

Jesus explains why he had to leave

John 16:5-15

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John 16:5-15

⁵ But now I am going to him who sent me. None of you asks me, "Where are you going?" ⁶ Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things. ⁷ But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸ When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ about sin, because people do not believe in me; ¹⁰ about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; ¹¹ and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. ¹² 'I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. ¹³ But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. ¹⁵ All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.'

The words we hear are part of our Lord's speech to his disciples shortly before his death. The disciples were troubled by the fact that Jesus, the hope of their life, says he is going to die on the cross. In his speech before his death, Jesus tries to explain to the disciples why it is good to go away, or to die, rise and ascend to the Father.

Let's think about your own past life: have you ever been in a situation where someone was dying. Such a situation is not pleasant. It is pretty depressing and sad. Death usually seems to us so final and irreversible. It really does not seem like a happy situation.

In today's Gospel Jesus's disciples face this kind of situation. Jesus said to them, "Your hearts are filled with grief because I have said these things."

But God's ways and choices are often hidden from us; we find it difficult to understand these. Here, however, Jesus tells his disciples several reasons why it is good that He returns to the Father in heaven.

The first and most important is that otherwise the Defender, the Holy Spirit, cannot come to the disciples. Jesus said, "Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you."

We - you and me - now live in the times of the Holy Spirit: our Lord is no longer visible to us, but He is among us in His Word, in His promises, and in all the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Or when we see our fellow human beings in need, hungry or thirsty, strange or naked, sick or imprisoned, we know that when we help them, we do it to our Lord, as our Lord told us in Matthew 25:35-36. Or, when we welcome a child, we welcome our Lord, as He himself told in Matthew 18:5: "And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me."

The Holy Spirit thus continues the work of our Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit has no work of his own or his own plan, but He only does what God the Father did in creation and what the Son of God our Lord has done and wants to do for us. Therefore, Jesus said, "He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make

known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.”

The work of the Holy Spirit is at its best when we do not notice Him as such, but when we notice what He wants us to see: the law and the gospel, i.e. God's holy will and the forgiveness through Jesus Christ. When the Holy Spirit works, then we – first of all – realise that we are sinners; and secondly, when we believe in the forgiveness of our sins in the name and blood of Jesus. Then the Holy Spirit is truly at work, even if we ourselves do not yet know about the work of the Holy Spirit as such.

For example, we can learn how to use an electric iron, even if we do not know anything about electricity. We can ride a bicycle, even if we do not understand the air pressure in the tires. Likewise, the Holy Spirit has been working in us for a long time before we have realised it.

The Holy Spirit is thus at work where you hear the talk and the teaching of Jesus and the Father of God. Where there is much talk of the Holy Spirit, but not of the atonement and forgiveness brought by Jesus, the fruits of the Holy Spirit are very small. The Holy Spirit Himself does not want to be glorified, but the Holy Spirit wants to glorify our Lord; the Holy Spirit wants to glorify the sanctity of Jesus and the gospel of Jesus and his death and resurrection, the deliverance from sin, death, and the power of evil.

The second task of the Holy Spirit, mentioned by our Lord in today's Gospel text, is that “he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment.” (verse 8).

That is, besides the glorification of Christ, the task of the Holy Spirit is to shed light on the reason why our Lord had to die on the cross! Our Lord went to the cross just because the world lives in sin; and because the world does not work righteously; and because the world is under judgment.

Usually, the Holy Spirit works by revealing first the sin in our hearts: the Holy Spirit reveals our sinfulness to us. After this we begin to understand the gospel, that is, why Jesus had to die on the cross and why he lived a life without sin! Our Lord came into the world to save us from the reality of sin, to save us from all our unrighteousness and our self-righteous attempts to redeem ourselves; and to save us from being judged and condemned by God!

Therefore, our Lord also refers to the Holy Spirit as the spirit of truth. Only the truth sets us free. That is why the Holy Spirit is also a defender! It is interesting and important to notice that the Holy Spirit is the spirit of truth.

Why is the truth so important? The truth is so important, for everything that is based on lies and injustice does not really last. It is nonsense or a deception or a mere imagination. There is a lot of talk about God's great love in the Bible, but we must note that it is not unlimited love. God does not accept everything: God cannot accept that anyone is hurt or extinguished.

And that's why it is so important to confess your sins to God every day. Not due to the fact that God knows everything – for He knows all our sins; but our confession is important because, when we confess our sins, we acknowledge that we are accountable to God, and that only he alone can forgive them. Confession of our sins is like giving praise to God and giving glory to Him who alone can forgive sins and

who alone can save us from the chain of sin. And to Him alone, all glory belongs. God does not share his glory with anyone.

We humans have sinful thoughts and attitudes and we commit sin every day – unfortunately. Sometimes we think about how to choose in certain situation: whether an act or something else is a sin or not. At least I myself have learned to recognise more and more clearly that in most cases my motives are not entirely pure regardless of my choice and alternatives at hand. My thoughts are not totally unclean or sinless. So when I opt for the better alternative, I realise I couldn't live up to it as well as I should have. The final result is that I find myself living more or less in sin all the time. That is why – again and again – I have to ask for forgiveness for my imperfection and wrongs from my fellow human beings and from God. And it is so that if we made it heaven based on how well we have succeeded in this life, none of us would get there.

But this is precisely at the heart of the work of the Holy Spirit: the Holy Spirit reveals our sinfulness and, on the other hand, glorifies and clarifies the gospel, i.e. the forgiveness of sins. Where we realise that we are sinners and that our sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, there the Holy Spirit works, even if there is no mentioning of the Holy Spirit as such. Becoming more holy is that we become more and more aware of our sins and sinfulness. But at the same time becoming holy is a deeper knowledge of grace; that is, we realise ever deeper and deeper that we are constantly living under the mercy of God!

Only from our Lord Jesus Christ do we receive such a freedom, peace and joy in our lives that endures this life and ultimately transcends the limits of time.

Let's pray: Almighty God, Heavenly Father. Thank you for giving your Holy Spirit to enlighten, comfort and guide us, your people. Thank you for sending your Spirit into our midst to bring us to Life.

Thank you for that the Holy Spirit reminds us about everything that You, Jesus, have spoken and taught us.

In particular, He reminds us to keep your commandments, and reminds us to love God over everything and our neighbours as ourselves. In addition, He reminds us of the commandment to spread the gospel into all the world.

Let the gospel spread all over the world until all nations praise you in their own language for the gift of salvation. Amen.