

XI. The Holy Spirit in Biblical Perspective

Led by the Spirit

“The Last Sermon from the Last Supper—The Way, the Truth, and the Life”

John 14:1–11

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May 1, 2016 – Morning sermon

Our God speaks to us in His Word, from His Word and we'll look at His Word from John 14. It's the truth. This is our second study in the last sermon that Jesus preached from the Last Supper that He celebrated with His Disciples. This is His Last Supper, His last Sermon from the Upper Room. God's Word is the truth. John 14:1–11 says [1] *“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. [2] In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? [3] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. [4] And you know the way to where I am going.” [5] Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” [6] Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. [7] If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”*

[8] Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” [9] Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? [10] Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. [11] Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

A great American philosopher died this year. Do you know who that is? It was Yogi Berra. I have a collection of his sayings and one of my favorite ones I'll give to you in just a moment. What is a dilemma? Di means division of two opposed to each other. Lemma means choice demanded so dilemma is that you are faced with two choices. You can't choose both. You have to choose one or the other. That's a dilemma.

In this study we won't be looking at a dilemma but a trilemma. Three possibilities are before you. You cannot choose all three. You have to choose one. Many of you have made that choice and some of you have not made that choice. This is what Yogi Berra said about a dilemma, “When you come to a fork in the road, take it.” That is the way he solved the dilemma. You can't just take it for you have to choose one or the other. In this trilemma you'll have to choose one of the three and all eternity rests on this choice.

Before I get to the trilemma I want to review with you where we are in John 14. We are in the last sermon that Jesus preached and there are six of His sermons recorded in the Bible. Three of them we call major and three we call minor due to the size of what was recorded. The three major are the Sermon on the Mount, the Olivet Discourse and the one we are in today, the Upper Room Discourse. This last sermon came from the celebration of the Last Supper in the Upper Room. It is very important to understand the context of where they are and what has happened.

Where are they? They are in what I call the epicenter of the New Testament church or ground zero of the New Testament Church. This is the place where the Gospel earthquake of the

spreading of the Kingdom through the planting of Gospel churches throughout the world. It is in this Upper Room. They have been here before. It's a very large room because eventually they will have at least 120 people in it. So much will take place here. Jesus will celebrate the last Passover and institute the first Lord's Supper. Here He will teach them about leadership. Here He will give the new commandment to love one another as He has loved them. Here He reminds them that He loves them to the end of His humiliation ministry when He goes to the cross and the grave and throughout all eternity in His ministry of exaltation as the resurrected ascended Savior. It is to this room that many of the disciples will flee at the crucifixion of Jesus in fear.

It is in the Upper Room that on the first Lord's Day after the resurrection that Jesus will appear to them, which is one of His four appearances after His resurrection. It is in this room that He'll come back one week later on the second Lord's Day after His resurrection. He will minister particularly to Thomas on that day because he wasn't there the first time Jesus appeared on the first Lord's Day after His resurrection. After the ascension it is back to this room that they will go with prayer. It is there where they will select the Apostle Matthias who will replace Judas Iscariot. When they go into prayer a mighty rushing wind indicates the Holy Spirit, the fiery tongue in front of all of them and then the miraculous effect of them being able to speak the Gospel to people in their language, even though those speaking did not know that language in fulfillment of Joel 2.

It is so powerful that in this place where the New Testament church is birthed with 120 people, in one day they will outgrow their facility for 3,000 and that is just counting the men, will come to a saving relationship with Christ. So they will have to find another facility after that. This is the epicenter. This is ground zero and it's the place where Jesus preached His last sermon to His Disciples. That sermon will be focused upon what we have been focused upon this entire year which is Romans 8:14 that says *[14] For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*

What does it mean to be led by the Spirit of God? We have looked at Romans 8 but John 14–16 which records the meat of His sermon, is devoted to helping us understand who the Holy Spirit is, why Jesus sends Him, and what He does in our life. We are almost there but not quite. We will go back and look at the text for this study in John 14 in three sections but before we do that I think you need to understand the atmosphere in that Upper Room.

When Jesus walks into that Upper Room, for His last sermon, at the last Passover, the first Lord's Supper, what are they doing? For the second time recorded in the Gospels they are arguing who will be the greatest in the Kingdom and the argument is likely led by those who led the other argument about who was going to get the right hand or the left hand seating place beside Jesus. They are likely being led by James and John. The first argument was led by their mother who was trying to secure their place at the right or the left. I think you have to remember that when you think about what Jesus did here. What did He do?

He knows He has come from the Father, He is going back to the Father, He is going to save His people and He will love them into eternity with His saving work at the cross and knowing that He takes off His outer garments, gets on His knees with a basin and towel and does the work of the lowest slave – washing the refuse and the dung of the streets off the feet of His disciples. Then He says "If your Master has done this for you here is what leadership is. It is not the place of honor but it's the towel and the basin." In the middle of doing that, Peter says 'You don't need to wash me' and Jesus says 'if I don't wash you then you don't get into heaven.' Peter says 'ok wash all of me.' In the middle of that Judas will go out to betray Him and he will hear 'what you do, do quickly.' Then the rest of them will be informed that they will flee Him.

Then in this room He gives them the new commandment to love one another as He has loved them. This is the power of the Holy Spirit that allows us to grab towels and basins, to love one another, yet who is He speaking to? He is speaking to the twelve Disciples in this Upper Room. One will betray Him, one will deny Him three times and the other ten will flee from Him in the moment of His trial when He goes to the cross to save us from our sins. If there is any moment in life when I look at Jesus and I say ‘Jesus, some sanctified disappointment and discouragement would be appropriate right now.’ He knows what they are going to do. He knows out of fear they will leave Him. He knows out of bewilderment they will desert Him. I mean some sanctified self-pity would be appropriate right now. That is not what Jesus does. I want you to see your sovereign, self-less Shepherd and Savior. Knowing their fears and troubled heart will overwhelm them, what does He do?

John 14:1–4 says [1] *“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. [2] In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? [3] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. [4] And you know the way to where I am going.”* Here He takes a moment to minister to them. He could have said something like ‘how many times have I told you to fear not so why is your heart troubled?’ Jesus could also be silent because of His own troubled heart which we know He had.

Just hours before this He was at the temple and it is recorded in John 12:20–23, 27, [20] *Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. [21] So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” [22] Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. [23] And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. [27] “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour.”* His heart was troubled within Him. So you see His human soul troubled knowing the cup He was going to drink and the hour had come. So Jesus knowing the frailties of the human heart and soul, and the fears they had, now instead of protecting Himself, being disappointed and giving up on them He comes to them with the solution to their troubled heart.

He gives it an indicative and then an imperative. He describes who they are and then tells them what they need to do. First He says ‘you believe in God’ for He knew they believed in the Triune God. Now He gives a command. The solution to your troubled heart is to believe also in Me. He is the solution to our troubled heart, our fears, and our faint, heartedness. Notice how you see not only His humanity in John 12 but you see His deity affirmed here in John 14. Believe in God, believe also in Me. This is the Son of God who has come. Note the careful use of the name for God as well – I Am. I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. I Am the One going to the cross. I Am going to build a house for you. You also believe in Him not only because of who He is but what He is going to do. He is going to that cross to save you. Believe in Me for that is what gets rid of the fears, guilt, trouble and insecurities in our life. It’s not found anywhere else. It won’t be found in your job, marriage, children or in a church but it will be found in Christ.

After He says that He goes on to tell them what He is doing. After I save you then I am going to prepare a place for you. It’s called My Father’s house and there are magnificent rooms that I am building for you. Then I will come again for you so that where I am there you may be also. So what is the answer to all our fears? There is only one answer and it’s Me, what I do, what I am doing and what I will do. I am going to save you. I will build a place for you. I am coming for you. I will come again to bring you to be with Myself. That is what He is going to

do. Stop and think. How many times did this son of a carpenter, with His earthly father had built houses for others? Now this Son of a carpenter in the victory of the cross ascended, is building the house of His Father in heaven for you. That's what calms the troubled soul and dispels the fears. He is building us and is coming again for us. 'Now you know the Way,' Jesus says. This selfless Savior gives us His sovereign work of redemption to save us. The selfless Savior who is sufficient says to cast all your cares upon Him because He cares for us.

This is obviously not a Presbyterian service with a Presbyterian sermon because people actually speak back to the Preacher. Two of them speak back to Him, one is named Thomas and one is named Philip. John 14:5-7 says [5] *Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"* [6] *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. [7] If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."* Jesus tells Thomas to pick Him as the Way because He is the destination for where I am there you will be also. I am the One who saves you and is building it for you. I Am the One who will bring you there to be with Me. I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. What a glorious powerful statement that He gives. It is a magnificent, confrontational, an exquisitely radical statement.

This is the statement that all of you believers have grappled with. Is He telling the truth or is He lying? If you're a believer then you say 'yes He is telling the truth' and you put your trust in Jesus Christ alone as Lord and Savior, because there is no other one. Now you go and share Him with others. No one can come to the Father but through Me – this exquisitely, sovereign, supreme, sufficient statement of the singularity of Christ alone, not only the Carpenter building the house but the Cornerstone of your salvation.

It is by that statement whereby you incur the wrath of a world, unless the Holy Spirit intervenes. Have you ever wondered why the Gospel stands so unique? The Gospel isn't giving you a religion whereby you work your way to heaven. It is giving you a glorious gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ who purchased the way for you to get to heaven by Christ Himself who is that Way. Then you tell others 'if you turn from your sins, put your trust in Jesus Christ who went to the cross to save you and now He is risen building a place for you so that He'll come again to get you, then you can have eternal life. If you don't then you remain under the position of the judgment of God and it's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a God whose wrath is directed against you because you have not only sinned against Him but you have rejected His Son.' You share this as painstakingly and compassionately as you can.

What does that Gospel get unless the Holy Spirit changes people's heart? You are met with mockery or marginalization and many times anger because that Gospel is a scandal. Why? The words are found right here. It is a scandal for three reasons. Number one is that nobody wants to be told that they need a Savior unless God breaks their heart. Reason number two is that nobody wants to be told that they can't save themselves or that their religion can't save them. Number three, no one wants to be told there is only one choice. We live for choices. We'll enlarge our entertainment budget so we can have 900 choices on a television. Seems like the more choices we have the less we really have. It is not an a la carte list. Jesus says 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, for no man can come to the Father but through Me.'

A man once said to me 'Harry I just don't believe that. I utterly despise that.' I said 'I understand why for you want to be the master of your own soul, your own savior and you don't really think you need a savior and that God exists for you but you exist for Him. I used to be right there. I am going to pray that the same thing that happened to me will happen to you for you have the same emptiness that I did and you'll see the glorious majesty of the Savior who

loves you, loosens you from your sins, changes you and grows you in His grace.’ He said ‘Pastor, I think all religions lead to God.’ I said ‘You’re right for Jesus didn’t say all religions didn’t lead to God for all religions do lead to God but that’s not the question for we must all appear before the judgment seat. The question is what will He say when you get there. If you are in Christ you will hear ‘enter in trophy of grace My beloved’ but if you’re not in Christ you will hear an irrevocable verdict, ‘depart from Me into the lake of fire, you workers of lawlessness for I never knew you.’’ Christ has come with this message of grace and the offer to come to Him.

We do some of what some of current political candidates do, we love to put adjectives in front of their names to talk about them. What is the adjective most of us have heard that is put up against the name of Thomas? He is called ‘doubting’ Thomas. Some preachers will even reach in to try and rescue Thomas to say he is not really doubting Thomas but realist Thomas. Thomas is mentioned very pointedly three times in the Bible. One time he is mentioned is when Jesus is near Bethany near the Jordan and they get word that Lazarus is sick and dying and Mary, Martha and Lazarus are calling for Jesus. Jesus waits for the appropriate time knowing that by then Lazarus is dead and all His Disciples are telling Him not to go to Jerusalem because people will kill Him but Jesus says ‘we’re going to Bethany.’ Thomas says ‘Ok let’s go with Him so we can die too.’ It hadn’t entered into his mind that there might be a resurrection and Jesus is greater than all his enemies but let’s do it anyway.

Another time Thomas is mentioned is when Jesus had appeared to the Disciples in the Upper Room on the first Lord’s Day and Thomas is there the second Lord’s Day. The Disciples tell him they have seen Jesus since the crucifixion and Thomas says “Unless I see Him and touch Him I will not believe.” Then there is the graciousness of Jesus that says ‘take a look and touch for you’ll see this isn’t a ghost. This is a raised spiritual body.’ Then Thomas says “My Lord and my God!”

Then there is this third time which we just read about. Thomas wants to know where they are going so he’ll know if it’s the way or not. I don’t believe doubting Thomas is a bad term. I think we need to go back a layer. Why is he doubting Thomas? You’ll always be a doubter of God’s promises if you build your life the way Thomas is building his life. I like to call Thomas, Thomas the pessimist. This is where you’ll always end up – a cynic, a skeptic and pessimist – if you build your life on what you see instead of what you have heard from Jesus. The key is in what Thomas said ‘unless I see, show me.’ If you want to build your life from your faulty, finite, frail sidelines and our fallible interpretation of what we see, the result is always pessimism, but the believer loves to confirm what they’ve heard by what they see but we do not build our life by sight. We build our life by faith and faith comes from hearing the Word of Christ that we are convinced of the things we have not yet seen but what God has revealed to us. It is by faith that we build our life.

Now we have a second response and that is from Philip. John 14:8–11 says [8] *Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.”* [9] *Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? [10] Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. [11] Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.*

Jesus responds to Philip by saying ‘have I not been with you so long that you do not see I’m the Incarnate testimony of the Father. I am the perfect revealing image of the infinite,

glorious, majestic Father. Do you not see that? Have you not heard Me? If you need to, just go look at the miracles.' God's Word is true and it's always affirmed. For instance, the Bible says all men are sinners. Has anyone ever found a truth more verifiable that all men and women are sinners? Then He says there is one solution and that's Me. That makes sense.

Saving faith is not a leap in the dark but it's walking in the light. It makes sense but it begins by hearing and believing God's Word. So Philip like Thomas wants to rely on the faulty sight lines in his life and the frail abilities he has to assess it rather than the truth God has revealed in His Word. That is why you know people who are on fire for Jesus. They love the preaching of His Word because their whole life is built on faith and faith comes from hearing the Word of Christ. So they embrace it completely, lovingly, purposefully and intentionally. So what is the takeaway?

We are back to the trilemma – this radical statement that demands a verdict. Here is the trilemma. I didn't come up with this. A man I love to read who is known as Rabbi (John) Duncan is the man who came up with it. C.S. Lewis also got this from him. He is known as Rabbi because of all of his sayings and his book is titled The Sayings of Rabbi Duncan. It is a great read. Here is what Duncan said about this statement 'I am the way, the truth and the life, no man comes to the Father but through Me.' Duncan said "Christ is either engaged in a conscious fraud upon all humanity or He is self-diluted or He is the God of grace and glory. Those are your three choices and you will make one right now.

Here is the way Thomas à Kempis interprets this text. He said 'if there is no way then there is no going and if there is no truth there is no knowing and if there is no life there is no living.' Now I will add the last one to his statement and that is if Christ is not the way, the truth and the life then there is no salvation, but He is the way, the truth and the life for no man can come to the Father but through Me. This is absolutely amazing!

Do you feel guilt, sin while being in a broken world and life and facing death? Jesus says 'don't let your heart be troubled, you believe in God now believe in Me. I am saving you. I am making a place for you. I will come again for you. I am the answer to all your insecurities in a sin sick world. I am the way, the truth and the life. If you come to Me you will be with the Father. I will come for you.' What a glorious, marvelous, powerful statement! Then when someone says 'how can we know the way if we don't know where we are going?' He says, 'I am where you are going and I am the way Thomas.' Then Philip says 'show me the Father.' Jesus says 'the Father is in Me, when you have seen Me you have seen the Father, when you have heard Me I have spoken from what the Father has given Me.'

In every single point there is the preeminence of Christ but the preeminence of Christ never eclipses the majesty of the Trinity. I know of no text in the Scripture that exalts the preeminence of Christ as Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer more pointedly, more radically, more exquisitely than this text in John 14, yet this text whereby Christ says 'I am the way, the truth and the life no man can come to the Father but through Me' the supremacy, sufficiency and singularity of Christ – I don't know of any text of Scripture that exalts the Father any more than this text. In John 14:1–11 Jesus refers to the Father fifteen times. The preeminence of Christ as Savior does not eclipse the Father but it exalts the Father. Now He is going to tell you who you have to have to come to Him to come to the Father – the Holy Spirit.

The glorious Trinitarian Gospel now comes to you. So what do you believe? Do you believe He is a fraud? If I believed Jesus was a fraud the last thing I would do is spend any time in a church but I hope you keep coming so I can keep sharing with you that Jesus loves you. He died for sinners. If you think He was self-diluted then for certain I wouldn't run around with a

bunch a crazy people that think He told the truth but I hope you keep coming because I want to keep telling you about Jesus. If you believe He is the way, the truth and the life then you will build your life from the truth of His Word and you'll keep your eyes fixed on Jesus to the glory of the Father in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

Before I came to Briarwood I was engaged in a manner of public theology and policy in Charlotte, North Carolina. I was in a number of public debates and one of them was on a radio station with a commentator who loved to tweak the nose of Christians. He was an atheist, cynic and gifted at what he did so he and debated one time on radio. This man and I became great friends and one of the last people I talked to before I left Charlotte to come to Birmingham was him. I remember sitting with him at the Atlanta Bread Company at the South Park Mall pleading with him to come to Christ. He even wrote an article about our conversation after I left that was published in the local newspaper.

When we were in our debate on the station he said 'I'll tell you what I can't stand about you Christians, is you keep saying your way is the only way.' I said 'My way is not the only way. I'm just reporting to you what Jesus said. He said 'His way is the only way for He is the way, the truth and the life.' Jerry you and I have a decision to make. (C.S. Lewis made this a little more memorable than Rabbi Duncan.) C.S. Lewis put it this way – He is either a liar, a lunatic or the Lord. All eternity rests on that decision. I have made mine, what is yours?' Jerry said 'you're not going to put me in that box.' I said 'I'm not putting you in a box. It's simple. You say He is not the way and I say He is. I have decided He is not a fraud or deranged so I have put my trust in Him as Lord and Savior and now you have to make that decision.' He said 'I'm not going in that box' and I said 'you are in that box.'

I told him about the three choices and these are yours as well and then I'll close in prayer. One choice is you are right and I am wrong. Another choice is I am right and you are wrong. The third choice is we're both wrong. Here is what can't be true. Both of us can't be right. He is either the Lord of glory or He is not. I tell you today the Cornerstone can be your Carpenter because He redeemed you at the cross and He'll come again for you. Dear believer know this – if you came to Him it is because His Spirit set you free to love Him who first loved you now build your life on His Word for it's the truth. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father I thank You for the One who is the Way so we can be going. He is the Truth so we can be knowing. He is the Life so we can be living now and forever. I pray for anyone reading this today that they realize no decision is a decision but I pray they will realize this can be a decisive day by Your Spirit. Say, 'Jesus I come. You are the way and I'm going with You because You go with me. You are the truth and I want to know Your Word which is the truth. You are my life for me to live is Christ.' Fears of guilt, sin and brokenness can be banished. I fix my eyes on Jesus. May the Holy Spirit work upon your heart. God, please build up my brothers and sisters in Jesus – the way, the truth and the life. Dear Father, bring those who have not yet come to Him who came for them. Father, we pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

Life Takeaway
The Trilemma