

Scripture John 14: 8-17 The Message (read by the children)

Read by William Libruk:

⁹⁻¹⁰ “You’ve been with me all this time, Philip, and you still don’t understand? To see me is to see the Father. So how can you ask, ‘Where is the Father?’ Don’t you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I speak to you aren’t mere words. I don’t just make them up on my own. The Father who resides in me crafts each word into a divine act.

Read by Kennedy Posey:

¹¹⁻¹⁴ “Believe me: I am in my Father and my Father is in me. If you can’t believe that, believe what you see—these works. The person who trusts me will not only do what I’m doing but even greater things, because I, on my way to the Father, am giving you the same work to do that I’ve been doing. You can count on it. From now on, whatever you request along the lines of who I am and what I am doing, I’ll do it. That’s how the Father will be seen for who he is in the Son. I mean it. Whatever you request in this way, I’ll do.

Read by Lucy Posey:

¹⁵⁻¹⁷ “If you love me, show it by doing what I’ve told you. I will talk to the Father, and he’ll provide you another Friend so that you will always have someone with you. This Friend is the Spirit of Truth. The godless world can’t take him in because it doesn’t have eyes to see him, doesn’t know what to look for. But you know him already because he has been staying with you and will even be *in* you!

Though many of us return to Acts 2 for Pentecost, writing these gospel commentaries for the last number of years has made me appreciate the work of the Holy Spirit that much more. I mean, don't get me wrong, flaming tongues are pretty cool to imagine—and a friend of mine once made a pretty rocking hat for her children's sermon that I still think about each year.

But how John tells us Jesus talked about the Holy Spirit is quite powerful in its own right. Perhaps a fair bit more subtle than flaming tongues, but again, isn't that the way of God, ready to be found in the big and the small? Jesus has just told the disciples that he is going away but that he is preparing a place for them, and that he is the way, the truth, and the life for all who want to go to the Father. Likewise, Jesus has promised his beloveds that because they know him, they have also known the Father—in fact, they have *seen* the Father. This prompts Philip to request that Jesus show them the Father.

Jesus explains that knowing one of them is just like knowing the other. They are close in their companionship and purpose—so close that Jesus describes the Father as dwelling in him. In fact, it's the same sort of way that Paul will talk about Christ and the Spirit dwelling in us. Jesus tells them that they can believe this to be true because they can look at what he's done while he has been with them: they will see the Father's purposes and power written all over what's happened.

Jesus has come alongside humanity to show us God, and now, he promises that another will come alongside humanity and be in his beloveds. Because of this other companion, they will continue in Jesus's way of doing the will of the Father, full of glory. Jesus is saying to *us* that we can only understand and know the Holy Spirit if we know and understand the unity of the other two persons of the trinity: Father and Son. In trinitarian theology, the Holy Spirit is often thought of as this bond of love between the Father and Son.

Also, notice how Jesus describes the Holy Spirit as “another Advocate, to be with you forever.” The purposes and bond of love among the Father and Son is what led to Christ's incarnation in the first place; it is also the reason they send the Spirit to us: God is our Advocate, the one who comes alongside us, no matter which person of the Trinity it is.

The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, is the way of our abiding with God; the Spirit will be *in* us, not just alongside us. The Spirit is in us, united to us, the way that the Father and the Son are united to one another. And if this is so, then this close bond with the Spirit of truth becomes our guide in life just as Jesus pursued the will of the one with whom he was united.

And because the Spirit of truth becomes the guiding light for those in whom the Spirit dwells, the world cannot receive the Spirit. They refuse to see the Spirit of truth alongside them, tapping them on the shoulder and calling them to repentance. Those people and systems and structures and practices that do not want to be bent to the beauty of obedience shaped for the common good, the ones who measure the cost-benefit analysis in ungodly ways, the ones who prefer to play with the truth for their own gain, they show that they do not know or understand the loveliness of our triune God.

But if we can see it in Jesus, if we can see the Holy Spirit alongside us as God changes our paths, if we can know and understand real truth when we are confronted by it, if we can call upon the Lord to help us do the things that he would have us do, then we too can know the presence of God within us.

And how might we show it? Maybe this song has the lyrics we need: The song is titled "Solid" and was performed by Ashford & Simpson in 1984. In the lyrics, the narrators of the song celebrate the fact that, through all the difficulties and problems their relationship has faced, they made their love stronger by learning how to forgive and trust each other, and their love for one another remains "solid as a rock". The lyrics in the first verse might give us a clue"

*And for love's sake, each mistake
Ah, you forgave
And soon both of us learned to trust
Not run away, it was no time to play
We build it up and build it up and build it up*

If we look at our scripture today, the description/name, in latin, *paracletos* (translated: *Paraclete in English*) in verse 15 is translated as “Advocate.” It’s literal meaning is “one called alongside,” as it is a participle made up of the preposition *para* (beside, by, near) and the verb *kaleō* (to call). It truly is a lovely description of the Holy Spirit: the one who comes to be our companion on the Jesus Way.

I recently heard about the cost of being polite in a conversation with systems like OpenAI. According to Sam Altman, the CEO of OpenAI since 2019, every time someone types “please” and “thank you” to the machines adds up, big time. Altman estimated that it’s cost the company tens of millions of dollars in electricity costs, but that it’s money “well spent.”

But here’s the thing. That’s how the “world sees” and why people, caught up in such superficial stuff, can’t see the real promptings of the Holy Spirit. As much as the company might want you to believe it, those tens of millions of dollars aren’t an altruistic cash loss, it’s a convenient distraction.

Because, along with other key resources like water for cooling the data centers and rare minerals to build the computers, those dollars are paying for electricity, very likely being generated by fossil fuels, which are increasing greenhouse gas emissions.

Now, there is still hope for change, but it will take us becoming more thoughtful and less motivated by superficial niceties like how great it is that people are typing please and thank you, not that they are bad in themselves. It will take people seeing that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, and God the Creator and Jesus the Redeemer, are

- in the works of creation care
- in the call to steward our resources
- in the need to consider the needs of others around the world

And that just because we can do something, doesn’t mean we ought.

The phrase “solid as a rock” is often used to describe something that is strong, dependable, and stable. In the context of John 14:8-17, this phrase can be applied to the foundation of faith in Jesus Christ, as highlighted by the verse “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). This verse emphasizes that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and that those who believe in him are built upon a firm and unchanging foundation.

Here's how the verse connects to the idea of being "solid as a rock":

- **The Solid Foundation of Faith:**

Jesus emphasizes the importance of believing in him and the Father. He establishes himself as the foundation for their faith, promising that those who believe in him will do even greater work than he has done.

- **The Promise of the Holy Spirit:**

Jesus assures his disciples that he will ask the Father to send another Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who will dwell with them and guide them. This Spirit is described as the Spirit of truth, a constant source of strength and comfort.

- **Abiding Presence and Guidance:**

The Holy Spirit is not just a temporary presence, but one that will abide with believers forever. This promise of a constant, guiding presence is reassuring, providing a sense of stability and unwavering support.

- **Overcoming Fear and Anxiety:**

Jesus addresses his disciples' fear and anxiety about his departure by promising the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit's presence will bring comfort, understanding, and assurance, helping them to navigate life's challenges with greater peace and stability.

- **The World's Inability to Receive the Spirit:**

Jesus notes that the world cannot receive the Spirit of Truth because it cannot see or know him. This highlights the unique nature of the Spirit's presence and the need for a faith-filled heart to recognize and receive him. In essence, John 14:8-17 speaks to the solid foundation of faith in Jesus and the unwavering presence of the Holy Spirit, both of which provide a sense of stability and strength, much like a "solid as a rock" presence

As the world turns and we progress to see the Holy Spirit at work, perhaps we can sing another verse of that song...

*Oh, you didn't turn away
When the sky went gray
Somehow we managed
We had to stick together*

No rush of wind nor unexplainable speaking in multiple languages. Just people trying to make the best decisions they can with mutual care and trust and being open to the Spirit speaking through one another. Solid like a Rock! Amen!