

An Intimate Friendship
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Series: The Space in which HE calls us to follow
John 16:6-7; 14:16-25

“The space in which He calls us to follow.” I invite you to continue exploring the space in which the risen, ascended Jesus now calls us to follow. It is not the space in which the first community of disciples followed Him. The space in which they could see Him and touch Him. Nor is it the space in which we will one day follow Him; the space in which we will see Him face-to-face in His new heaven and new earth. The space in which we now follow Him is marked by the absence of His physical presence. Not by the absence of His presence as we shall see today. But by the absence of His physical presence. And the amazing thing is Jesus says this is to our advantage. John 16, verse 7 “I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage, for your good, that I go away.”

It is? How can that possibly be?

It was on the Thursday night of Holy Week, on the night before He hands Himself over to death. Jesus had gathered His first community of followers together for a meal. They met in a second-story apartment in an “upper room” as it came to be called – somewhere in the downtown core of the city of Jerusalem. They were all reclining around a large wooden table. Jesus has spread the table with food and drink of the Jewish Passover Meal, the most sacred celebration in the life of Israel. Think Christmas Eve, candles, breads, fruit, fancy music, tender fellowship. As the evening progresses Jesus does a number of surprising things. He begins by altering the liturgy of the Passover Meal. He takes a loaf of bread, and after saying the traditional blessing over it, He breaks it, and hands it to His followers saying, “this is My body”. Your body? Your? Body? He then takes a cup of wine, and after saying another traditional blessing over it, offers it to His disciples saying, “this cup is the New Covenant in my blood.” Your blood? Your? Blood?

Then he gets up from supper, takes off His outer garments, wraps a towel around His waist, gets down on His knees and begins washing the disciples’ feet. They are stunned by such ‘divine humility.’ After washing everyone’s feet He returns to his place around the table. And then comes the biggest surprise of all. “little children,” He says, It is a very tender word. “little children”, I will be with you only a little while longer.” (13:37) “I am going away, back to the One who sent Me.” And for the rest of the evening Jesus prepares the disciples – and us- to go on living in the absence of His physical presence. Which is why John 14-16, the so-called ‘upper room discourse’ begins the way it does. “Let not your hearts be troubled.” (14). Troubled. The verb is an intense feeling – word. It means “to shudder, to be thrown into confusion.” Jesus’ announcement of His imminent departure made the disciples shudder. Understandably so.

For three years, for three wonderful years, they had enjoyed His company. For three years they had enjoyed His visible, audible, tangible presence. They had come to depend on His companionship, on His intimate friendship. When they were with Jesus they felt secure, they experienced hope, they were not afraid, they knew themselves to be loved, unconditionally so. “I came forth from the Father and am going back to the Father.” “I am going away.” They shuddered their hearts filled with fear. The fear of being abandoned, left alone. The fear of having to face the future without their trusted friend. Ever felt that way? Jesus’ Upper Room Discourse is addressed to those fears. The fears raised by the surprising announcement that in just a little while He was going away. But what really surprised the first disciples and us is what He goes on to say. John 16:7 “But I tell you the truth, it is for your good that I go away.” What? “I tell you the truth it is for your advantage that I am going

away." How can that be? How can it possibly be to the advantage of the disciples that He go away? How can that be? How can it possibly be to the advantage of the disciples that He go away? God has raised up a number of godly men and women in our city who serve many people as kind of "Spiritual Directors", As "Life-coaches" so to speak. Can you imagine one of them saying to the people who count on their guidance, "I am now moving to Toronto and it is for your good that I am going? How can it possibly be to the advantage of disciples – then and now- to live in this world in the absence of Jesus' physical presence? How can it possibly be better than having Jesus right here in this room in His flesh? Where He can wrap His arms around them and us? "I tell you the truth , it is to your advantage that I go away." Why?

Jesus continues in John 16:7 "for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you." The word translated is the Greek word Paracletos, or Paraclete. Not parakeet! I used the word Paraclete in a sermon a number of years ago. After the service, a precious, hard-of-hearing parishioner came up to me and said "oh pastor, I am so confused. I thought the Holy Spirit was like a dove but you kept call Him a parakeet!"

The word is notoriously difficult to render with one single word. Which is why different translations of the Bible use different terms. The NIV and RSV render it "counselor" The King James renders it "Comforter". The New English Bible, New Jerusalem Bible, TNIV and New RSV render it "Advocate". The New America Standard renders it "helper". J.B. Phillips uses the phrase "Someone-to-stand-by-you". Although it is a mouthful it is probably the best "someone-to-stand-by –you". Literally "Someone-called in alongside" Para- alongside as in para-medic, para-legal. Cletos, called in. "Someone called in alongside". And called in alongside for all kinds of reasons! The verb form of the word (parakeleo) has a wide range of meanings: call in, send for, exhort, encourage, comfort, strengthen, console, convict, convince.

In the upper room Jesus claims that it is for the disciples , and our good that He go away physically. For unless He goes, the Paraclete will not come. But if He goes, He will send in "the One called in alongside." And they and we will not be alone in the absence of His physical presence.

Yet, I ask, how is this better? How is this to our advantage? Why is this better than Jesus' physical presence? Because of all Jesus says about the Paraclete before John 16? I call your attention in particular to John 14:16-18. Three life-changing verses. Listen.

"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Paraclete, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.
"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."

I want to highlight just five things Jesus says about the Paraclete.

First, the Paraclete is a PERSON. A PERSON. Jesus always uses personal pronouns when speaking of this "one called in alongside". This is so basic and so crucial to grasp. The Paraclete is a PERSON. Jesus identifies the Paraclete as the Spirit, the Spirit of God. What we need to know is that the word for Spirit (pneuma) is a neuter noun. Yet, never is the neuter pronoun used with reference to the Spirit, it is always the masculine pronoun. The rules of Greek grammar are broken when Jesus refers to the Spirit using masculine pronouns. The point? The Paraclete is not an "it". The Paraclete- Spirit is not an impersonal force or influence. The Paraclete-Spirit is a Person. And this makes all the difference in the world for discipleship. For, as long as the Spirit is thought of as "it" we can seek to manipulate "it" for our own ego-centric needs and purposes. But once the Spirit is thought of as "He" and "you", the tables are turned; the issues become his purpose and plans. We find this Person-hood of the Paraclete-Spirit lived out in the Book of Acts, the story of the Church. Luke tells us that the Spirit speaks (1:16, 8:29, 10:19), the Spirit can be led to (5:3), is tempted (5:9), He bears witness (5:32), is resisted (7:51), He snatches (8:39), gives orders (13:20), sends (13:4), thinks (15:28),

forbids (16:6), prevents (16:7), He appoints (20:28). This Person-hood of the Paraclete-Spirit is also lived out in the New Testament letters. The writers tell us that the Paraclete helps us pray (Romans 8:26), the Paraclete searches our hearts (1 Cor. 2:10), He teaches (1 Cor. 2:13), He leads (Rom. 8:14, Gal. 5:18), He speaks (1 Tim. 4:1, Heb. 3:7, 10:15), He predicts (1 Peter 1:11), He groans (Romans 8:26), He can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30).

The Spirit Jesus sends in His physical absence is not an impersonal force or influence. The Paraclete is as personal as Jesus in whose name he comes. (Michael Green, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, pg 43).

Secondly, Jesus says, "I will ask the Father and He will give you another Paraclete. Another. Mark that word. It, too, is crucial for understanding Jesus' surprising claim. You see, there are two Greek words translated 'another' in the New Testament. One is the word 'heteros' which comes from into the English language in words like heterogeneous, heterosexual. "Hetero" means another of a different kind. The other word is "allon". "Allon" means another of the same kind. It is the second word which Jesus uses. The Holy Spirit is an "allon Paracleteon", "a second of the same kind and not of a different kind." (H.B. Sweet)

The question is, Who is the first Paraclete when the Spirit is the same kind? The first Paraclete is Jesus Himself. He is the first One called in alongside as comforter, counselor, helper, advocate. And He promises that when He goes away physically He will send in another of the same kind. In Jesus' physical absence another just like Jesus comes in alongside.

Now, why is this so crucial to grasp? Because it tells us that the Person and Work of the Spirit cannot be separated from the Person and the Work of Jesus. New Testament Scholar James D.G. Dunn puts it this way: "The unity of Jesus and Spirit in personality and mission is reality expressed by identifying the Spirit as the "other Paraclete" (John 14:16), where Jesus is by implication the first Paraclete (1 John 2:1), so that the Paraclete continues the presence and work of the Son once the Son has departed. "Thus the Spirit is conformed to the character and work of Jesus and only that Spirit which displays that character and testifies to Jesus the Christ is to be recognized as the Spirit of God (1 John 4:1-3, 6; 5:6-8) ("Spirit" in *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol 3, p. 704)

Another of the same kind. Which is why Jesus can say to his disciples "you know Him". The "another" has been abiding upon and in Jesus all along. Spirit descended upon Jesus at His baptism. Spirit led Jesus for 40 days in wilderness of testing. Spirit anointed Him to ????? ?? By the Spirit Jesus Christ casts out demons. As long as they have been with Jesus they have been with the Paraclete who is with Jesus. When the Spirit comes the disciples do not meet a stranger. The "Another" stamped with the very personality of Jesus. Another of the same kind.

Now here is the heart of the matter. The Paraclete-Spirit comes to take the place of Jesus in His physical absence. But because He is "another of the same kind", the presence of the Paraclete is the Presence of Jesus! "I will not leave you as orphans", he says. "I will come to you." How? In the "another".

Thus the rest of the New Testament speaks of the presence of the Spirit and the presence of Jesus Christ in the same breath. To be "in Christ" is to be "in the Spirit"; to be "indwelt by Christ" is to be "indwelt by the Spirit; to have Christ "make intercessions for us" is to have the Spirit "make intercession for us". (P.K. Jevott; see Romans 8:9-10, 8:26, 34)

Now the Paraclete-is not the Paraclete-Jesus. Yet they cannot be separated in experience. To receive Jesus is to receive the Spirit; to receive the Spirit is to receive Jesus! "Allon". "The Father and I will send 'another of the same kind'".

It gets better! The Father. The Father. Not only can we not separate the Person and Work of the Spirit from the Person and Work of the Spirit from the Person and work of Jesus and the Father. Jesus does

not speak of the Paraclete without also speaking of the Father. John 14:26 – The father sends the Spirit in Jesus' name. John 15:26 – Jesus sends the Spirit from the Father. John 15:26 – The spirit "proceeds from the Father". The way Jesus speaks implies a distinction between the Father, the Son and the Spirit. But the way He speaks also implies a oneness.

So, after promising the "Another Paraclete" Jesus goes to one of the most wonderful verses of the Bible. John 14:23. Listen

"Those who love Me will keep My word, and My Father will love them." Now listen "And We will come to them and make our home with them." Did you hear those pronouns? We. Our? "We will come to them and make our home with them." Theologian Paul Jewett made the point best: "when this other One comes, even though He comes in Jesus' stead, it is also true that his coming is the coming of Jesus and the Father as well. Glory! We cannot separate the Person of the God-head. "The God Who dwells with us and in us is the One God Who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (Ibid) Another Paraclete allon, of the same kind!

There is a third thing I want to highlight from John 14:16-18. "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete to be with you forever". With you forever! Up to this point in time, the presence of Jesus was restricted by geography and schedule. If Jesus were in Nazareth, for instance, and the disciples in Jerusalem, He could not be with them. In the coming of the "Another" the presence of Jesus is no longer restricted. As Michael Green of England puts it: "it is the task of the Paraclete to universalize the presence of Jesus." Green continues: "In the days of His flesh Jesus was limited by space and time. His physical departure made possible the coming of the Spirit as Paraclete and there would be no barriers of space and time to prevent disciples bring in intimate contact with Him (page 42-43). We need not go to Jerusalem and fight the crowds to get to the Saviour. He comes not only on Sunday or Tuesday or whatever day it was He used to come to our village. He comes everyday and stays with us forever. In the presence of the Another the reality of Jesus as Immanuel, God with us, is realized and universalized. You cannot go anywhere where He is not with you. The Paraclete fulfills Jesus' promise "I Am with you always."

As good as that is it gets better! Better? Better than with? The fourth thing I want to highlight from John 14:16-18. "I will ask the Father and He will give you another Paraclete who lived with ... and will be in you. In you. In you!

It is better because the disciples would "find the relationship even closer than fellowship with Jesus in the days of His flesh... He has dwelt with them, but the one Whom He promises as another Paraclete will dwell IN them." (Green, page 43) You cannot get closer than in. So the apostle Paul can say to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 3:16 "do you (pl) not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" 1 Cor. 6:19 – "do you not know that your (sng) body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?" The word translated "temple" is the word "naos", and refers to the most sacred part of the Jewish temple, to the Holy of Holies. Because of the coming of the Paraclete our bodies, mortal and sinful though they be, have become the Holy of Holies, the sacred dwelling place of the Living One.

Bruner, Swiss theologian expressed it so well in his work on the Apostles Creed, a summary of basic Christian truth. Bruner writes this: "The theme that is before us is none other than that of the God Who is present who comes to be God who is experienced." Bruner continues: "Whereas the first article of the Creed – "I believe in God the Father" is concerned with God the Creator; and where as the second article – "I believe in Jesus Christ, His Son" – is concerned with the entering of God into history, the event of the once-for-all historical revelation, the third article – "I believe in the Holy Spirit" – is concerned that the 'then' becomes 'today', that the 'there' becomes 'here' that the is 'without', becomes what is 'within', that the 'Christ-for-us', becomes 'Christ-in-us'".

In you. In you. oh precious preposition 'IN'. The question is" what is the Paraclete doing "IN" us? We come then to the fifth thing I want to highlight for John 14;16. We are habitual people indwelt by a Person of the Another!

Jesus speaks of "Holy Spirit" and "Spirit of Truth". Holy is Truth. The effect of the IN-dwelling of the Paraclete is a function of those two words: Holy and Truth.

Holy. We say and sing the word so often we forget what it means. It means "Wholly other", "distinct". And it means "pure", "radically pure". Clean. The Paraclete, dwelling alongside and with and in is pure fire.. And he is working to purify us, to cleanse us, to free us from all that displeases the Father. The In dwelling Paraclete is fulfilling God's word: " you shall be holy for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev. 19:2; 1 Peter 1:15-16)

Which is why, although the Presence of the Paraclete comforts, the Presence also disturbs. The Paraclete creates in us "a holy dis-content" with the way things are in ourselves, in our relationships, in the church, in the world. The Paraclete will not rest, nor let us rest until we are made like Jesus... Holy.

Now please note: it is the Paraclete who makes us holy, who makes us clean. Not we! We do not make ourselves holy, clean. The Paraclete comes to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. And does it form within. This is such a relief! We do not become holy by observing holy rules. We become holy by being indwelt by a holy presence. Oh blessed Paraclete! We become holy by being indwelt by You! We are being transformed from the inside out.

And also note: the Holy one comes to dwell in us while we are still unholy! It is the miracle of grace. The Holy One, who, says the prophet Habakkuk, is too holy to look on sin (1:13) takes up residence in unholy, sinful people! Holy indwellers.

And Spirit of Truth. Three times Jesus calls the indwelling presence Spirit of Truth. Who, says Jesus, will teach us (14:26) and guide us into all truth (16:13). Another great relief! He dwells in us, teaching us, teaching us the truth. The truth about ourselves, the truth about the world, the truth about the nature and character of the Living God.

Not all at once. But step by step as we are able to handle the truth. In the Upper Room Jesus told the first disciples, "I have many more things to say to you but cannot bear them now" (16:12). But He did say the things later. The Paraclete came, and said what the disciples were not able to bear at the time. The Paraclete comes to us and unfolds the whole truth. He, as it were, slowly unpeeling an onion, layer after layer. Only in this case, as C.S. Lewis observed, the further in you go the bigger the onion gets, until you discover that the inside is bigger than the outside! "You shall know the truth," said Jesus "and the truth shall make you free." the Paraclete comes to live IN us to make that happen. Again, a great relief! For we are living in times of great confusion and uncertainty. We are regularly caught in the cross-currents of conflicting understanding of the nature of the human person. The Spirit of Truth is in us, guiding us through all the complexities.

Bring it in closer. He helps us in our workplaces. In our workplaces we can find ourselves feeling that something is "off". Something does not square up. Something is "eccentric", off centre, out of center. We cannot put our finger on it. We wake up at night wrestling, trying to understand why we feel unsettled or unsafe. The Spirit of Truth is in us; helping us understand what we are dealing with. Or bring it in even closer – our family lives. In our family system we can find ourselves feeling that something is "off", eccentric, out of center. We are freely jerked around emotionally, manipulated but not sure in what ways. We cannot get our hands on what is troubling us. The Spirit of Truth is in us; unraveling the lies, healing the pain.

Or even closer in. In our own hearts. We feel something is "off" in our own hearts. Out of center. The prophet Jeremiah laments, "the heart is more deceitful than all else. Who can understand it? The

Paraclete! He can understand our hearts! He knows all the ins and outs of the human heart conscious and sub-conscious. He sees through the games we play, the twisting of words, the spin-doctoring. And He is in us leading us into freedom. "You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." he sees it all and moves to free. The Paraclete loves Jesus. His great passion is that we know Jesus in all His fullness. His great passion is that we see all of life in light of Truth. That we read the newspaper in light of Jesus. That we surf the Internet in light of Jesus. That we watch television in light of Jesus. That we access social and political movements in light of Jesus. That we understand the movements of our hearts in light of Jesus.

Brothers and sisters: A teacher has taken up residence in us! A theologian live sin us! Who wants us to really live in light of all that Jesus has accomplished for us. He will teach us the benefits of Jesus' death. He will teach us the consequences of Jesus' resurrection. he will teach us the full implications of Jesus' Ascension. He will teach us to live lives in the expectation of Jesus' coming again.

Holy. and True. "The Holy Spirit will guide you into all the truth."

"Let not your hearts be troubles." "It is to your advantage that I go away." Really How can that possibly be? Because, when Jesus goes, He sends the Another, the Paraclete. A person of the same kind as Jesus who continues Jesus' presence with us. Who comes to live In us. Who slowly, but surely, makes us more and more like the Holy One helping us to see everything in light of Him who is the Truth. That is the space in which we now follow.