

## *To God Alone Be The Glory*

It was terrible news! He was going away?!? Why!? Things were going so well. Only four days ago the crowds had welcomed him with shouts of “*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna to the son of David!*” Then on Monday he had driven the money changers out of the temple. On Tuesday he had put an end to all the questions of his adversaries. Things couldn’t be going better! And to top it all off, tonight they were celebrating the Passover, the most important worship event of the Jewish year. “Why go away, Jesus?!? You are crushing our hopes for a renewal of David’s earthly kingdom. You are filling our hearts with grief by telling us you are returning to the Father.” \*This is how the disciples were thinking when Jesus spoke the words of today’s Gospel.

How many of you are filled with grief this morning because Jesus returned to his Father? Not a one! It’s possible we haven’t even thought about Jesus’ returning to the One who sent him, not since last Sunday when we celebrated Jesus’ ascension. Watching TV, doing some reading, playing a video game, articulating our dreams, planning our strategies for work or personal finance, helping our (grand)children with something, settling into a new home, getting the car repaired, working in the yard, planting the garden, overcoming our aches and pains—these are the kinds of

things we’ve been thinking about, haven’t we? I don’t mean to be harsh, but perhaps the most realistic way to describe how we feel about Jesus’ return to the Father is...apathy. So much else has been so much more important, or so we thought.

Jesus’ message back then for those sad disciples of his was DITCH YOUR GRIEF: I’M SENDING THE SPIRIT. But since we’re not so broken up about Jesus’ going away, the message for us is DITCH YOUR APATHY: JESUS SENT THE SPIRIT!

He sent the Spirit **to comfort us** (5-7). Listen as Jesus gently chides his disciples while at the same time he is comforting them. <sup>5</sup>“*Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ [Instead,] <sup>6</sup>Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief.*” If we also feel gently chided for our apathy about Jesus’ kingdom, we’re in good company. After all, what’s the difference between the disciples’ grief and our apathy? Not much: it all boils down to being self-centered. The disciples had no interest in Jesus’ future welfare. And that’s why none of them asked him to explain **where** he was going and **why**? Oh, earlier in the evening Peter had asked where Jesus was going (cf John 13:36), but only so he could make sure he was near Jesus. See, Peter was still immature in his faith. He could only care about what Christ’s kingdom meant to him personally: “Never mind the rest of the

world; what's in this 'Jesus-stuff' for me? Why can't it be convenient for me?" Are we still like Peter? Or has the Holy Spirit matured us to the point where we can say, "Whatever is best for your kingdom, Lord, that's what I want, even if it's hard or it costs me something dear. I'm ready to put up with anything or sacrifice everything for you, Lord"? Or as Jesus put it to his disciples earlier in the evening, "*If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father*" (John 14:28).

Can you sense Jesus' frustration with his peeps? Here he is, full of joy because of what he's going to accomplish for the world in the next three days, full of joy because of whom he is going to send to them in 50 days, and his disciples are trying to hold him back with their detachment issues. You know what Jesus is about to accomplish, right? Tomorrow (Good Friday) Jesus will die on the cross to pay for the sins of the whole world, including our apathy! (This means we're forgiven. So lean into the message.) Three days from now Jesus will rise from the dead, proving that the Father accepts Jesus' death as payment for our sins!! (This means we're forgiven. So lean into the message.) Forty days later Jesus will remove his visible presence from the world, and in effect, go make a report to the Father on how successful his work of redemption has been!!! Ten days after that, Jesus will keep his promise and send the Holy Spirit, who will begin his awesome work of

bringing the world to faith in Jesus as their Savior from sin!!!! No wonder Jesus is full of joy on this first Maundy Thursday.

Jesus is right when he says, *I tell you the truth: It is for your good—it is to your advantage, it is for your benefit—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.* And, yes, he actually intends these words to comfort his disciples so they DITCH THEIR GRIEF.

It doesn't work. When Jesus dies tomorrow, they will be crushed. Only later, after the Holy Spirit comes to them on Pentecost and causes them to understand the significance of Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension—only then will their grief finally turn to joy. It really is for their benefit that Jesus is going away! But they don't understand, even though Jesus himself is present with them. They need the Holy Spirit to clear things up. And Jesus is going away in order to send Him. This is good!

Now compare us to those disciples. During the brief minutes of this sermon, many of us have quietly repented of last week's sin of treating Jesus' kingdom as less important than our earthly concerns. How is it that we were so able to quickly see our self-centeredness, turn away from it, and rejoice over our forgiveness? It's because JESUS SENT US THE HOLY SPIRIT. So it was also for our good, our benefit, our advantage that Jesus went away. Even as we speak, the Spirit is

inside our brains, dumping out a load of apathy. He's doing the ditching. Can you feel it? If you can, that's great, but most Christians don't usually feel the Holy Spirit working. He likes to get us to focus on God's Word rather than on him. Then, while we're learning more about God's love for us, the Holy Spirit quietly works to strengthen our faith through God's Word. We usually notice that the Holy Spirit has been working when we look back in time and see the difference in our attitude or our way of life from what it used to be.

It's a good thing the Holy Spirit has ditched that apathy we used to have. We're going to need highly motivated hearts to slog through the next few verses of our text. In fact, you may want to take some notes and copy them into your personal Bible for the next time you read through John 16. Here we go.

Jesus wanted his people to take home this main point: He would send the Holy Spirit **...to convince the world** (8-11). Here's how he said it: *When [the Spirit] comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment.* Did you pick up on the subtle difference between the word I used and the word our translation used? I said the Holy Spirit would "convince"; our translation said he would "convict." These two words are closely related. They come from the same Greek word (*elegxw*). At one time "convince" and "convict" were interchangeable in English. \*You can

make sense of this passage using "convict" like our translation does, but you really have to work hard to understand it. For instance, I can understand how the Holy Spirit convicts the world in regard to sin. He holds up the clear law passages like a mirror: "See, I wanted you to do this, but you did that." And people eventually say, "Oh, I get it now. Yeah, I was wrong." So I can understand how the Holy Spirit convicts the world in regard to sin. But how does he convict the world in regard to righteousness? Does he say, "You're guilty of righteousness!"? This translation doesn't work. Furthermore, how was it a comfort to the disciples in their grief over Jesus' leaving to know that the Holy Spirit would convict the world of guilt? Were they to break out into a cheer: "Yee, haa! The world's a'goin' to hell! Yee, haa!" Obviously not. It's hardly comforting since it's contrary to what God says in the Bible: "*I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live*" (Ezekiel 33:11).

It's so much easier to understand this passage if we just translate the Greek verb with another of its legitimate nuances, "convince." Then everything falls into place. Let's try it. When the Spirit comes, he will convince the world *in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me.* Yes, that works: the Holy Spirit has convinced lots of people that 'not to believe in Jesus' is a sin. This especially happened on Pentecost. In our second

lesson today (Acts 2:1-21) we heard part of Peter's Pentecost sermon. The Holy Spirit worked through the law and the gospel to convince 3000 of Peter's listeners that they were guilty of sin because they did not believe in Jesus. Acts 2 says they were cut to the heart and asked, "*What shall we do?*" See? The Holy Spirit had convinced them *in regard to sin, because they did not believe in Jesus.*

The Holy Spirit also convinces the world *in regard to righteousness, because Jesus went to the Father.* It sounds difficult, but you already know this concept. Jesus went to the Father. What does Jesus do at God's right hand? He constantly points the Father to the righteousness, the not-guilty-ness, which he earned for us. And because of Jesus, the Father considers us sinless. Through God's Word the Holy Spirit has convinced you that you are righteous based on the fact that the crucified, risen, ascended Jesus has gone to the Father. The Holy Spirit also convinced Peter's listeners on Pentecost in regard to righteousness because Jesus had gone to the Father. Peter told them, "*Repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins,*" and 3000 were convinced. They didn't see Jesus risen from the dead and sitting at God's right hand. Yet they believed. They were convinced. The Holy Spirit convinced them in regard to righteousness because Jesus went to the Father.

Do you see how Jesus was trying to

comfort and strengthen his disciples by assuring them the Spirit would be sent to work alongside them, even though he himself was going away?

Jesus tried one more time. The Holy Spirit will convince the world *in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world [Satan] now stands condemned.* Again it sounds difficult, but you already know this concept. Basically the Holy Spirit comes to us and says, "See how bad Satan has it, knowing that he is doomed to unending torment? That's what happens to people who rebel against God too. But the Father has judged you innocent for Jesus' sake." So we learn to say, "I am convinced that I will be judged innocent because Satan stands condemned."

Jesus knew what would happen. That's why he said, "It is for your benefit that I go away and send the Holy Spirit." What comfort Jesus was offering to his disciples then and to us now! The Holy Spirit works alongside us every time we share God's Word with others. This takes all the pressure off us. The Holy Spirit will do the convincing. All we do is tell people the bad news ("We're all sinful") and the good news ("We're all saved through faith in Jesus"). That's why the Lord wants us to **DITCH OUR APATHY: because JESUS SENT US THE SPIRIT.** We're forgiven. Lean into the message. Get excited about it. Organize your life around it. Become one with the message. Share it. The Holy Spirit will help you.