

9/11, 2001, “a date that will live in infamy.” It has been said that 9/11 changed everything. I’m not so sure. There can be no doubt that the events of that day forever changed the lives of the families who lost loved ones in NY or DC. It certainly has changed the way wars are fought in this new millennium. It has changed the way we get on a plane. But as catastrophic as 9/11 was, most of us were not directly impacted by the events on that fateful day. Church attendance changed immediately after 9/11 but it didn’t take long for attendance to fall back to normal. For some the events of 9/11 have little impact compared to what they are facing today. The death of a loved one, the diagnosis of a life-threatening disease, a nasty divorce, the loss of a job; these are personal 9/11 moments. Where do we find the courage to face an uncertain future? Where do we find comfort for our troubled hearts? Is peace even possible in a 9/11 world?

John 14 records Jesus’ words to some close friends who were on the verge of a catastrophic series of events. They had left everything to follow Jesus whom they were counting on to usher in a kingdom that would bring peace and justice. They longed for those things. But in a few short hours their lives would be turned upside down. Their dreams would be dashed and their hope snuffed out. They had a serious case of heart trouble. Let’s listen in... John 14:1-6...

Last week we talked about what happens when you die. Here Jesus gives a simple answer, “Where I am you will be also.” In other words, “To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.” One of the most beloved promises in the Bible is Jesus’ promise of a place. God has a place, a house, eternal in the heavens. In His house He has reserved a place for us. To all who believe Jesus is “the way, the truth and the life,” He promises a home, eternal in heaven.

“Home” is one of the most pleasant words in the English language. We love “home cooking” or being “homeward bound.” We look forward to a “homecoming.” Conversely, some of the most painful experiences in life are described using the word home – like being “homesick” or experiencing a “home invasion.” Being “homeless” is tragic (although in these economic times only slightly more undesirable than being a “home owner!”). Some of my favorite words come from the lips of the immigration officer at the airport after a trip abroad when he/she stamps your passport and says, “Welcome home.” When my mother-in-law died last February I went through her Bible and when I got to John 14 where Jesus promises a home in heaven she had written in the margin, “Home Sweet Home.” Home really is where her heart was.

We are comforted by Jesus’ words but what if you were there when He spoke them the first time? The initial reaction of the disciples to the announcement that Jesus was going away was fear and confusion. That’s always the first response to a 9/11 moment. Thomas speaks for all of the disciples when he challenges Jesus’ assertion that they know the way home. He says, “No, we don’t know, Lord. We haven’t any idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

The antidote for their fear and confusion is found in 14:16-18. The Holy Spirit will be their “helper,” their comforter, their encourager. He is one who is “called alongside.” The word “another” is a word that means another of the same kind. In other words, the Holy Spirit will be just like Jesus with one major exception...He will be “in” you. This little preposition explains why Jesus can say to His disciples, “I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.” John 16:7

Up to this point Jesus had been WITH the disciples. He was physically present with them. As wonderful as that must have been Jesus was limited by His physical body. If he was on the mountain with three of them He couldn't be in the valley with the other nine. Furthermore, Jesus' physical presence did not prevent the disciples from doubting and disputing and, in the end, even from denying Christ. The promise here in John 14 is that the Holy Spirit would be IN them. Now the fullness of God, the presence of Christ and the encouragement of the Holy Spirit is not limited to being in one place at one time.

You were created by God to be a container for His Spirit. Invite Him in and He will make your life His home. All you have to do is to throw out the welcome mat of your life and the Holy Spirit will take up residence inside you. **John 14:23**, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him." When I say "yes" to Christ the Holy Spirit takes up residence within me so that I am full of God. When your heart becomes a home for the Holy Spirit you have nothing to fear.

Think of it this way: if you have a son who likes football and wants to be a quarterback he could learn a lot if he could live WITH Tony Romo for a couple of years. But what if Tony Romo could be IN him? What if he used his eyes, his brain, his arms and legs? Your child may not be the best athlete in the world but he would have a confidence he never had before. The church was not even born until the Spirit of God came into the lives of Jesus' followers. No external teaching can surpass the internal work of the Holy Spirit. After the Spirit came upon the disciples and the church was born, these same men turn the world upside down.

The Holy Spirit is God's indwelling and active presence in our lives individually and corporately. When the Spirit of God takes up residence within you there will be evidence that He is at home. The empty space, the God-shaped space in your life, will be full. That's what this series is about...the fullness of God's Spirit. If we are filled with the fullness of God then we will be peace-full, hope-full, truth-full, help-full, grace-full, power-full, purpose-full. Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is peace...and hope, truth, help, grace, etc.

Two things I want you to know this morning:

1. **A Spirit-filled home is a peace-full home.** 9/11 was a home invasion. Ten years later we are still responding to what happened the day the sanctuary of our home country was violated by a few religious zealots. In fact, we now have a new department in our government called "homeland security." Jesus promised the Spirit of God as our "homeland security." You can have peace with God knowing that you have a home reserved in Heaven if you open your heart to His abiding presence. The Spirit of God is God's seal of ownership upon your life.

Ephesians 1:13-14 ¹³ In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory.

A “seal” is not like a zip-lock bag that seals the freshness in. It is not a means of protection but a sign of ownership. God places His stamp of ownership on our lives in the form of the Holy Spirit. When we have the Holy Spirit we have “shalom” or peace.

John 14:27 – “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.”

How is God’s peace different from the world’s peace? The world defines peace by the absence of something. If we don’t have another terrorist attack we will have peace. If we can end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan we will have peace. If there are no disagreements between us then we will have peace. But that is not how Jesus defined peace. His peace is not defined by the absence of strife but by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Shalom is a beautiful Hebrew concept that describes life as God intended it to be. It is a sense of well-being, a harmonious relationship with God. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit we will be peace-full, full of peace.

2. Fill your home with the Holy Spirit. In fact, we are commanded to be filled with His Spirit. **Ephesians 5:18**, “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.”

What does it mean to be full of the Holy Spirit? The analogy Paul uses gives us important insight into what this term means. He uses wine as an illustration to make it clear that to be filled is to be “under the influence.” Occasionally I hear someone say, “I want more of God, more of Jesus or more of the Holy Spirit.” When we hear that it sounds like God may be holding out on us. Does He offer Himself to us little by little so that we are first “drizzled” with the Holy Spirit and then gradually, if we are found worthy, we get the whole carafe? If I am not full of the Spirit the problem is not on the supply side, it is on the receiving end. God does not withhold Himself from us but we often lack the capacity to be fully under the influence of the Spirit. If my life is full of anything other than God then there is no room for His influence. I’ll never forget going to some people’s home not knowing that they were making dinner for me. I had just eaten a full meal. In an effort to show my appreciation I ate again! It was the worst meal of my life – there was just no more room for food!

When we fill our life with the flesh we limit the capacity for God’s Spirit. “For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.” **Romans 8:5-6**

Home-Work

Meditate on Galatians 5:16-26 and check your life for the influence of any of these “foreign substances.”