

A Heart to Send the Spirit (John 14:12-31)

Big Idea: Jesus did not leave us alone. He's given us the Holy Spirit to empower us, live with us, unite us with God, and give us peace.

The movie's called Home Alone.

It's about Kevin, an eight-year-old troublemaker who's accidentally left behind when his family travels to Paris, France. At first he enjoys it. He has a pizza all by himself. He jumps on his parents' bed. He makes a mess.

But he starts to miss his family. And it doesn't help that a couple of burglars try to break in. It makes for a funny movie, but it's still not a good idea to leave eight-year-olds alone at home.

I want you to think about the passage I just read. Jesus is about to leave his disciples after walking with them for three years. Leaving the disciples alone doesn't feel much better than leaving an eight-year-old alone. It is not a good scene. The disciples struggle even when Jesus is with them. How could they ever manage to survive without him?

But in this passage Jesus says that he is not leaving his disciples alone, and that it's actually better that he leaves because we're going to be better off without him. That

sounds impossible! But it just may be that what he tells us in this passage is one of the most important things we'll ever learn in the Christian life.

Jesus teaches us four important realities in this passage.

First, we're going to do even greater works than Jesus did (14:12-14).

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. (John 14:12-24)

This is astonishing. Jesus did amazing things. He cast out demons. He healed the sick. He raised the dead. And yet Jesus says in this passage that his disciples will not only do the same works that he did, but even greater works. Jesus gives a blanket promise that we can ask anything in his name, and he will do it. This seems a little hard to believe.

What does Jesus mean by this?

Here's the reality about you if you are a follower of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit dwells within you. Even if you are the weakest Christian who ever existed, that alone makes you greater than John the Baptist, whom Jesus said was the greatest prophet who ever lived (Luke 7:28). "You are greater in position and potential than John the Baptist,

the greatest of all the prophets!" (J.D. Greear). Not only that, but we will do greater works than Jesus did.

Notice what Jesus is not saying. He didn't say more spectacular works than he did. He's saying greater. Think about it.

In one day after Jesus left – the Day of Pentecost – three thousand people came to faith. That's more than the number who believed during Jesus' entire ministry. Add to that the fact that Jesus was ever only in one place, and he only traveled in a very small geographic region. Today his followers are all over the world representing him. Every person Jesus healed or raised from the dead is now gone. Their healings were temporary. But seeing people trust God – turning from death to life – makes a difference for eternity.

We are not Jesus. That's obvious. But the same Holy Spirit who empowered Jesus now empowers you.

The same power that, through Jesus, brought regeneration and life to many flows through us. The same wisdom that brought healing to the most fragmented relationships is operable in us. The same miraculous love that brought life to impossible situations resides in us, through the Holy Spirit! (R. Kent Hughes)

That's why Jesus can say that he will answer our prayers. Jesus is saying that God is making available to us all the divine resources and power so that we can accomplish his mission in the world. We participate in the power of the risen Lord. We are called

to do the work of God in his power, and he's given us everything we need to do it. Don't underestimate what Jesus has given us.

That's the first truth Jesus teaches us. We're going to do even greater works than Jesus did. Here's the second.

Jesus has given us a Helper to be with us forever to help us (14:16-17).

I began today by talking about Home Alone. But the reality is that we are not alone without Jesus, because Jesus says this in 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.

This is one of the greatest truths we will ever hear. Jesus promises a Helper – another Helper. Jesus was the first Helper; this new Helper will continue his work. The word has so much meaning. Depending on what translation you're using, you may see words like Comforter, Advocate, Counselor, and Helper. It's hard to capture the meaning in one English word. We may not be able to get the perfect word to capture all that it means, but we can get the basic idea: God is intimately present with his

people. God the Spirit is with you. He is present to console you, guide you, and teach you in the ways of God. You are never alone.

We're going to do greater works than Jesus did. And we are not alone. Jesus has given us a Helper to be with us forever and empower us.

Here's the third reality.

Our relationship with God will be so close that you can barely describe it with words. (14:18-24)

I have to admit I struggled a little with this part. Read some of what Jesus says in this passage:

In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.
(14:20)

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. (14:23)

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three distinct persons, and yet they exist in an inseparable relationship of mutual purpose and love. And now Jesus says this is

extended to us. Our lives are now so intertwined with the life of God that God dwells in us, loves us, and lives within us. He couldn't be closer.

We are united with the Triune God. We have communion with the Father, who has given us "free, undeserved, and eternal love" (John Owen). The Father's love is our safe haven where we are always safe. We communion with the Son, who is always with us, and holds us as precious and valuable. And we have communion with the Holy Spirit, who works in our souls. He is the pledge of God's love, the guarantee of God's work, and the power we need to live. He brings us all the benefits of our salvation. This changes everything.

Friends, the Christian life is not just about the moment of salvation. It's a whole new way of life. It's about the closest possible relationship with God: God living within us, loving us, empowering us. God loves us and changes us. He couldn't be closer to us. We now participate in the life of God.

And the evidence of this is that we keep his commandments. That's what Jesus says in verses 15 and 23 to 24. This is not meant to be just an idea. All of this changes how we live. It transforms us from the inside out. This isn't something we just think about on Sunday. It changes us Monday and every other day of the week.

We're going to do greater works than Jesus did. And we are not alone. Jesus has given us a Helper to be with us forever and empower us. Now our relationship with God couldn't be closer.

One more reality.

All of this gives us peace. (14:25-31)

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. (14:27)

The disciples were about to go through the hardest experience of their lives. Jesus was not only about to leave, he's about to die. They're going to need a lot of help.

And they have it. The Spirit will be with them, Jesus says, teaching them and allowing them to remember everything that Jesus taught them. And he gives them peace – not just tranquility in the moment of trial, but a new state of peace – shalom – that's ours because of our relationship with God. In a world of continuous strife and fighting, we have peace that the world can't offer. Because we now participate in the life of God, we get the peace of God.

We've covered a lot today. Let me try to sum up.

Jesus did not leave us alone. He's given us the Holy Spirit to empower us, live with us, unite us with God, and give us peace. What Jesus offers us is much more than forgiveness of sins. He offers us a completely new way of living, and it's available to anyone who comes to him, and it changes everything.

I love how Skye Jethani puts it:

The doctrine of the Trinity tells us that God is a party – that this world is built on the foundation of a relationship. This is why we can say that Christianity is a

relationship, not a religion. This is what separates the Christian vision of God from all other—including all other monotheistic faiths...

Friends, the Trinity is a party of love, joy, peace, goodness, creativity, power, and glory that has been going on forever—and it will continue forever. And you and I have been invited to join it. Not because we deserve to be there. Not because we've earned the right to be there. But because a long time ago, the Father sent the Son. And the Son revealed to us this everlasting party. He died so that our sin would not prevent us from joining it. And the Father raised him from the dead through the power of the Spirit. If we put our faith in him, we too can be filled with the Spirit, raised from death to life, and join the Father, Son, and Spirit in this party that will never end.

This is why the Trinity matters. It tells us that at the heart of the cosmos is love, a relationship, a party. It is because of the Trinity that we believe we can have a personal relationship with God that will never end.

Father, thank you for the Spirit. Thank you for not leaving us alone, but inviting us to the party. Help us all to join that party by coming to Jesus, and to enjoy you forever. In Jesus' name. Amen.