

**Sermon Series: “Good News for Life”**  
**“God’s *Great* Gift, Pt. 2”**  
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**Easter Sunday, April 4, 2021**

Have you ever been given an extra special gift? I have to be careful when I tell my kids that I have a special surprise for them a times. They have told me to be careful saying this to them, because they are often thinking of something special— I am not quite sure what, but perhaps a puppy or vacation— and I am just thinking something like chocolate-covered Oreos! E.g., but I recall one gift a high school graduate got which was quite unexpected by him and was a very special gift. He was getting ready to go off out of state to college and he knew his family’s finances were tight, so when they led him outside to get his graduation gift he was not expecting anything out of the ordinary, but what he saw as a very nice, used BMW sedan! Apparently, his family was able to get a good deal on it, and it lasted him well for his college career. And he was in a state of shock over this! Perhaps you can think of an extra-special gift you were given in the past. Today we are going to see the truly *great* gift Jesus gave to His first disciples, as well as to you and me!

READ John 14:15-24 (p. 109)

**CONTEXT:** Philip has asked Jesus to show him the Father, and Jesus responds by pointing to Himself and to all the amazing works He had been doing. And Jesus encouraged the disciples that they are to ask for anything in His name and it would be done—and they would be doing even greater things than He had been doing!

Last week we discussed in depth the important statement Jesus made in v 15: READ. It is a motto of sorts which concisely reveals what following Jesus means— if we love Him, we will obey Him. This is a major theme in our passage. The other major theme has to do with the Holy Spirit. We read earlier in this service John 20:1-23 where the resurrected Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on the disciples. In our text He unpacks a bit of the role of the Holy Spirit.

So, we may ask, how do we follow this Jesus and keep His commandments? READ v 16. “For those who love Jesus, He promised the Father would give them another ‘Parakletos’, which can be translated ‘legal advisor’, ‘advocate’, ‘counselor’, or ‘helper’. ‘Defense attorney’ before God would work as well; along this line it is said to mean, ““pleader”, “a friend of the accused person, called to speak to his character, or otherwise enlist the sympathy of the judges”” (J.H. Moulton & G. Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p. 485). Cf. John 3:17-21; 16:7-11; Romans 8:31-39; 1 John 2:1-2.” It may strike us as surprising that Jesus in v 16 refers to “another Advocate”—who is this? It is Jesus. In 1 John 2:1-2 we read, “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous; and he is the anointing sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.” So Jesus is sending another “Parakletos”. What exactly is this? This word only appears five times in the New Testament— four times in the Gospel of John and once in 1 John 2:1. What I have in the Sermon Notes tells us the way this word is used in non-biblical Greek,

as some kind of defense helper or attorney before a court. This idea is found in Romans 8:31-39; READ. I believe this advocacy for believers in the time of judgment may be implied in John 16:7-11 when the world is judged. Where do we see defense attorneys today? E.g., many of us grew up watching the TV show “Perry Mason”. E.g., I recall reading about a persistent defense attorney who tried to find evidence of the innocence of his client who was found guilty of murder, and when DNA evidence came out it allowed his client to be found innocent and let out of jail. This is kind of what the Holy Spirit does as the Parakletos— He defends us when we sin and declares us righteous based on the death and resurrection of Jesus. E.g., I recall a story about B.J. Thomas who is famous for the song, “Raindrops Keep Fallin’ on My Head”; he, in the late 1960s and early 1970s became increasingly famous and got into drugs, and his marriage was on the brink of divorce when he became a Christian in 1976; he then cut an album, “Home (Where I Belong)”, which was the first Christian album to go platinum; I recall a story he told when he became a Christian when he lost his temper and kicked in a hotel room door out of frustration over his child’s misbehavior, and the remorse he felt over this and he accepted God’s forgiveness— this is how the Holy Spirit can defend our hearts before the Lord and declare us righteous and we can forgive ourselves and know the Spirit’s comfort. Recall 2 Corinthians 5:21, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” We also see the idea of the Holy Spirit as our “Helper”, helping us to speak when we don’t know how, as in Matthew 10:19-20 and Romans 8:26-27; READ. We might note that Parakletos in v 16 is translated “Advocate” (NRSV, REB), “Helper” (ESV, NASB), and “Counselor” (NIV, RSV)— and these translations are good. The KJV has “Comforter”, but this is not seen as one of its possible meanings. The Holy Spirit acts as our Helper to speak. Have you ever experienced this? E.g., in sermons I prepare things and am ready to go, but often I experience a way of wording or an illustration that I had never

thought of before I got up to preach. E.g., I have heard of Christians defending the gospel or sharing the gospel with an elegance of wording they did not know they had. This is the power of the Helper!

READ v 17. “The ‘Parakletos’ is also known as the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive and who ‘will teach you everything, and remind you of all I have said to you’ (v 26). Cf. Mark 13:9-13.” E.g., I recall the wonderful story Randy Roberts has told me of when he was a young Christian, he went to visit some friends at a party at someone’s house, and they were kind of mocking him for following Jesus and saying there are many ways to follow God than Jesus, and Randy felt led to take the big Bible off the mantle and open it— open a book he did not know well at all— and he turned to John’s gospel, 14:6, and read that Jesus said He is the way, the truth, and the life, no person comes to the Father except through Him”. Many were caught in shock and were in awe at what he read, and others scoffed. But Randy knows this was an amazing act of the Spirit of truth! E.g., I recall when I was in college taking a history course on The Emergence of Christianity which was taught very liberally, where the professor did not believe in the resurrection or miracles, and I was challenged in my faith, and my campus minister John led me to the book by I. Howard Marshall, *I Believe in the Historical Jesus*, and that helped me see the reliability of the gospels could be defended in scholarship against skeptics.

READ vv 18-20. “This ‘Parakletos’ will remain with believers forever, and thus will replace the earthly Jesus. Cf. Matthew 1:23; 28:20. ‘His [the Spirit’s] help as Jesus’ *alter ego* will be available specifically to the disciples, to compensate them for the loss of Jesus’ visible presence’ (F.F. Bruce, *John*, p. 302).” This is a theme of God’s relationship with His people is an important theme in the Old Testament. When the Jews were taking the promised land, God promises to be with His people; Joshua 1:9; cf. Psalm 23. And notice that in vv 21-24 the verb ἀγαπάω (“to love”) is used seven times in these four verses! It is

as though Jesus is using bold, underline and italics to emphasize His point! He is expressing the essentials of what His Spirit being like us actually is— a love, trusting relationship. Have you ever gone somewhere where you felt comfortable because someone else was there with you? E.g., I recall years ago when Gayle would bring her youngest son John to the children’s classroom for Sunday School, he would be holding on to her leg; then minutes later when Gayle was in the Parlor for Sunday School class John would appear and not want to leave her side. That is what God is like for us — He is our comfort, and He is with us.

“Have we ‘opened’ God’s *great* gift lately?” The Holy Spirit is our Advocate and Helper, the Spirit of truth, and the One who is always with us in love..