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SERMON TITLE: "The Mission, and the Spirit Who Empowers"

SCRIPTURE: John 14:15-24, 20:21-23

DATE: June 10, 2018

Check out the service at www.fpcd.org.

READ John 14:15-24, 20:21-23, Ezekiel 37:1-10

For the last several years, whenever my husband and I visited my father in Kansas City, I always knew that one of those days would be spent in his office. My father would call me in and he would take me through all of his accounts, investments, files, and what I was to do in the future.

He made sure I understood his method of investing and the contents of his assets. He took me to meet his accountant, his financial adviser, and his bankers. He never lived as if his lifestyle was for him only. Certainly, he had hobbies and habits that belonged solely to him, but concerning his responsibility to the family he always had a view of the next generation, and even the one after that.

It took a lot of self-restraint for him to reach his goals but he had a vision for providing the means for stability, like education, home ownership, lack of debt, and so on. As the years passed he began putting some things in my hands, under his tutelage.

Your family may set goals too; perhaps good family relationships, or well-managed health and nutrition, or running your own business. I am sure you were left with a legacy of some worth to you, or you are doing the same for your children.

Because I loved and respected my father, I became increasingly responsive to his instructions, though they were many. They weren't really a list of rules, but they played out in a lifestyle that he lived himself and strongly suggested I follow.

Now I see much better the wisdom of what he said. Now that he has gone on and I am the full manager, I am strongly influenced by the legacy he planned and it influences me greatly.

Jesus was a planner. The time for his exit was soon to come. He was well aware of why he had been sent:

- ~ He spoke for his Father,
- ~ He came as light so everyone who believes does not remain in darkness,

~ He proclaimed faith in himself as God's Son.

He did not judge those who did not believe him. Rather, the words that Jesus spoke while here will serve as judge on the last day. (See John 12:44-50)

In other words, your response to Jesus will stand.

But to those who did believe, and those of us who have become God's children through him, he says, simply, "*Love and obey my words.*" How do we do that? Let's hear the passage: READ John 14:15-24

Jesus knows the world's faith history. He knows that even believers struggle with obeying God's words. In fact, we could take a look at ourselves, knowing that one week we do great! And then in a day all of our faith can fall away. Constant idols try to unseat Jesus from the throne of our lives.

So what is Jesus to do? He knows the history of Israel. He is looking at twelve disciples who are about to be without him. There are seventy more in a larger discipleship group. There are hundreds more in the crowds who believe. There are going to be thousands of believers in the next century and hundreds of thousands in the one following that, until right down through the ages there are millions. Will we all be just as defeated as Israel? Just as prone to idols?

Jesus does not think so. Jesus is a planner.

Jesus is going to pray that God call "One alongside," the *παράκλητος*, or Advocate. *παράκλητος* in common Greek usage at that time meant to "help another in court," not as a lawyer but more as a sage.

It is advice from a wise person, but not legal counsel. Think of the world as a large court and you as a Christian needing wisdom in how to conduct yourself. For example, once when I went to court I was given this advice by someone very familiar with the court system, "If they ask you the temperature, do not give a weather report."

That isn't a rule, but it is wise general advice for being questioned in court or for when you are facing hostility. That's what a Paraclete does. He helps you stay faithful to

Christian ways and the Christian lifestyle. The παράκλητος helps us as a friend. He applies or interprets the words of Jesus at just the time we need them.

The παράκλητος (noun) is also a παράκαλεο. That's a verb. It means our Advocate encourages, exhorts, and comforts.

So the Holy Spirit is a noun and a verb – an Advocate, Helper, and Supporter, and also someone who encourages, exhorts, and comforts us.

Do you accept help and support from God? Oh yeah!! We all have those stories and some of them are very dramatic. If you were to live each day with an awareness that you have that Advocate who stands with you—a παράκλητος from heaven standing up for you, **how might your life be different?** If you could wake up and say, "Thank you, Holy Spirit. I know you will argue my case for me when I face challenges, hostility, and obstacles."

Keep in mind that the Holy Spirit comes down from the Heavenly Father (15:26) at the request of the Son (14:16) who is aware of your every need, and he comes in Jesus' name (14:26) and whom not only the Father, but also Jesus sends (15:26).

He not only helps you and argues your case, but he also encourages, exhorts, and comforts you. This is care 24-7.

Are you engaged with your Helper at all times?

If you lived each day with an awareness that you have an advocate alongside you from heaven who offers παράκαλεο, that is, encouragement, exhortation, and comfort, **how might your life be different?**

Of course, all of this is for those who believe in Jesus—not the world at large because **you are special. You are blessed because you belong.** You are to grow into the Spirit and into living the words of Jesus.

Jesus' words are not a list of dos and don'ts. Jesus' words are not a program of sin management. It's not just straightening out your mess so you are a presentable Christian. Living the words of Jesus is a lifestyle. It is like talking to him like he is right here in the room speaking to you.

God came to Ezekiel. Ezekiel was a prophet in Israel during a very bad time. The nation was falling apart. Its people had turned away from God and there had been huge attacks from other nations. One day God's Spirit carried

Ezekiel away to a distant valley. The valley was filled with dry brittle bones. God asked Ezekiel, "Can these dead bones become live people again?"

Ezekiel answered, "Only you know the answer, Lord!"

Ezekiel could not even hope for life in those dead bones. But God's presence was there. God's presence brings great hope.

"Speak a prophetic message to these bones and say, 'Dry bones, listen to the word of the LORD! This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Look! I am going to put breath into you and make you live again! I will put flesh and muscles on you and cover you with skin. I will put breath into you, and you will come to life. Then you will know that I am the LORD.'" (37:4-6)

No matter how lifeless you feel, no matter how hopeless you are, God's Spirit can transform you if you devote yourself to his Word and get to know the Person behind the words.

Like my father trained me about something that he lived by, and you might train your family members in something that is important to you, we have an Advocate to train us in Kingdom of God living.

This is how Jesus began his process of transformation. It was on the night after the resurrection. The disciples were behind locked doors, scared to death and not knowing how to move forward. Jesus appeared. He said, "Peace be with you." He then activated his plan for his poor, beaten down disciples. He breathed on them:

"As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you. Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." (Jn 20:21-23)

Through the Holy Spirit's presence you step into Jesus' lifestyle. By the Holy Spirit's dwelling in you he is bringing the Kingdom of God into your life here and now. Jesus is a planner. His plan gives you the power to spread it to your loved ones and to many, many others.

Have you embraced the Holy Spirit? Are you on God's hopeful mission of transformation? Listen to Jesus' voice and obey his words. It leads to the joy of experiencing the Kingdom of God now.

AMEN