

BACK TO NORMAL... BACK TO PNEUMA
Constant Companion
May 9, 2021

Overarching Theme: In 2021, FUMC will be SENT with the peace of Christ!

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasis in the lesson. *The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.*

Core Point:

On Easter evening, the Risen Christ appears to his gathered disciple for the first time since Good Friday and speaks these words: "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you." Just as Jesus sent his disciples into a divided, conflicted 1st Century with his peace, so he sends us into a divided, conflicted 2021 with his peace.

John:

The Gospel according to John is written by John, one of the apostles, who was the brother of another apostle named James and all the Gospels mention their father's name as Zebedee (Mark's Gospel in addition mentions that Jesus gave these brothers the name 'Sons of Thunder'). John's Gospel is quite different from the other three (does not contain a genealogy, or any record of Jesus' birth, childhood, temptation, transfiguration, appointment of the disciples, nor any account of Jesus parables) because more than his Gospel giving an account of the life of Christ, it is a powerful argument for the incarnation of Christ. The purpose of the writing of this Gospel was to demonstrate conclusively that Jesus was, and is, the very heaven-sent Son of God and that all who believe in him will have eternal life because he is it's only source. It was written to new Christians and also to seekers of salvation and truth sometime between AD 85 and 90. A key verse of this Gospel is: "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (20:30-31). Some of the special features of this Gospel are: In every chapter Jesus' deity is revealed and his true identity of the divine-human nature and life-giving mission is underscored through the many titles he is given as well as through the eight miracles of Christ which John mentions, calling them signs. The greatest sign, of course, is the resurrection and John provides a stirring

eyewitness account of finding the empty tomb and various post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. Of these miracles, six are unique to John as well as the 'Farewell / Upper Room Discourse' (chapters 14-17); over 90% of John is unique to his Gospel. John records seven 'I am' sayings of Jesus through which he affirms his preexistence and eternal deity.

– Adapted from The Life Application Bible, p. 1866.

Reflect on this Scripture:

John 16:4b-11 CEB

"I didn't say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. ⁵ But now I go away to the one who sent me. None of you ask me, 'Where are you going?' ⁶ Yet because I have said these things to you, you are filled with sorrow. ⁷ I assure you that it is better for you that I go away. If I don't go away, the Companion won't come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ When he comes, he will show the world it was wrong about sin, righteousness, and judgment. ⁹ He will show the world it was wrong about sin because they don't believe in me. ¹⁰ He will show the world it was wrong about righteousness because I'm going to the Father and you won't see me anymore. ¹¹ He will show the world it was wrong about judgment because this world's ruler stands condemned.

Introduction:

Last week we looked at how the Holy Spirit is our guide. This week we will look at the ever-abiding presence of the Holy Spirit as our companion.

This Week:

Jesus called his disciples together, and through them all others who would believe in him as their Savior and Lord, to form a new community that would live differently from the ways of the world by being other-centered, loving and caring, forgiving, and holy. This would cause them to be at odds with the world, the world of sin and evil would be up against them, and while Jesus was with them, he was their companion, teacher, and keeper. Now he was returning to the Father and when he let his disciples know this they were sorrowful because he would not be with them for long. However, Jesus would not leave them as orphans in the world to struggle on their own and be defeated in faith and discipleship of him. He knew they would continue to need help and support, comfort and strength, and counsel from God and so he promised to ask the Father to send them another companion who would be everything and more that what he was to them – the Holy Spirit.

Remarkably, Jesus even went so far as to say that it was even to their benefit that he leaves them and returns to the Father because then only would the Holy Spirit

come in a new way as never before to live within them and be with them forever. Jesus having come in human form was limited by time and space but the Spirit is unlimited and would be with and in all disciples, in all situations, and at all times. So before his ascension, Jesus asked his disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit (Lk. 24:49; Ac. 1:4-5) and this happened a few days later as they were gathered together on the day of Pentecost when the Spirit came upon them in a powerful way and filled them (Ac. 2:1-4). The Greek word for the Holy Spirit used in the original language of John 16:7 is *parakletos* which means one who is called to come alongside and come to the aid of another in a multi-faceted way. The Holy Spirit would be all that believers in Christ would need in their lives as companion, advocate, helper, comforter, counselor, and more so as to see them through every situation.

God is still giving and filling today with the Holy Spirit all those who put faith in Jesus Christ through repentance and faith and by that making them God's children. While faced with the absence of Jesus' physical presence, all believers in Christ now have the comforting guidance and strengthening of his spiritual presence dwelling in them through the Holy Spirit. Although in living in this broken, hurting, and unjust world, believers in Christ would face worries and fears, temptations and struggles, despair and even death, but with the ever-abiding presence and companionship of the Holy Spirit, they would find peace, comfort, and encouragement to accept and overcome them, in spite of fumbles and falls in life. The Holy Spirit can be experienced as the constant companion when we ask God to fill us with the Spirit and as long as we yield to the working of the Holy Spirit within, we would find that the things and ways of the world will not rule over us nor defeat our faith and witness in Christ. We can live a Spirit-filled Christian life and approach the troubles of this world from the point of Christ's victory over sin and death through his death and resurrection and the same victory available to us through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. As you think of the words that describe the Holy Spirit – Companion, Comforter, Advocate, Helper, Counselor – what word best describes your experience and why?
2. How has the Holy Spirit helped you respond to challenges in this world that you've faced as a Christian? Have you seen any blessings emerge from the challenges you've faced and the spiritual strength you've received?
3. How can the truth that the Holy Spirit is always with you and in you help you to overcome temptations or find comfort in distresses faced?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: John 16:7 CEB
⁷ I assure you that it is better for you that I go away. If I don't go away, the Companion won't come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.
3. Prayerfully approach God in asking to be encouraged that the Holy Spirit of God will never leave you and to enjoy and receive the blessing of the Spirit's companionship.