messiah, they refused to believe in him.

Rather, they arrested him and they nailed him to a cross. Now, how sinful is that? When we refuse to see the obvious that Jesus is the Son of God.

And because, again, of our own pride, we choose to nail him to a cross. He will convict the world of sin because they do not believe in me.

In regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father and the Holy Spirit is needed in order to work in people's hearts. Where you can see me no longer. And in regard to judgment, because sin and righteousness, when they come together, they form the judgment of God.

[21 : 09] And every one of us, by nature, deserves that judgment. So that's the blue light ministry. This morning. That's how the Holy Spirit operates in the world.

And we have to believe that he continues to do that in places and in people that we do not know. We don't know what the Holy Spirit. And that's why it's so important to continue to witness and to preach and to speak about Jesus.

Because it's through the witness of God's people that the Holy Spirit works and convicts people of sin. And draws them into a place of repentance and faith.

Secondly, the headlight ministry. Look at what we're talking about here. In verse 13. When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth.

Now, what does that mean? That the Holy Spirit, we're talking now about how the Holy Spirit is going to work amongst the disciples. Does it mean that he's going to work in every age in terms of him guiding people, the people of God?

[22 : 22] But here's what I used to think. Another confession. I used to think that these words meant the way in which God comes into a person's life when that person comes to faith in Jesus.

And begins to go to work in that person and guides that person in the choices that they make. We've often heard discussions.

Especially when we were younger. How does God guide? How do you know God's guidance? How do you know when you hear God's voice? Should we expect to hear a voice in our heads?

How do you know when God's guiding me? If I've got the choice of two jobs or two places to live? Or if I'm going out with a girl and how do I know I'm supposed to marry that girl?

And what church to go to and so on and so forth. When I was younger, we used to get into all kinds of discussions about how do you know that you're doing the right thing? How do you know that your choices are the right ones?

[23 : 26] That's one area where age, I think, settles you down a whole lot more. And you look back with gladness. And I believe it's only as we look back that we can see that no matter how troubled I used to be, God's taken care of it.

I've made loads of mistakes and yet God seems to have just, He seems to have operated and worked despite all these failures that I've made. And there was no need for me to be all freaked out about how God was going to guide me into the right choice.

And if I made the wrong choice, would I be outside of God's will for the rest of my life? You often hear people talking like that, don't you? Am I ever going to be out? If I make the wrong choice, does that mean I've been outside?

I remember hearing a guy saying that in a pulpit once. Telling us about his own life many years ago. And he said this, he said, when I was a young man, he said, I made a wrong choice.

And ever since then, I've been outside of God's will. I felt like standing up and saying, I'm sorry, that's not correct.

[24 : 33] You have not been outside of God's will. Because God is able to compensate for our failures. And he's able to bring us to see our failures. And he's able to bring us to see that his grace overcomes our failures.

Not just in terms of forgiveness, but in terms of working all things together for good to those who love God. That's the promise that we have as Christians. That God works all things together for good to those who love God and who are called according to his purpose.

That doesn't mean we go out the door and we decide to do wrong things. Of course not. It should be all the more encouragement for us to go and do the right things. And to please him and to live for him and to obey him.

But we get it wrong. All of us have got it wrong at some point. Does that mean that God wants nothing to do with us? Of course not. Moses got it wrong when he killed the Egyptian and had to flee.

Did that mean that God was finished with him? No. God had a great purpose for Moses despite his wrongdoing. Nevertheless, it's true that God does guide individuals.

[25 : 50] Because we believe that when a person comes to faith, the Holy Spirit comes into that person's life never to leave that person. And he takes up residence in you. Remember that. If you're a believer this morning, you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

And he's not going to go anywhere. He's in you to stay. To work out God's plan and his purpose for you. God's plan and purpose for you is one thing above everything else.

Whatever he wants you to live or whoever he wants you to marry. His plan and purpose for you is this. That you be conformed and shaped and fashioned into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

That I can say with absolute confidence because it's what the Bible says. So, when I used to read these words, I used to think, well, that just means that the Holy Spirit will guide us, will give us the answer and the guidance and the light that we need to make the right choices.

I'm not saying that doesn't happen. What I am saying is, I don't think that's what these words mean. So, what do they mean? I believe, and again, come back to me if you disagree with me on this.

[26 : 56] I believe that when Jesus said this, he's actually talking primarily to the twelve disciples. Who he was going to give a certain specific task to do.

They were to be the first church. And their task was to make Jesus known. To bring the information about Jesus, the message about Jesus, to a lost world in the first century.

That was what their job was going to be. How did they do that? Well, they went to every city and village and they went to various places throughout the Roman Empire.

Most of them, if not all of them, gave their lives for Jesus. It meant persecution. But it also meant this. Leaving a lasting legacy for the rest of the church through the ages.

And how was that? It meant that they were going to write down what we know as the New Testament. It was the disciples' work, plus the Apostle Paul, to write down the New Testament.

[28 : 14] And here is Jesus and he's saying, I know how ignorant you are. I know that you can't get your heads around the Trinity. I know how difficult it is for you to try and grasp what I'm trying to say to you.

You don't even really understand why I have to be crucified. You don't know why it's necessary for me to be taken and for me to be put to death. And for me to rise again on the third day. Even although I've told you, you don't really get it.

But you will. Because the Holy Spirit is going to bring all of this to clarity for you.

Not only so, you're going to write all this down for successive generations. And that's what we call the New Testament.

And that's exactly what we believe happened. That the Holy Spirit guided the disciples as they wrote down the truth of the gospel in all its detail and in all its glory.

[29 : 22] And left it for us. Recognized by the church throughout the first 200 years. And left for us in the pages of the New Testament.

Now here's what I'm trying to get to. Here's where this is going. What this means is that if Jesus kept his promise that the Holy Spirit would guide the disciples into all truth.

And if this is what it meant that they would write the New Testament. Do you know what this means? It means that the New Testament is absolutely 100% reliable.

If it's not, then Jesus didn't keep his promise. And Jesus always kept his promise because he was God.

That's how important it is to believe the pages of the New Testament. And to combine it with the pages of the Old Testament, which are just as inspired and just as inerrant and just as infallible, the Word of God.

[30 : 24] We have the whole thing in one package. And it is 100% reliable. That's why we can trust it. Every page.

Every word. And that's why all the more reason we need to make use of it and love it and cherish it and understand it in all its complexity and in all its glory.

These are the words of God. This is the Word of God. Please let's remember that. Whenever we open our Bibles, that this is Jesus keeping his promise.

The last promise was a floodlight ministry. And you find that in verse 14, He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.

And I'm going to only spend a couple of minutes on this one. I know that the time is almost gone. I must confess, first of all, that this is not my illustration. Many of you have read the book Keep in Step with the Spirit by J.I. Packer.

[31 : 28] And it's J.I. Packer who calls the ministry of the Holy Spirit the floodlight ministry. And that's because he tells us on one occasion he was asked to speak at a meeting at nighttime. And he was trying desperately to come up with an illustration that would adequately describe the work of the Holy Spirit.

And he just couldn't do it. He got out of his car in the car park. He was walking past this great cathedral that was floodlit. And all of a sudden it came to him. That was the work of the Holy Spirit.

To shed light on Jesus Christ. To focus on Jesus Christ. And to bring glory to Him.

What does that mean? It means, first of all, that if I can say this with all reverence. If the Holy Spirit were to say anything in our service this morning.

He would say something like this. And I'm being as reverent as I possibly can. Don't speak too long about me. This is about Jesus.

[32 : 36] Jesus stands at the center of the Christian faith. The Christian faith is all about Jesus. And what He did in His coming into the world as a baby.

In His incarnation. In His living amongst men and women. In His teaching and in His miracles. And in His death on the cross. Supremely in the death of the cross.

The Holy Spirit didn't die for anyone. The Holy Spirit cannot save you. But what He does is to point the way to Jesus.

And it's to shed light on Jesus. In His glory. And to draw our attention to Him. So that what Jesus did on the cross is brought to us.

In all its majesty. And in all its power. And in all its awesomeness. Christ died for our sins.

[33 : 39] That is the most glorious message in the world. It's the truth that we need to come back to again.

And again. And again. And again. And it's the truth that a dark and unbelieving world needs desperately to hear. We rejoice today.

That not only do we have the message. But that there is the power of God. In the world. Working in the world. To bring men and women.

To a knowledge of the truth in Jesus Christ. We rejoice. That we have a Savior. In the light. That God has given to us.

About what He has done in His love. To rescue us. From sin. In His death. And in His resurrection. Praise be to God.

[34 : 36] Our Savior. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven. We ask that you will. Shed light in our hearts. So that we will grow in our knowledge.

And in our thankfulness. And in our sense of. Of. Worship. In what Jesus has done.

We pray that you will bring. This great truth to us afresh. In marvelous power. Never to leave us. And to encourage us. And to strengthen us.

In a difficult life. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.