



Life Guide

applying God's Word to life

Jesus Brings Good Things to Life! May 31, 2020

John 16:5-11

⁵ but now I am going to him who sent me. None of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' ⁶ Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things. ⁷ But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ about sin, because people do not believe in me; ¹⁰ about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; ¹¹ and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

1. What is the purpose of “before” and “after” pictures? **Before and after pictures can be inviting, helping us to realize that others might share our struggles as seen in the “before” pictures. At the same time, they offer hope – that there might be something we can do about those troubles. They encourage us to think, “If that person can change, so can I.” The Pentecost “before” and “after” pictures are no different. We see struggling disciples who are instructed and emboldened by God’s Holy Spirit. There is nothing for us to do. There is plenty for us to enjoy as the Spirit does his work through Word and sacrament.**
2. Discuss some reasons as to why the disciples may have been filled with grief by the news that Jesus was leaving. Any applications for your life? **It seems that the disciples were afraid to face the thought that Jesus, whose love and power had done so much for them, would no longer be with them. They**

seem to have the misguided thought that Jesus was with them to make their earthly lives better, and that if he left, they would not attain the glories for which they had seemed destined. The fact that they were still expecting Jesus to restore the greatness of bygone Israel seems to support these ideas. I find myself struggling with the same sort of grief. When I convince myself that Jesus means to give me this or that earthly blessing, and it doesn't happen, I feel that Jesus has let me down. I grieve the loss of what I think he should have given me.

3. The disciples refused to ask Jesus where he was going. When and why might you refuse to talk to Jesus about something in your prayers? This question picks up where the previous question let off. To this day, though I know better, I sometimes don't want to say to Jesus' "Your will be done." I don't want to talk to him about things that he may decide not to give me, things he may refuse to give me. There are also times (too many) when my own stubbornness and sin hamper my prayer life. When there is something between me and God, a sin that I'm clinging to, I don't want to talk to God. I'm afraid of his anger, or just as afraid that a conversation with him might prick my conscience at a time when I don't want to feel bad about what I'm doing. How foolish. Jesus is the friend of this sinner and all sinners. He is the one person I can always talk to.
4. Citing Matthew 16:23, the sermon makes reference to praying in a shortsighted way. Agree or disagree, and why? Shortsighted prayers are sinful. I agree. Sin spoils even the good work of prayer. (Prayer is a good work that flows from faith.) When I pray in a way that shows I'm focused on merely human concerns, it shows, at best, a lack of appreciation for what Jesus came to do for me. At worst, it shows I despise his work. Think about it this way, if I'm focused on God growing my bank account, or helping me get rid of my debt, or curing my illness, or whatever earthly blessing I'm seeking, if that's all I pray about, I'm telling God that all of this is more important to my life than what he accomplished for me through the gift of his one and only Son. This is the way I would feel if I gave my wife a gift and when she opened it, all she could talk

about is what she would have rather gotten instead. This is what I do to God, this is how I sin against him when my prayers are always and only about earthly blessings.

5. Why would Jesus say that the Advocate would not come unless he himself went away? At first blush, this might seem confusing. This isn't a tag-team wrestling match in which only one contestant at a time can represent the team. When we put Jesus' words into their proper context, we understand what he really means. Unless he completes his saving mission, unless he leaves the disciples, goes to the cross, rises from the dead, and ascends victoriously into heaven, there would be nothing for God's Spirit to come and do for us. He could not come and work faith in a Savior that doesn't exist. (Note: Jesus had to leave this world because that was part of his mission – to return to the Father in heaven from where he rules all things in the world for the good of his people to insure that we will enter the heavenly rest he has secured for us.)
6. Explain how the Spirit proves the world to be in the wrong about...
 - a. Sin – the world sees “sin” as a “small” thing, if it acknowledges sin at all. The Spirit changes this. He convinces sinners that sin is a deadly, damning thing. Ultimately the Spirit convinces sinners, as he has convinced us, that failure to believe in Jesus is the worst sin of all, because if we don't have him as our Savior, we will perish in hell forever. People who by nature, mock Jesus, as we all have done, are proved wrong about what they've thought and said about Jesus.
 - b. righteousness – The Spirit is the one who proves people all wrong when they think that they can do enough good to earn God's favor now and forever. He proves them wrong by showing them that the only righteousness that counts is the righteousness that Jesus produced for us with the holy life he lived in our place and with the innocent death he

suffered as our Substitute. This is what he came to do for us and this is what he proved he accomplished for us by rising for the dead and ascending in victorious fashion to his Father in heaven.

- c. **Judgment** – It is the Spirit who proves people wrong who think that sin has no consequence. All who listen to Satan, all who give into his temptations and revel in their sin, will suffer Satan’s fate. The prince of this world is already judged and condemned. The same will happen to his unbelieving offspring. (Note: The Spirit’s purpose in proving people wrong in all these things is to call them to repentance. The work he does with God’s law is preparatory in nature. He readies hearts by using the law to show them their sin and their great need for Jesus. Then he uses the gospel to show them God’s saving love and forgiveness in Christ. This is what he has done for us. How happy we are to know that in our natural state we were all wrong about sin and Jesus, about righteousness and judgment. Here is another important truth: People may not heed the Spirit during their time of grace. They may reject the truth about their sin and Savior. If this happens, they will come to see how wrong they were only after it is too late. This will be part of their great suffering in hell, - dying forever with this thought in mind: “If only I had listened....”

7. Agree or disagree and why? Making disciples is the Spirit’s work. I disagree in the sense that Jesus commissions his followers to “make disciples of all nations.” (Matthew 28:19). The fact that he’s commissioned us to do this work means that we have a role to play in disciple-making. And yet we must understand the nature of that role. We are commissioned to testify and nothing else. We are not commissioned to convert people to Christianity. This is beyond our ability. This is the Spirit’s work alone. He mortifies sinners with the law and

gives them new life through the gospel. So, if someone understands that this is what is meant by “making disciples” then there would agree with the statement.

8. What does the spread of COVID-19 teach us about our work as Evangelists? The spread of COVID-19 may serve to remind us the impact that one person has on the world. From one person, the virus has spread to many, many people the world over. We don't have something bad like a virus. We have a wonderful, life-giving message which the Spirit makes contagious. It's a message that can spread from one person to the next, to the next, in quick fashion, until thousands, maybe millions of people are saved by the message we share.
9. Which is the better sermon theme and why?
 - a. Jesus Brings Good Things to Life!
 - b. God's Spirit Brings Good Things to Life!

I spent many hours of my sermon preparation wrestling with this very question. Pentecost is the Spirit's festival. It seemed good and right to give him “top billing.” And yet, the Spirit is pleased to go about his work quietly. I chose “A” because of everything that Jesus says about the importance of his “departure” to our Salvation. It is Jesus who promised and then sent the Advocate to us. Having said all this, I would not fault anyone for making a case for “B.” I had that theme typed in several times before going the way that I did.

10. Agree or disagree and why? The Spirit in my life is greater than Jesus at my side. This is also one that could be answered either way. Unless Jesus came to my side to save me, the Spirit could do nothing for me. Unless the Spirit lives in me giving and preserving his good gift of faith, I would be lost. Jesus' saving work would not help me. Given what Jesus says in the text, taking in account the struggles of the disciples who felt they could not go on without Jesus at their side, I think we could make a good case for the thought that Jesus himself points to how important it is to have the Spirit dwelling within

us. The question is misleading in the sense that this is not an either/or, but a both/and!

John 16:5–7

⁵“Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ ⁶Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. ⁷But I tell you the truth: It is for your good 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.

In 13:36, 37 Peter had asked Jesus where he was going and expressed his undying loyalty to follow Jesus anywhere—even to death. But Peter was not on the right track and actually didn’t try at all to learn where and why Jesus was going. Thomas also in frustration spoke out about not knowing where Jesus was going (14:5), but he did not pursue the opening Jesus gave him in response.

So now Jesus needed to redirect their attention to the question they weren’t asking, namely, where he was going. So far Jesus’ words had instead caused a gloomy veil of grief to settle on the disciples. So he reminded them that he was going back to the One who sent him in the first place. He was going for their own good.

Just how much meaning those words held, the disciples would not know until later. This was Jesus’ hour. By going to the cross, he was carrying out his Father’s will to the end. He was fulfilling the plan of salvation. He was preparing the way to the Father in heaven for all who believe in Jesus. The disciples had to let him go in order to receive the good he came to bring them. Anything else spelled failure and disaster.

The rest of God’s plan included sending the Holy Spirit, as Jesus had already told the disciples (7:39; 14:16, 26). Not only did Jesus have to leave them to send the Spirit on Pentecost, but without Jesus’ death and resurrection, the Spirit would have no means to work saving faith. The work of the triune God for the

world's salvation would come to an end if Jesus did not continue as planned.

John 16:8–11

⁸When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; ¹⁰in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; ¹¹and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

With the coming of the Holy Spirit, the unbelieving world would stand condemned. The Spirit convicts the world in respect to sin, righteousness, and judgment. The Spirit's work for the chosen children of God is to lead them in all truth for their salvation. The effect on those who reject the truth in Christ is just the opposite. Those who do not repent of their sins and believe are convicted.

Jesus explained what each reference meant. The Spirit convicts the world in regard to sin *because the people of the world do not believe in Jesus*. The Spirit teaches people about Jesus through his Word. In Jesus they receive forgiveness of all sins—none excluded. But when the world's followers reject the testimony of the Spirit through the Word and refuse to believe in Jesus, they lose his forgiveness. They stand convicted in their sin. In contrast, John has been exhorting his readers to believe and live, forgiven of all sins.

The Spirit convicts the world in regard to righteousness *because Jesus has gone to the Father and we don't see him any longer*. Those who have no savior from sin have to earn God's favor, if they can, by their righteousness. But the Lord demands a righteousness that is equal to the perfection of the Father (Matthew 5:48). Mere human beings cannot claim that righteousness for themselves since Adam's fall.

But Jesus lived the perfect life for us. He followed the Father's plan for our salvation to the letter. He returned to the Father in glory, having triumphed over sin, death, and hell. Now each

person who believes in Jesus is robed in his righteousness. The Father counts the Son's perfect life as ours because all has been fulfilled in him. The world's sons and daughters, however, who reject the Son, are left to their own righteousness. Therefore they stand convicted. Again, we can apply the keynote of this gospel: believe and live, robed in Christ's righteousness.

The Spirit convicts the world in regard to judgment *because the prince of this world now stands condemned*. Jesus was on his way to a confrontation with Satan himself. In his death and resurrection, Jesus sealed Satan's doom. Those who reject Jesus choose this world's prince, Satan, for their leader (8:44), and they share their leader's judgment. They stand condemned. Those who believe in Jesus live.¹

¹ Baumlert, G. P. (1997). [*John*](#) (pp. 213–216). Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House.