

He Always Points People to Jesus

In this series of articles from John 16:4b-15, we've seen several aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit. In my previous article we saw that the Holy Spirit will guide believers into all truth. In this final article from this series, I want us to look at how the Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus. Look with me in verses 14-15: "[The Spirit] will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you." We don't want to miss the Trinitarian aspect of these last two verses. The message that Jesus has declared is what the Father has given him to speak. It's this message—this truth—that the Holy Spirit "presses home to the disciples." Later in John 17 Jesus speaks of the fact that he has glorified the Father on earth "by accomplishing the work that you gave me to do." The Father wants the Son to be honored and glorified just as he himself is glorified (John 5:23). In light of this truth, it's important to see the work of the Holy Spirit as he continually points to Jesus so that we as his disciples may glorify Jesus all our lives. Theologian J.I. Packer points to this truth of the Holy Spirit's focus on Jesus by comparing the Spirit to floodlights. "When floodlighting is done well, the floodlights are so placed that you don't see them; you're not in fact supposed to see where the light is coming from; what you're meant to see is just the building on which the floodlights are trained. The intended effect is to make [the building] visible when otherwise it would not be seen for the darkness, and to maximize its dignity by throwing all its details into relief so that you see it properly. It's as if the Spirit stands behind us, throwing light over our shoulder, on Jesus, who stands facing us. The Spirit's message to us is never, 'Look at me; listen to me; come to me; get to know me,' but always, 'Look to *him*, and see his glory; listen to *him*, and hear his word; go to *him*, and have life; get to know *him*, and taste his gift of joy and peace."

We can see how different this is than what many are doing by putting a hyper-emphasis on the Holy Spirit. Some put a major focus on those who seem to have been especially blessed with Spiritual gifts like celebrity pastors; some churches focus on the healing ministry of the Spirit; some believe that they receive new revelation from the Spirit. And yet, what we're seeing in this passage rules out any teaching that would take the emphasis off Jesus Christ and put its primary focus on the Spirit. The Holy Spirit does a mighty work in applying the redemption purchased by Christ to believers. The Spirit works with the Word to point people to Jesus. John Calvin writes, "For as soon as the Spirit is severed from Christ's Word the door is open to all sorts of craziness and imposters." Allow me to summarize some important truths that we've learned about the work of the Holy Spirit in this passage from John's gospel.

—As we saw earlier in this series, the Spirit convicts *non-believers* of their *sin* through the Word—and certainly the preaching of the word—as we saw from Peter’s sermon on the Day of Pentecost; The Spirit convicts people that true *righteousness* is only found in the Righteous One; He convicts non-believers that there’s a coming day of *judgment* for those who will not turn to Christ for salvation. Along with the Spirit’s conviction to non-believers, the Spirit also convicts *believers* of their ongoing need to turn away from their sin and turn to Christ in new obedience. True believers will not fall into judgment, but God *disciplines* those who refuse to repent of their sins (Hebrews 12:7-11).

—We’ve heard today of the Spirit’s ministry of pointing people to Jesus. We want to be wary of falling into situations where we may hyper focus on the gifts of the Spirit or the fruit of the Spirit to the exclusion of focusing on Jesus. We honor the ministry of the Holy Spirit when we—as the Spirit does—seek to point people away from *ourselves* and whatever gift that we’ve been given and point them to Jesus. It’s not wrong to be joyful when someone expresses thankfulness for your Spiritual gifts, your service, or the use of your time, talents and treasures in the service of another. And yet, it’s wrong to place our focus on *ourselves* and on what we’ve done rather than pointing to Jesus Christ.

—Just as the Son brought *glory* to the Father during his entire earthly ministry, the Spirit brings glory to the Son. In like manner, we’re commanded to live our lives seeking to bring glory to our Triune God. The Westminster Shorter Catechism teaches us how to do this:

Question: What rule has God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?

Answer: The Word of God which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments is the *only rule to direct us* how we may glorify and enjoy him.” We glorify God by continually growing in knowledge of God through the Word and seeking, by grace, to obey his word from the heart. We want to glorify God in our Lord’s Day worship which includes the biblical instruction in how we’re to worship God. We want to glorify God in our marriages and in the raising of our children. We want to glorify God in the workplace and in our relationships with others, wherever we are. “So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” 1 Corinthians 10:31.

As we conclude this series, I pray that our knowledge of the work of Holy Spirit has been challenged if we’re—in any way—at odds with what Jesus taught his disciples, and us, from what we studied in John’s gospel. As Dr. Packer reminds us, the Spirit’s message to us about Jesus is, “Look to *him*, and see his glory; listen to *him*, and hear his word; go to *him*, and have life; get to know *him*, and taste the gift of joy and peace.” May we be lifelong learners and may we pray for a teachable spirit.

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