

Natalie W. Bell
 May 17, 2020

The Holy Spirit: A Legacy of Love
John 14:15-21, 25-27

If you love me, you will keep^[f] my commandments. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate,^[g] to be with you forever. ¹⁷This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in^[h] you.

¹⁸“I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. ¹⁹In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. ²⁰On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

²⁵“I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶But the Advocate,^[i] the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. ²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

Next to my Bible, they are ***some other precious books*** I own.

The first one is a ***Family Tree Record Book*** with memories of my Grandma Morene, who we lost 4 years ago at age 97.

It's precious, because not only does it have the family tree,

but also lots of questions that she answered, like what was your education?

And how did you meet your husband?

What were your growing up years like?

Some other great books are ***Grandpa Do You Remember When?***

And the companion book about Grandma.

They are books written to my children from my parents, about their growing up years.

Dad's has great things in there about his favorite horse Ginger,

how much he loved growing up on the dairy farm,

and how special it was to live on a homestead from the land run of 1901.

There's a letter from Dad to my kids.

And it's so precious now that he's gone.

These are as valuable as pictures,
 Because they are more than just books.
 They are a *family legacy*.
 They are passing on hopes and dreams for my family,
 from my parents and grandparents.
 These legacies *inspire* me
 to live a life of love, and work, and appreciation for all that I've been given.
 These legacies are something I hope will inspire my *children* to do the same.

I wonder, what kind of legacy has *been left* for you?
 What do you want to *pass down* as a legacy to your family?

As I read these words of Jesus, I really think he's talking about *leaving a legacy*.
 In the *promise of the Holy Spirit*.
 As he says so clearly, he is not leaving us alone.
 He is leaving us his Spirit, the Holy Spirit,
 our *Advocate, our Counselor, the Spirit of truth*,
 and this Spirit will reside within us.

He is ultimately leaving a *legacy of love*,
 So that we can live in a new way.

This must have been a *shock and a comfort* to his disciples.
 A *shock* to hear that he would be leaving them,
 But a *comfort* knowing that they would have his own Spirit inside of them.

Just think of *how powerful it is* to have the love of a precious family member who
 has passed away...how you can often just feel their love inside you..
 How that love brings such comfort,
 How their words and actions inspire your life today.
 I am often inspired by the saints from this congregation!
 Jesus is doing something similar, and even more powerful.

What Jesus is promising is this legacy, of the *Holy Spirit inside*.
 Much like the legacies passed down through our families,
 This one *brings* hope, and *love* to all who follow Jesus.
 It literally *guides* our every step, if we receive it.

What do you think of when you think of the Holy Spirit?
 Do you think of Holy Spirit as a *Counselor, or your Advocate?*

Do you ever think of it like a *legacy*?
 Do you ever think of it like your own personal *power supply*?
 Something to keep you *going*, and going in the right *direction*?

I wonder, *what kind of power do you find in the Holy Spirit*?
 Is it God's presence?
 God's love?
 God's strength?

The truth is, the *Holy Spirit is God*—a third person of the Trinity.
 It is *not just a feeling* we have as Christians.

I think we can easily fall into the trap of, *do I feel* the Holy Spirit?
 Do I feel God's love?
 Do I feel that comfort and counsel and truth inside of me?

Sometimes—yes, we do feel all of that.
 Sometimes I'm overcome by emotion
 because of God's presence.

But I like what one pastor I heard said about the Holy Spirit inside us.
 The Spirit is about *devotion, not just emotion*.

You can have *love—or devotion—even when you don't feel* that emotion.
We have God's love inside of us, even when we don't feel it.
 And we have the power of God working in us and for us, even if we don't feel it.

One of the saints I most admire is *Mother Teresa*.
And she wrote letters, during times that she didn't feel the presence of Christ--
 She described it as "the darkness."

In a letter from 1961, Teresa wrote:
"Darkness is such that I really do not see—neither with my mind nor with my reason—the place of God in my soul is blank—There is no God in me—when the pain of longing is so great—I just long & long for God." Shona Crabtree, "Book Uncovers a Lonely Desolate Mother Teresa", Christianity Today, August 30, 2007.

That really speaks to me about the Holy Spirit.
 That if a saint like Teresa has times when she doesn't feel God's Spirit inside of her, *we don't have to worry* when we don't feel it either.

It's the same thing with people we love in our lives,
sometimes we don't feel the love, but we still love.
 What if that's how it is for us *with God sometimes* too?

The Holy Spirit is *more than a feeling.*
 The Holy Spirit is *a promise, and a legacy*
 that comforts, counsels, and advocates for us.

Jesus says the Holy Spirit is our *Counselor and our Advocate*—
 someone on our side, someone standing up for us.
 Wow—*we could all use that these days of the pandemic, right?*
 We need to know that God is on our side, that God is our Counselor.
 Especially when our stress levels are so high, when we are separated, isolated,
 alone, when everything seems to be crashing down around us.
 We need the Holy Spirit, don't we?

Do you realize when Jesus *promised the Holy Spirit?*
 It was on his last night.
 Just as he is telling them to love one another as He loves us!

Love.
 That's an important part of the Holy Spirit.
Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit—because He loves us.

And the Spirit is God's love in action.
 All throughout the Bible we read about *love in action.*
In James it says, *Do not be hearers of the word only, but doers of the word.*
In 1 John it says *God is love, so we should love one another.*
We should love not just in word or speech, but in love and action.

What if that is our *key to following the Holy Spirit?*
love in action.

Just as the Spirit is our Counselor and Advocate,
 We are empowered to love others like that.

And Jesus is our perfect *example.*
 We all know the *love of Jesus in action.*
 All throughout his life,
 He was a Counselor, an Advocate, a Healer, a Speaker of Truth!

What if we are called to *carry on that legacy of love*?
And we do that by *the power* of the Holy Spirit inside of us?

Think for a minute about those *you have been called to love*.
Family, friends, church family...now expand that circle...
to coworkers, acquaintances,
Now expand it even further... to strangers, and people you haven't yet met.

What if the Holy Spirit *enables you to love* all of those people,
and to see them as God's children?

And what if all that starts with *knowing the love of God for you,*
through the Holy Spirit
What if receiving the love of Christ,
Is the first step in loving anyone else?

That is the legacy that Jesus has left us---
And the *power* that resides within us.

We may not always feel it, but it is there.
It has been promised to us.
We have a *Counselor, and an Advocate*.
We have the presence of God---the *Holy Spirit*—
and because of that Spirit, we are *never, ever alone*.

This is what has been left for us,
And it is something we can pass on.
And that is our *Good News* of the Gospel this day.
For the gift of the Holy Spirit, all God's people say, Amen.