

Where God Dwells (Part 1)

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John 14.15 - 31

Those who have followed Vladimir Putin's unprovoked assault on Ukraine have seen the pain etched on the faces of the survivors in Irpin, Mariupol, and Bucha as they find and bury their dead and walk through the ruins of their city. They grieve over the loss of family members – some who were first tortured; the loss of their homes – places once filled with happy memories; their businesses, Churches, and places of entertainment – all places that were part of the fabric of their lives – now gone. The irony of Putin's agenda is very apparent in his assault on the civilians of Mariupol, the very people he claims to be liberating, but is indiscriminately killing. The devastation we see in Ukraine is a picture of what evil looks like – a portrait of the agenda of satan. It is something that those who reject Jesus in favor of remaining in the kingdom of darkness, over which the devil has control, should closely examine.

The situation in Ukraine helps us visualize people with troubled hearts, people to whom Jesus reaches out and offers help. It provides a glimpse of a world turned upside down by evil. That was about to happen to Jesus' disciples in the hours following His final meeting with them before His death and crucifixion. The words of Jesus to them are often referred to as His *Farewell or Upper Room Discourse*. Jesus sought to prepare them for what lay immediately ahead as well as during the years between His ascension to heaven and His return one day for His Church.

His words, which were initially directed to His immediate disciples, are equally applicable to you and me, people in Ukraine, or to people anywhere else in our troubled world. Jesus began His remarks in John 14 with the counsel, "*Let not your hearts be troubled.*" (14:1, ESV). He proceeded to tell them how that could happen. He reminded them of the only legitimate Source of hope and outlined critical truths to hold on to. Then He told them about His *Provision* which would be essential to victory over troubled hearts. Not just to get through the turmoil and uncertainty in the days immediately following, but throughout the rest of their lives when they would face opposition, suffering, and hardship as He had.

Of course, central is the Source of hope, Jesus Christ, who said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (14:6. ESV). Just as they had trusted in God all their lives, they needed to hold to unwavering trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior. Coupled with that is Jesus' promise He will return for His own (14.3). Jesus also pointed out to His disciples and to all believers who would follow, that they would have the amazing privilege of doing greater works than He did. When Jesus promised salvation and redemption to people it was contingent on His death, resurrection, and ascension; however, no such contingency remains for followers of Jesus Christ who can now, triumphantly and with certainty, point back to the finished work of Christ. The hope we offer to the watching world is based upon the truth of

Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension. Jesus is now seated at the righthand of His Father, "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come." (Eph 1:21, ESV). Those whose perspective on life is earthbound will find victory as they encounter adversity, illusive at best, and totally absent at worst. Genuine and long-lasting victory comes exclusively from an enduring and abiding relationship with Jesus Christ.

An abiding relationship with Jesus Christ also includes a supernatural provision which Jesus told His disciples about before He left them. Victory in a world opposed to God, is dependent on that provision. Receiving it necessitated Jesus doing the very thing that was troubling the hearts of His disciples – He had to return to His Father, which meant going to the cross followed by His resurrection and ascension. He pointed out to them that they should have rejoiced about His return to His Father where He would return to the glory He had before His incarnation (14.28). The reason for His followers to rejoice was He would send another *Helper* to be with them.

John 14:16–17 (ESV) ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

In the aftermath of the crucifixion, the disciples would feel abandoned and leaderless – they would feel like orphans. Filling that void was one of the roles of the *Helper* Jesus would send.

John 14:18–19 (ESV) ¹⁸"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.

This morning I will give attention to several details about the *Helper* Jesus sent.

The Nature of the Helper

Following Jesus' ascension, He would ask His Father who would send another *Helper* (14.16, 26). The Greek word is *parakletos*, and the variety of words used to translate it, provide some insight into His nature: *Comforter* (KJV), *Counselor* (NIV84), *Advocate* (NLT, NIV2011), *Helper* (ESV, NASB, NKJV). Implicit in the word *parakletos* is that He will come alongside of a person to minister to them, give direction, defend, strengthen, provide aid and assistance as needed, watch over them, and so on. It is readily apparent how indispensable the *Helper* is in caring for people not just with *troubled hearts*, but in navigating through life in a God-honoring manner.

Do not miss the adjective, *another*, before the word *Helper*. The *Helper* would continue with many of the roles Jesus had. He would bear witness to the truth as Jesus had, convict people of sin, minister comfort to people, and come alongside as Jesus was as He prepared them for what lay immediately ahead. Thus, while Jesus would be gone after His ascension, He would have a replacement. And in contrast to Jesus Who had been with His disciples for only three years, the *Helper* would be with them forever – He was not going to leave them – ever!

This *Helper* is none other than the *Holy Spirit* (14.26), Who is given the title, *Spirit of Truth* (14.17), with which He is also referred to in 15.26 where Jesus said, *He will bear witness of Me*,

and in 16:13, “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.” (John 16:13, ESV). A defining characteristic of the *Helper* is Truth. He functions in complete harmony with Jesus, Who declared He is the *truth* (14:6). The Holy Spirit would be instrumental in inspiring the authors of Scripture to record the very words of God, so that what we received is the *truth*, and is therefore completely trustworthy and reliable.

2 Peter 1:21 (ESV) “For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” It is no wonder then that the Holy Spirit is instrumental in conveying God’s truth to followers of Jesus Christ.

It is also the *Spirit of Truth* Who illuminates those words of Scripture for us and impresses them upon our hearts. He fulfills the roles detailed in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 of *teaching, reproving, correcting, and training* God’s children with the Word of God. In the same light, the Holy Spirit is active in unfolding God’s truth in the heart and mind of the believer as described by Paul in his letter to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 2:10–12 (ESV) ¹⁰these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹For 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. ¹²Now 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.

It is common for people with troubled hearts to feel abandoned and think no one cares about them; that the future holds no hope. However, it is God’s truth that conquers those lies. God provides hope even in the most hopeless looking situations because no one will ever snatch one of His children out of His hand – they are safe with Him; He has their back. That which is absolutely crucial, no one can take away from a follower of Jesus Christ. The truth is essential in addressing troubled hearts. However, in a broader sense, it is essential in understanding how we should live in a manner which pleases our Lord. As we read God’s word we uncover truths about the nature and Person of God, His promises and provisions, His standards of righteousness, and so on. In our world where people dismiss information they disagree with by simply declaring it to be *Fake News*, it is reassuring that we have God’s *Truth* by which we can accurately assess the validity of claims about God and how people might walk with Him.

The Recipients of the Helper

Jesus began His section on the Helper by identifying who would be recipients of the *Spirit of Truth*, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” (14:15). He added a few verses later, “Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” (14:21). He reiterated similar qualifications in John 14:23, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” Given the repetition in this

passage it is rather obvious that only those who love the Lord and demonstrate that love by obeying Him, will receive the Holy Spirit.

Don Carson, a former professor of mine, makes the observation that, “loving Jesus, obeying Jesus, and having faith in Jesus constitute elements of an indivisible whole”¹ The suggestion that one can truly love the Lord, while living a life of disregard for God’s commandments and what He says about what living righteously consists of, is entirely foreign to Scripture. A genuine love for the Lord cannot coexist with ongoing sin and disobedience to God’s word. Carson goes on, “The passage [John 14.15-24] therefore forces Christians to examine themselves to see if their life is characterized by love for Christ, obedience to Christ, and faith in Christ, and by a deepening awareness of the fathomless depths of God’s love; or by worldliness as the fourth Gospel presents it.”²

Those who are given the *Spirit of Truth* are characterized by love for Him, while in sharp contrast, the world will not receive the *Spirit of Truth* because it neither sees nor knows Him. He is entirely foreign to them.

John 14:17 (ESV) “the world cannot receive [the Spirit of Truth], because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

It may initially seem that there is no way for an unsaved person (of the world), to be saved and become a recipient of the Holy Spirit; however, that would be an incorrect deduction since at one time every follower of Jesus was among the unbelievers – they were without God and therefore without hope. Paul reminded the believers at Ephesus of their former unbelief.

Ephesians 2:1–2 (ESV) ¹And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—

If it were not for God’s grace and mercy all people would remain lost. The great “*But God*” passages of Scripture make it clear, that because of God’s intervention when He sent His Son, all one needs to do is believe the Gospel and place his or her trust in Jesus Christ for salvation.

Ephesians 2:4–6 (ESV) ⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved— ⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

In contrast to those who trust in the Lord, love Him, and demonstrate that love through obedience to Him, the world dismisses Jesus’ words.

John 14:24 (ESV) ²⁴Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me.

¹ D. A. Carson, *The Farewell Discourse and Final Prayer of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 60.

² Ibid, 61.

On a previous occasion, Jesus gave this assessment of the world and their response to the truth. “The world . . . hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil.” (John 7:7, ESV). And following a confrontation with the Jewish leaders, He said, “But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me.” (8:45). They reject Him *because* He told them the truth; they did not even want to hear the truth spoken, so intense was their hatred. It follows then that because of the world’s rejection, that Jesus will not manifest Himself to them, but only to those who love Him (14:21).

The Relationship of the *Helper* with Followers of Jesus

One feature of the *Spirit of Truth* that stands out is His residence; Jesus paid particular attention to it. Note the following statement of Jesus:

John 14:17 (ESV) ¹⁷even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for **he dwells with you and will be in you.**

Jesus makes it clear that the *Comforter* will reside in His followers. Perhaps a look back into the past expands our understanding of what this means. Following the exodus of Israel out of Egypt, God instructed Moses to build a *Tabernacle* and provided him with the exact details for it. It was an exquisite tent-like structure which was portable and was filled with symbols which fostered a focus on God and utensils used in offering sacrifices to God. The centerpiece of the *Tabernacle* was the *Most Holy Place* which symbolized the dwelling place of God among His people. Only the High Priest could enter the *Most Holy Place* and only once a year on the *Feast of Yom Kippur*, and there were specific preparations the High Priest needed to follow before entering.

Some 400 years after Israel entered the *Promised Land* the *Temple* was built by Solomon to replace the portable *Tabernacle*. The *Temple* was a grand structure beyond imagination. Centuries later it would be replaced by *Herod’s Temple* which was considered quite grand as well, but according to the Biblical account of the first *Temple*, the one built by Solomon, *Herod’s Temple* paled in comparison. To give you an idea of the grandeur and beauty of *Solomon’s Temple*, the *Temple* and its furnishings and accessories contained 3,750 tons of gold and ten times as much silver. At today’s price of about \$2,000 per ounce that works out to over \$200 billion US dollars. That is a lot of gold, and a lot of money! Imagine spending that much money on a single building and its furnishings today! The reason the *Temple* was so magnificent was because of its *Occupant* – God!

When the *Temple* was dedicated around 1,000 BC, Solomon acknowledged that it could not contain God when he said, “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!” (1 Kings 8:27, ESV). God of course is *omnipresent*, which means He is everywhere at the same time, consequently He cannot be contained within any structure; however, despite that, He chose to dwell within the *Most Holy Place* in the *Temple* to convey to His people that He was present among them. The next step in the unfolding of *God dwelling among His people* happened when Jesus left the glories of heaven and came to earth and clothed Himself with humanity. John described it this way, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his

glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14, ESV). However, on the eve of Jesus’ crucifixion, He told His disciples that was about to change; He was going to leave. While He would no longer be physically present, He would send a replacement – the *Spirit of Truth*. No longer would the dwelling place of God be the *Most Holy Place*, it would be followers of Jesus, a change visually conveyed by God when He tore the curtain in front of the *Most Holy Place* in two, *from top to bottom* (Mark 15:38) after Jesus died on the cross. God would remain personally present and remain with His children forever by means of the Holy Spirit. Thus, Jesus would not abandon His disciples as orphans but would care for His children from His ascension until He returns for His own.

Fully comprehending what it means for God to dwell within people stretches us beyond our finite limit of understanding, and it should, therefore, stimulate our worship of our God Who willingly makes His dwelling place within us. Note the language of John 14:17 where we are told that “He dwells *with* you and will be *in* you.” On the one hand, the Holy Spirit comes alongside of us, but on the other He takes up residence within us in the most intimate way. Another mystery we fail to fully comprehend is the Trinity – one God who exists in three Persons, all equally God, yet with distinct roles. The unity of the Godhead is apparent in this passage. Jesus said the Holy Spirit would dwell in His followers, yet afterwards He said, “*I will come to you*” (14:18), followed by “*We will come to him and make our home with him [the one who loves Him]*” (14:23). The Godhead of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is inseparable and dwells within us by means of the Holy Spirit.

Paul referred to this incomprehensible relationship by saying believers are *God’s Temple*.

1 Corinthians 3:16–17 (ESV) ¹⁶Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? ¹⁷If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple.

Paul went on to emphasize the importance of living righteously and not being unequally yoked with unbelievers because believers are the dwelling place of God. In doing so he quoted God’s promise from Leviticus 26:12 that He would dwell among His people.

2 Corinthians 6:16 (ESV) ¹⁶What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

While fully comprehending this, eludes us, we are sufficiently able to do so that we can not help but fall on our faces before God and examine our lives to see places where our view of God and our commitment to Him is impoverished. The Temple with all of its magnificence and beauty, was designed by God as a visual image to give us a glimpse into Who He is – to recognize He is supreme over all gods fashioned by man and His majesty and holiness far exceeds our comprehension. And that is to stimulate our worship of Him alone.

When one is captivated with Who God is – this same God who despite being omnipresent is willing to dwell within us, and has promised to care for His children – our focus shifts when our

hearts are troubled. Our focus shifts from what is troubling us, to the One Who knows all about it. And if after we have prayed about our circumstances, He chooses to not change them, we know He will provide the grace and strength needed to get through them victoriously. Even Vladimir Putin who is infatuated with his position and power and believes he is above rebuke, will not negate the ability of God to care for the very people he terrorizes with his demonically inspired agenda of evil. Jesus will minister comfort and assurance to those who call upon Him. The truth is, that because Jesus is alive, we have a message of hope to a lost and dying world! A hope that finds its ultimate fulfillment in heaven where followers of Jesus Christ shall be in God's presence and He will dwell with them for all eternity. That is when God dwelling with His children will reach its pinnacle.

Listen reflectively to the following song in which several of the roles of the Holy Spirit are highlighted.

Holy Spirit Living Breath of God (Official Lyric Video) - Keith & Kristyn Getty

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kDYjn-YdnD4>