

Last week, we learned about who the Holy Spirit is and about what that means for us as Christians in our daily lives. The Spirit is the Paraclete, as we just sang. He is the Helper, the one who helps us through all things. The Holy Spirit is God. God himself is with us through all of the troubles of this life. And the Holy Spirit bears witness, which means that he speaks through us whenever we speak to the world of Jesus. All of these things together show us that we can be confident in the face of a hostile world, because if God is for us, Christians, who can be against us?

And this week, we learn a little bit more about who the Spirit is and what that means for us. Jesus tells us, just before our reading for today, in John chapter 14, verses 16 and 17: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even 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." I know some of this we've already heard, such as the Spirit being the Helper. But the Holy Spirit is more than just the Helper, as Jesus teaches us in our reading for today.

Because first of all, Jesus calls the Holy Spirit "the Spirit of truth." And we did hear that last week, when the Spirit of truth leads us into the truth and helps us to bear witness. He helps us to proclaim the truth of Jesus Christ. But being the Spirit of truth means more than just that. Jesus says again in our reading for today, verse 26: "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." So being the Spirit of truth, then, means that the Holy Spirit teaches us. He is our teacher. We wouldn't know anything about God apart from him. Because we can't come to God on our own. We can't come to God because of our sin, but the Holy Spirit comes to us and teaches us the truth. If we know anything about God, it's because the Holy Spirit has revealed it to us.

Paul shows us this in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 when he's talking about the hidden wisdom of God. Paul says, verses 9 and 10: "But, as it is written, 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him'—these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God." The world can't know any of this, Paul says. The world has no idea who God truly is, because they suppress the truth in unrighteousness. But if we know the truth, if we know what God has prepared for those who love him, it is only because of the Spirit. We're here this morning because of the Spirit. We know what we know because of the Spirit. Whenever we read the Bible and understand it, that's the Holy Spirit at work. Whenever we hear the Word and receive it, that's the Holy Spirit at work. Whenever we grow in faith, when we learn to trust God more and more, that's the Holy Spirit at work. We are who we are as Christians because of the Holy Spirit alone. And so it's good for us to pray for him whenever we study the Bible, whenever we go to church, whenever we hear a sermon, whatever it may be. To ask him to guide us into all truth and to teach us more and more so that we would be built up into everlasting life. Yes, Christians, we are who we are because the Spirit of God has taught us.

But what Jesus says here in John 14 also shows us that we have the Bible because of the Holy Spirit. We have the Scriptures because the Spirit of truth gave them to us through the prophets and the apostles. Jesus promised the apostles that they would remember everything that he had taught them through the work of the Holy Spirit. And under the guidance of the Spirit, they wrote

down what Jesus taught them and gave it to us today. Peter says in 2 Peter chapter 1: "No prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." That's why we can trust the Bible, Christians, because it's not just the words of men, the way that some like to say. Whatever we have written down here in the Bible comes to us from God himself through the work of the Holy Spirit. It was the Spirit who inspired the prophets and the apostles to give us what is written here.

Now, of course, I know it's true: we don't always understand everything in the Bible. There are some things that are just too difficult for us, even though there are some things that are clear. But that's not the Bible's fault, Christians. It's because of our own limitations, our own lack of understanding that makes it unclear. But when we pray for the Spirit to guide us and to teach us, many things will become clear. Who better to tell us what something means than the Author himself? And so the Spirit teaches us also in this way, by giving us the Bible and by teaching us and making clear to us what it means for us. That's also what the Spirit is doing.

Jesus again says, John 14, verse 17: "You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you." Now, dwelling with us is probably easier to understand, right? We get that God is with us. We get that he's going to help us through all things, that he will guide us through life. That's easy enough. But dwelling in us is a great and profound mystery. Because the Holy Spirit is not only with us, Christians. The Holy Spirit lives within every believing heart. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3: "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple."

And that's important for us to remember, because I think sometimes we're tempted to think that God's temple is somewhere outside of us. Because, yes, in the Old Testament, it was an external thing. The temple where God promised to be was built in Jerusalem. But both of those temples were destroyed, first by the Babylonians and then by the Romans. But those temples pointed towards the true temple, the greater temple which is to come, the one that we now are. And for this reason, we must not think of God's temple as being something outside of us, something external to us. We might be tempted to think of it as like this building, the one that we're in here today. This church building we sometimes think of as God's temple. And while we rightly show respect to this building for God's sake, it's only a building. It will not last. Eventually this building will be gone, either because it's destroyed in time or because it's destroyed on the last day. It will not continue forever. But this building is not the temple of God. You are! The Spirit is within you. The Spirit lives in you. You are the living temple of God. To put it another way, you are the walking, talking, breathing Church of the living God. You are the Church to the world. This is a very great mystery, but what an amazing thing it is! To know that we are the temple of God, and God's temple is indeed holy.

But what that means for us, Christians, is so very important. Knowing that the Spirit lives within us changes how we live as Christians. First of all, it changes how we live and act within this body itself. Paul again says, 1 Corinthians chapter 6: "Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." So Paul tells us, then, that sexual sins are especially evil. They hurt us and abuse the body.

In fact, they hurt and abuse the body and the soul in a way that other sins do not. That's why we have to speak so firmly against such things. Some sins are indeed worse than others. But these kinds of sins are especially dangerous because we are God's temple. Imagine if somebody broke in here, for example, and utterly trashed the place. If they broke all the windows, spray-painted the altar, wrote obscenities on the walls, tore pages out of the hymnals, just utterly trashed it. We would be rightly upset. That isn't how you treat God's house! This is too important a place to be treated in that way! And yet Christians, this is exactly what we are doing when we give into sexual immorality. We are trashing God's temple, because we are the living temple of God. If we show respect to this building, and rightfully so, how much more should we show respect to our bodies, which are the true temple of the living God? As Paul says, flee from sexual immorality!

But one more thing that we learn from this, Christians, is that we are all God's temple. Paul again says in Ephesians 2: "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit." And what Paul means is we are tempted to think of ourselves as being the temple of God all by ourselves. That I am the temple of the Holy Spirit, that the Holy Spirit lives with in me individually. And that is true to a point. We are all the temple of the Holy Spirit, and he lives within each believing heart. But it's only part of the picture. And if we focus only on one part of the picture, we're going to fall into error. We're not going to see the full truth. And the full truth, Christians, is that we are all God's temple. We are all part of one body, which we call the Church. And in Jesus Christ, we are being built up together as one in the Spirit.

Think of the bricks that make up this building. Each believer in Jesus Christ is a living brick within the Church. You have to have all of them together in order to form this structure. And God dwells within all of us together. We are united as one through faith in Jesus. And if we are all built together, Christians, should we then despise one another? Should we act as if we don't need each other? Can one brick make a building? Can I tear out one brick from this wall and not expect the whole structure to suffer because of it? And if that's true, then why do we sin against one another? Why do we keep away from each other? Why do we sometimes keep away from church, keep away from worship? We are God's temple together, Christians. We are all one in Jesus Christ. We are the living, breathing church of God together in him. We need one another, because we are being built up together as one in Jesus Christ our Lord. That's also what we learn about what the Holy Spirit means for us.

Therefore, Christians, we can clearly see that knowing who the Spirit is changes how we live. The Spirit teaches us. We know what we know about God because of the Spirit alone. The Spirit gives us the Bible. We learn about who God is because of what the Spirit has done. And the Spirit dwells within us. We are the living temple of the living God. This is everything that the Spirit means for us in our daily lives. So hold onto these things. Think about them. Consider what they mean and take them to heart. And then together as one in the Holy Spirit, we will be built up together to everlasting life.

Let us pray. Come, Holy Spirit. Shine upon us today, and guide us into all truth, because you are the Spirit of truth sent from heaven. Unite us into one in the bond of peace, so that with all

humility and gentleness, we may walk together in love; for you live and reign with the Father and the Son, one God, now and forever. Amen.