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SPEAKER

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Fully Alive

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Four Abiding Truths

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John 15:18-16:4



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If we don't know each other, my name is Thomas and I serve as one of the pastors here at Providence. I'm so glad to see each of you this morning, and thanks for being here with us. A special welcome to guests and visitors in the house with us as well. Glad that you've come in and you want to be a part of this with us today. We're so thankful for you. Special welcome to those of you joining us across the hall. Also for anyone joining us via the live stream recording, we're happy to have you in this moment as well.

We're going to be in John chapter 15 this morning. So if you have a Bible, go ahead and open up to John chapter 15. If you made your way in here this morning and you don't have a Bible with you, then you can find one under the seat in front of you. Different copies are scattered around. John chapter 15, is where we're going to be, and we're going to study verse 18 to the end of the chapter, and we're going to hop over in chapter 16, and look at the first four verses there.

As we look into John 15 I want you to know we've been going through a teaching series throughout the gospel of John, this portrait, this picture of Jesus, it's been really wonderful time in the life of our church over the last year we took off this summer to study some other things, but we're still here look forward to wrapping this up at the end of the spring. And God's taught me so much through it, I'm sure we've all benefited from it as well. Hoping John 15:18-16:4 is going to be a real resource to each of our lives this morning as well. And to ask God to work and to do that would be the most fitting thing we could do right now. So let's do it together. God, we need you. We need you to speak to us, for all the situations, for all of the decisions, for the joys that we have and for the hardships we face, God we need you right here now in this moment. So God would you be so kind, and would you speak to us, would you use your word, and would you use the sermon, and would you use the space and the songs that we sing, God would you speak, and in speaking would you change us, and in changing us Father, would you change the world? We ask for it together in Jesus' name. Amen.

While we're going to study John 15, specifically verse 18 to the end of the chapter, first thing we need to do is take a look at the first part of the chapter. We're actually going to read through the whole chapter. I'm going to stop and reflect on a few ideas that we see because what we have going on in verse 18 to the end, it's really dependent on the themes that Jesus first sets up for us in the first 17 verses. So if we can start looking into John 15, the first thing I want you to see is end of chapter 14. You see, Jesus, they just finished dinner. Jesus and his disciples and Jesus says, "Rise, let us go from here."

So John 15, 16 and 17, is a teaching from Jesus. This giving on the move or on the run. If you know the story, they're headed from dinner and into the garden. And in the garden, Jesus is going to pray and after he prays, his accusers are going to come. He is going to be captured. He's going to be put on a trial with trumped up charges. He's going to be wrongly accused and he's going to choose to give his life to be the savior of the world. Last block of teaching right here. 15, 16 and 17, before we get to the garden in chapter 18:1.

And as we're ... If we could find ourselves this morning, if we could find ourselves in that pack of disciples, if we could find ourselves leaving dinner and walking through the night with Jesus, we hear him saying this, John 15:1, "I am the true vine and my Father is the vine dresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away. And every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes that it may bear more fruit. Already, you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine. Neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine and you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned. If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified that you've bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me so I have loved you, abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be a new, and that your joy may be full."

If we could pause right here between verses 11 and 12 and think about what's going on. The big idea so far is that Jesus is inviting his disciples to lean into him, to trust him, to abide in him no matter what. Specifically he's telling them the end for which this abiding exist. On our side, there's going to be joy. Joy of Jesus is going to be on us and our joy will be full. We will live lives that are fully alive when we abide in Jesus, but there's more to it than that. We are going to bear fruit and that fruit is going to be for all the world to see. We could pick up the action at the top of verse 12.

Jesus continues. "This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants for the servant does not know what his master is doing. But I have called you friends, for all that I've heard from my Father, I've made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask in the name of the Father, he may give it to you. These things, I command you so that you will love one another."

Okay, let's pause one more time before we enter verse 18. Jesus is telling us to abide. He's telling us there's going to be joy and the end of that joy is going to be a love for one another, his church family. It's going to be a love for the world that he put us in. That's got to be at the front of our minds as we encounter the next verse, because Jesus is about to tell us that this world did he put us in, is going to oppose us. And when we're in the world, just like our king and our Savior Jesus, even though we're opposed, we're called to love. So let's look at verse 18.

“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you would love the world, the world would love you as its own. But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, a servant is not greater than his master? If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours, but all these things they will do to you on account of my name because they do not know him who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates me hates my Father also. If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen and hated both me and my Father for the word that is written in their law, it must be fulfilled that they hated me without a cause.”

Look at verse 26. “But when the helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me and you also will bear witness because you have been with me from the beginning. I’ve said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed an hour is coming when whoever kills will think he is offering service to God and they will do these things because they have not known the Father nor me. But I’ve said these things to you that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told them to you.”

The big idea from John Chapter 15 is that Jesus calls us to abide in him. By abiding in him, there’s going to be joy for us in our lives. With joy there’s going to come fruit bearing and the distinct mark of that fruit bearing is going to be a unique love for God, a unique love for one another, and a unique world, love for the world that he put us in. The Bible uses many metaphors to talk about the way that you and I relate to one another, and the way that we as a people relate to God. You see, we belong to one another and we belong to God in a similar way, that citizens belong to a king. We belong to one another and we belonged to God in a similar way, that children belong to a parent, that sheep belonged to a shepherd. The different members or parts of the body belong to each other. The way that a soldier belongs to an army under a righteous king. The way that a bride belongs to a groom. And yes, this morning, the way that a would be dead branch abides in the trunk.

We belong to God as a would be dead twig, depends on the life giving trunk of God in order to have life. Christians, the two most important words in your life could be these two words right here that you were in Christ. Everything is different because of this truth. Of all the different things that you can belong to, of all the different memberships that we could have, of all of the different ways that we can affiliate and have connections in this world, this is the one right here that surpasses them all. Far above the political party that we’re a part of, or the country that we were born in before we found citizenship here. The tax bracket that we find ourselves in, the zip code that we find ourselves in, this category right here surpasses all of them that we are in Christ.

And if I can share with you, four abiding truths from this part of scripture then I think it could be a real benefit and blessing to your life. The first one is this. Jesus prepares us to abide in the midst of a radical conflict. Jesus tells his people about a conflict to prepare them for the journey that's ahead of them. He tells us about a coming conflict today to prepare us and ultimately draw us closer to himself, draws deeper, so that we can abide and have readiness for that day.

2 Timothy 3:12 says, "All who desire to live a godly life will be persecuted." If we could just get our minds right here and be clear on a few things. Getting a flat tire on the way to Bible study is not persecution, right? It's a world of thorns and thistles, and you've got one in your tire. That's not persecution. Going, being at Crabtree Valley Mall, which is a great place, driving around looking for a parking spot and praying really hard and not finding a parking spot, that's not spiritual warfare. That's called Saturday. We just rocked it. If you live for Jesus, then you will stir up some confusion, probably even some hostility and conflict in the world around you.

What is persecution? Persecution sounds something like this. The fact that every month, 322 Christians are killed for their faith. Every month, some 214 church buildings and structures are destroyed. There's a conflict between the church and the world. And this really shouldn't surprise us, should it? Now that Jesus is actually removing the sticker shock of what it means to be his follower, he said, "I'm telling you this upfront, I'm telling you it's going to happen, so when it happens, you won't fall away and when it happens, you'll remember that I brought this to you up front." He's a good king, isn't he? We can trust him with everything. There's nothing he's going to keep from us that we'd ever have to be worried about, when he's going to reveal it to us. He's telling it all to us up front.

So Jesus gives his disciples a series of, if then statements, to help them think about this. If we could start in verse 18, we'll see that if the world was confused about Jesus, then the world will most certainly be confused about us as well. The world hated Jesus, the world will hate us. Look at verse 19, "If the world was rejected because Jesus wasn't of the world, then if you and are in Christ and not in the world, then you can count on it, we're going to be rejected as well."

Verses 20-21, "If Jesus was persecuted then you and me will be persecuted." Verses 22-25, "Such profound truths are deep in here. If Jesus was hated because his life constituted a unique word of judgment for the world, then in a similar fashion, so will we." Now, one thing, let's just dig in right here, since there's a lot of stuff going on in 22-25. The world was not innocent before Jesus got there. The world wasn't without sin and then Jesus shows up and starts heaping condemnation on them. We've already learned this truth together.

John 3:17 it says, “Jesus didn’t come into the world to condemn the world because the world already stood condemned. Jesus came to save the world.” So friends, and Jesus’s own witness in life and in your witness and in your life together with Christ, we don’t walk around our city just heaping words of condemnation and heaping words of judgment on people. They already have it. Jesus came to take the condemnation own to himself. Jesus came to take the death penalty for their sin onto himself. He came as a word and is a beacon of life in you and me in our own lives. They already stood condemned and guilty of sin. Yeah, there was something unique going on where when Jesus did testify, when Jesus did do signs and wonders, and they rejected even that, then that became a unique form of condemnation to them. But it’s not like Jesus put them on the hook of sin. They were already there. And in a way that people rejected Jesus and hated Jesus because his life had that constituting effect in theirs. So we can expect as much in each of ours.

Let me say this another way, if we could look at it and find four reasons why the world hates the church, in this passage of scripture. If consider this, the church belongs to God and not to the world. The world does not own you Christian. The world cannot own you Christian because you are in Christ and you are not in the world. And that is a decision that God made. Think about this. Jesus cuts at the root of our political party, our social class, our friend group and our citizenship. He cuts at the root to engraft that into himself. So then he can come into our lives. He can start to transform our stories. He can work through those perfectly good things, but he can bear fruit in those arenas of our lives that belongs to him. And that’s a threat to the world, because we might not tow the party line on certain issues. We might not see things the way the populous does. We might find ourselves more and more and more to be a people that is on the fringes of society.

And while we were a threat at first, we might turn out to be an outcast in the end, but I think we can see is Jesus who cuts at the root and it’s Jesus who engrafts us to himself, and it’s Jesus who does all of this so that we can bear fruit. The world would be threatened by this. Second thing we see, why the world hates the church? Second reason is this. Is because the church believes in truth and not subjective reality. Think about this with me. Christianity has always believed and taught that there is truth that is outside of our minds that can judge us. The world finds this to be threatening. Christians may seem arrogant, in fact, I think for a lot of people that are legitimately considering the truth claims of Christ and the way that we represent him, I think we actually do come off as arrogant and I think it’s unavoidable.

When you go into a spiritual conversation with somebody or you’re talking with your neighbor about what you believe it is okay. It is okay if the Gospel is an offense, it’s okay if the Gospel is what stirs up confusion in people. It’s not okay for the Messenger to be the offense and it’s not okay for the messenger to do things to stir up conflict, but our message most certainly will. Paul’s the one who said this is the stumbling block to some. We’d do well to embrace it, but as we get into the world, we claim to believe in truth that is outside of our minds and that is seen as threatening because one of the chief values of the culture in society that you and I live in, is that we are the definers and creators of reality. And when we come along and we talk about a truth that’s outside of us, that’s going to feel threatening to people.

This is why we got to remember individual freedom valued by others is seen as a threat. It's threatened when we come in with a message of truth and love. We remember the words of Francis Schaeffer, level and display is the ultimate apologetic of the Gospel. This is why we not only speak truth to people, but we live a life of transformative witness in hope that invites people to consider the veracity of the truth claims that we bring to them. Not only this, the world hates the church because Jesus taught with authority and the Church has a derived authority from Jesus.

Back in the day, like Old Testament day, when they evaluated sermons and God would read from the scroll, he'd chair a few words, and then he would go sit down, and the chief head honcho rabbis sitting around the way they evaluated that God's word, is if it was a good sermon, they would end the sermon with these words. Amen. Amen. Jesus showed up and Jesus started his sermon like this. "Truly, truly, I say to you", Jesus started his sermon with, "Amen and amen." This is above your authority. This is above your ability to judge what I'm about to say, and friend, you and I as the church, we have a derived authority that comes from Christ. It's only because we're connected to Christ. It's nothing we have in and of ourselves, what we must understand, people don't like it because we claim that we believe in something that can evaluate all other truths.

One more, and we'll move to something else. Jesus loved people in a way that didn't make sense. And the church imitates him in this. The world doesn't understand the gospel of grace. The world doesn't understand what makes us live differently. There's a huge difference between people who know Christ than people who haven't known him. So if we could actually turn the tables right here and consider this from the other side. It's possible that you're here this morning and you're like, "Yeah, I'm the person, I oppose this, I'm not about this, I'm here with a friend, I'm here for her, I'm here for something." If we could even think. And then there's actually ... Something is possible for there to be a person that says, "You know what? I don't really, I guess I disagree because I don't see it."

Maybe the objection to the faith is that there's actually not that much different between a Christian and a non Christian. Maybe the objection that somebody would bring is that, yeah. Okay. Like the church hates the world. I don't know. Like I don't see that much to hate. Because the difference between a Christian and non Christian doesn't seem like that big of a difference. But if we could consider a mountain range with different canyons between them. If you could imagine your own life is standing on top of a particular mountain and you look out into the distance and you see a variety of different mountains there. And as you look at the different mountains, you may think, "Okay, well that's going to be me right there", is that mountain and that mountain right next to it, that's a Christian.

And just look at it from this point. We'd say, "Yeah, it doesn't seem like that much is different. Plus they look awfully similar, don't they?" But the difference is discovered on the journey. As we walked closer and closer and closer to the mountain, we actually see just how big those different mountains are. And on the approach, we would come to see that certain things that didn't look like that big of a deal, along ways out they were actually bigger and bigger details that can only be appreciated up close. As we got to the base of the mountain and we started to examine it, we would see, man, these ideas are a lot bigger up close than they appeared far away. And as we examine even more, perhaps even summit to the top of your mountain and you look across the way and that mountain that looks like it might be separated, I don't know, by just a couple of hundred yards from this perspective, is actually separated by thousands of thousands of yards, actually constituting a mile.

And what separated you wasn't just a few feet, it was a mighty canyon. And at the bottom of that canyon is a river that you must go down into and you must be baptized in order to be raised up with life and be able to ascend to the other side. Christian, friend, if you're sitting here thinking, well, there's not much difference between me and that guy or that girl, considered this. The difference might not look like much. It's actually far more profound you could ever imagine.

So for all of us in here, if we could consider Jesus is preparing us for a radical conflict and for people that are skeptical about the difference at all, let's allow conflict to push us deeper into Christ. Let's apply this truth this afternoon, tomorrow and Monday morning and into the next week by allowing the conflict that we face, to push us deeper into Christ. I think we do well to embrace the exile motif in scripture. You know about a third of your Bible is written to the church in times when they were exiled, when they were taken into captivity, when they were marginalized, when they felt like refugees in a foreign community, a third of your Bible is written to the church in those contexts.

We would do well to consider that God's people had always had no problem doing ministry from the margins and if we're connected to Christ then we will hear what he heard, and we will feel what he felt. As we think about this, we should let that conflict push us deeper into him. Help us to depend on him more. When someone opposes us, it's ultimately because they opposed Christ in us because we are in Christ. So we don't take a personal affront or a personal offense at any of this, we remember that this is part of being in the way of Jesus.

One of the things I love about this passage of scripture is that Jesus not only tells us that the conflict is coming, but he tells us about the change that took place that led the conflict to take place. And that's the second truth I want to show you. Jesus points out that the conflict is based on a change. This is incredible. The church is misunderstood because of a radical change that has taken place and it's only because of that radical change that there's a radical conflict. That change takes place, not because you and I just simply one day decided to just have Jesus for ourselves, it happens because of John 15:16.

Jesus said, “You did not choose me, but I chose you.” That happens because of John 15:19, “You did not belong to the world, but because I have chosen you, you belonged to me. And I’ve appointed you that you go and bear much fruit.” You’re caught in this. I chose you. I’m changing you, and you’re going to bear fruit for me. And because of that fruit, there’ll be a conflict.

If you’re facing conflict this morning, it doesn’t mean that you’re doing this wrong. Yeah, there’s conflict that we all face is so much of it is because we live in a fallen world. This is a place of thorns and thistles, isn’t it? There’s also a unique conflict that we face when our lives and the good fruit of Christ in us start stirring up confusion and even hostility in the world around us. The presence of that does not mean the absence of God. In fact, it means that we’re actually living a life of faithful witness. Take Heart Christian, you’re not far.

If we could think of it like this, the reason why Christians are misunderstood is that love has changed them. If you could imagine with me, you and a friend, let’s say y’all are best friends. Imagine two best friends and one of them falls for a girl that the other best friend just simply can’t understand. And in that relationship, I mean, how many times have you said the words like, “I just don’t understand what he sees in her”, or flip it around, “I just don’t understand what she sees in him.” We’ve all been a part of these conversations before. And think about what happens between two close friends in those moments. The respect level between those two friends, the one that can’t understand the respect level for the friend starts to plummet. And Jesus is telling us, a greater change has taken place. You used to be in the world, now you’re not in the world and that kind of change, is going to stir up all kinds of conflict.

Or if you’d like, we could illustrate through another way, if we could think of the Prince of Egypt movie. Can we go to the Prince of Egypt? Let’s do it. So Prince of Egypt movie, you have Pharaoh and Moses and they’re dialoguing, they’re talking, in the movie. And whether this is actually in here or not, I don’t know, lets just talk about the movie for a minute. So in the movie, Pharaoh is talking to Moses. And Pharaoh is trying to woo Moses, “Hey, won’t you align with us? Won’t you be a part of what we’re doing here in Egypt?” And Pharaoh is trying to convince Moses, he’s drawn to sway Moses. And there’s a particular conversation in the Prince of Egypt movie when Pharaoh looks at Moses and he realizes Moses is a Hebrew. And Moses isn’t going to be change. He’s not going to be bought. He’s not going to be persuaded. And in that moment, Pharaoh’s face grows stone cold against him. The change led to the conflict.

Or if you were even watching basketball last night, we all know KD right? He went to the other team. So then when he saw Westbrook last night, there was conflict. If you don’t know what I’m talking about, go home and Google Kevin Durant, Russell Westbrook love story conflict, and it’s all right there. If we could think about it. Jesus says that our love for him is going to seem repulsive to a world that doesn’t understand. Consider the exclusive truth claims of Christ. In John 14:6, “I am the way, I’m the truth, I’m the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” You’ll hear that one of two ways depending on where you are. If you’re in the world or in Christ.

If you're in Christ, you'll hear it and you'll think about it like this. Okay? That is a major claim, but I trust him. I know him, I know he will be true, I know he will be good, I know he will handle every single person with the right balance of mercy and justice. But if you're not in Christ and you hear that, you think how arrogant? Because you don't understand because you're not on the inside. Christian, as we reason with people, as we reason with family members, as we reason with coworkers and as we reason with friends, let us remember. We claim to believe things that they can't understand. This doesn't make us better than them, it should drive us deeper into abiding for wisdom, this should drive us deeper into prayer. When we pray for salvation the Spirit would help give us the right words to say in those moments.

If you're seeing a Christian, if you are a Christian, it means that God has first sought after you. It means that God has changed you by choosing you and appointing you to go and bear fruit. So as you think about it, Christians aren't people who have necessarily won. Christians are people who've got his won for himself. Christians are not people who have achieved, Christians are people who have been achieved by God. Christians are not people who were saved by their faithfulness, Christians are people who were saved by the faithfulness of God. Christians don't focus on being good enough, Christians focus on the fact that Christ was good enough for us.

So as a way of bringing this in and applying this, and leaving it out, this afternoon, tomorrow morning, and through the next week, let's do this. Let's give our lives out of gratitude for what he has given us. This is the only responsible way to bear fruit, isn't it? If we truly belong to him, if we are connected to him, if this is our calling to bear fruit for him, this is what we must do. So we give our time to volunteer here in this church family to meet the needs of the family. We give our time, we sacrifice TV time, we sacrifice when necessary some family time, to be in this city. When we give our resources to meet needs here around the faith family, we give our resources to meet needs across North America, we give our resources to get the gospel to the ends of the earth. Because our generosity is only motivated by his generosity towards us. And when we see and when we remember how much he loves us and how much he's given to us, that changes us.

And make no mistake about it, friend, when we start to live that life of radical change, it will lead to an inevitable conflict because the world doesn't understand these things from the outside. And when that conflict comes or when that change it seems too hard, Jesus has just what we need. And that's the next thing. Jesus promised to send the Spirit to be our comfort. When you're introducing a friend to a new acquaintance, what you say in those first few moments are some of the most important things that you'll ever say. And in this moment, Jesus is introducing the Spirit to us. We've actually already had an initial introduction, but he's continuing with the opening words here. And when Jesus introduces the Spirit to us, Jesus uses the word, helper. It's quite profound what Jesus is doing here because that isn't the first time that we've seen the word helper. We actually saw the word helper all the way back in Genesis chapter 1, on the first page of scripture, we see that God created man and woman to be complimentary partners in marriage and in life. And in creating man and woman, God created man to be heard, he created woman to be helper. This is Biblical complementarity.

Man and woman created equally with equal dignity, equal worth, and in the image of God. For the same purpose of imaging and displaying the beauties of Christ in the world, but doing so differently in his head and doing it as helper. We'll struggle to understand who the Holy Spirit is until we first really get a grip on what helper meant and was intended for, all the way back in the garden of Eden. If we go back into the garden, we see that the word helper was a good word, not a demeaning term that we might commonly work with because of our cultural misunderstandings and misinterpretations today. One way that the word helper could be misunderstood is to think of the man, the husband in the marriage relationship is having all the resources, having all the abilities, having all the skill, and the only purpose of the wife is to cook food and to make him look good in the process. That is not what the Bible teaches about what it means for a woman to be a helper.

That kind of gross understatement could be illustrated through this playful tale right here. I don't know if you've had a chance to meet my daughter, Perry Elizabeth, but let me tell you something, she is something else. And Imagine one day I'm out in the yard doing some yard work ... Yes, I know. I'm working on it. So I'm out in the yard doing some yard work and I invite my wife to send my daughter out into the yard to help me with yard work. Now Perry Elizabeth, her way of being outside is utterly different than mine. This is her. Beautiful dress, little grocery shopping cart, always taking care of Lola, that's the doll. And this is my girl.

And imagine the demeaning attitude I'd have if I told her to come out and to help me with yard work and I gave her a little kids fork to rake some leaves while I went around the yard with all the big tools and the equipment to really get stuff done. That is not how the Bible talks about what it means for a woman to be helper, or for God to be helper. Instead, something that's closer to the biblical picture would be imagining me in the gym working out ... I know, I'm working on that too. And I'm in the gym working out and I have a load that I can't lift and I'm trying to lift the load, but I need help because I'm going to be unable to lift it on my own. So in that moment, I call in no other than 2015 world's strongest man Brian Shaw, to be my help.

And having this guy assist me on bench, oh, you'd recognize it. You would know he is here. In fact, you wouldn't even be looking at me, you'd be looking at him. And in the Bible, we're not looking necessarily at us, we're not even looking at the Spirit, this job of the Spirit is to point people to Christ. We're looking at Christ. Jesus has provided the Spirit of Christ to be our comfort, and to be our help. The very fact of this implies that the Spirit has skills, wisdom, power, understanding, re insight and resource that we lack. So sisters, what an incredible, incredible title that God has bestowed on you. To look at you and call you helper, this is the name that God himself claims for his own. Deuteronomy 27, God calls himself the helper of mankind. And God calls you to be the helper of man, in the home and in the church for the good of man, for the good of woman, and for the glory of God, what an incredible God we serve. Men, how many of us are guilty from not treating our wives in this way just in the last week? Getting it right in marriage leads to getting it right when we depend on the Holy Spirit in our everyday lives. We're intended to depend on the Spirit. The Spirit has resource understanding insight, that we lack and we won't have on our own.

So as a result of this, as a way of applying this, let's listen to the Spirit of Christ and let's respond in obedience. For if you trust in God, if you trust Jesus Christ to be forgiveness of your sins, you have the Holy Spirit of God living inside of you. He's here. He is here to help. He is here to speak. He's here to resource. He is here to provide in and for our lives what we don't have and what we're incapable of doing on our own. For him the question is not, is he speaking to us? The question is, are we listening to him?

So as we think about it, let's consider that he is here to show us the wisdom of Christ in every situation. He is here to provide the power of Christ, to overcome every temptation. He has a word for each of us. He probably has a word for the person seated next to you that he could give to us if we would simply listen to him. He is here to help us when conflict is hard. He is here to help us when change seems impossible and he is here to help us to speak words of truth, even when it's risky and it could cost us everything. That's the last thing I need you to see. Jesus propels us out with a challenging commission.

This is where it ends for now. Jesus points us to a world that's hostile towards us. He points us to a world that desperately needs to encounter him and consider how it goes. Starting in verse 26 it says, "The Spirit has come to speak truth to us in every situation." So no matter where we go, what we do, how hard life gets, the Spirit of Christ is here to point us to the wisdom of Christ in every situation that we face. Not only that, verse 27, "The Spirit is here to help us speak truth in every situation that we find ourselves in."

So in 16:1, "We need the comfort of the Spirit because this life in Christ is hard." Verse 2, Jesus points us to the risky places and tells us that the Spirit will lead us. There's a reason he tells them you will be kicked out of the synagogues, risky place to go with the message. And he says, "The Spirit is here. The Spirit will send you into different places." And yeah, you might be kicked out, you might be marginalized, but just know it's not because it's you, it's because it's me.

Verse 3, Jesus tells us that this life is going to be hard. And verse 4, Jesus tells us all of this upfront in order to draw us in, don't you see? He's telling us this to draw us in, to invite us to abide more and more now, so we may find readiness for when the conflict comes.

John 14:12, Jesus says that his people would do greater works than him. Greater in terms of quality? I don't know. Raising people from the dead, having power of the demonic, feeding people out of a lunchable, that seems a bit of a stretch for this guy right here, but greater in terms of quality for his church? I think so. How do you do that? You release your Spirit into the world through the members of the church in the world. We go around as emissaries of light, as ambassadors of the Gospel, setting up little Gospel outposts in all the different neighborhoods and all the different social classes here to testify to the words and deeds of Christ.

But before we try to trump ourselves up with this, and try to go out and live this life, we remember that the way to go broad with our lives is to only go deep into the gospel. We remember abiding leads to fruit bearing. The change will lead to the accomplishment of the commission. The Gospel creates the ability to put up with radical conflict and to put up with radical change. So think of this.

And there were once two Moravian missionaries that desperately wanted to get the gospel to with a slave people in the West Indies. They examined the situation from every angle and they couldn't find a way in, but then they discovered one. The only way to get the gospel to the people, the slave people in the West Indies, was to sell themselves into slavery. And they did. They sold themselves into slavery because they remembered the way that Christ first sold himself into the slavery of our sin for us. He became a captive in order to set us free, and that led these people to sell themselves and to give everything they had in their lives for the sake of the Gospel as well.

And this caused radical change in their life, didn't it? Yeah, people didn't understand, "Hey, we usually don't do this kind of thing. Hey, what are you doing with your life?" But they knew that real freedom and real riches wasn't to be had in this world, it was to be had in the life to come. Friend, what is the Spirit saying to you in this? What would you attempt for God if you knew, not just thought, if you knew God would never leave you, God would never forsake you, and God is not ashamed of you. Don't you see this is intended to propel us out into the world, out into the neighborhood this afternoon, out into our offices in the next week? So as a way of bringing this home, let's find comfort in the fact that we belong to Christ. In Luke 12, Jesus sent his followers out. He sent them out with power. When they went out with power, they came back with joy and they testified to Christ, "Jesus, even the demons submit to us because of your name." And Jesus said to them, "Don't rejoice that the Spirits subject to you, rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

When his disciples were martyred, they weren't worried about their lives, they weren't focused on their own life, they were focused on the life that Jesus had first lived for them. They were focused on the fact that Jesus had first given himself for us. So with them, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside sin and every weight that so easily can entangle each of us, and let's set our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. For the joy set before him, he endured the cross, he despised its shame, and he is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Let's abide in him. Let's pray.

Father, we need you. We need you like children need a parent, we need you like sheep need a shepherd, we need you like citizens need direction from a good king. And Father we need you like would be dead twigs, we need the life-giving sap of the Holy Spirit in our lives. God as we take a moment now to abide in your word, and in this moment, God speak to us. We pray that your generosity towards us in Christ would stir incredible generosity in us in this moment now, as we give an offering, and in the rest of this day and in the week to come, as we remember how much you've loved us. We pray for this in Jesus' name. Amen.



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