

THE WORD FOR TODAY

JOHN 14, 16-20, 23-26

“. . I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor”

Follow the words of this Bible passage on seven panels around the church. The first is just round the corner on the north wall of this little building and the others are on the east wall of the church (right as you look from here) for panels 2 and 3, on the back door (4), and on the west wall (5, 6 and 7). The translation is the New International Version, and you can look it up on the internet under Bible Gateway.

It's about the Holy Spirit— first given to the followers of Jesus at Pentecost, in a rushing wind, with tongues of flame falling on people's heads. We celebrate Pentecost on 23rd May this year. We celebrate God's power making ordinary people special—those first disciples started the Christian church we still have today.

But the Holy Spirit is not just about power—there is so much more. The Spirit enables people to cope with whatever life throws at them. He is described in some translations as “Comforter” or “Helper” and sometimes pictured as a dove, the symbol of peace. How we have needed comfort and help and peace in this last year!



Just before Jesus died, he spoke the words we are looking at today to his twelve disciples, a little group who were very worried about the future without Jesus. Jesus was giving them reassurance, which included the promise of a very special gift—a gift which is for his followers today too.

**Jesus said “. . . I will ask the Father,
and he will give you another
Counsellor to be with you for ever—
the Spirit of truth.”**

1

Jesus' twelve disciples had been with him throughout his three-year ministry, and he had guided them in everything. How would they manage when he died? How would they carry on with his work? How would they make new followers of Jesus? Who would answer their questions?

Jesus has the answer. They will get another Counsellor who will be with them for ever—a Counsellor we call the Holy Spirit. Jesus says “the Spirit of Truth”, which points us to who he is. This Spirit was coming from God, who himself was always true to his promises, at the request of his Son Jesus, who had very recently told his disciples that he was the Way and the Truth and the Life. The Spirit brings the truth of God the Father and God the Son to the followers of Jesus in a very special way, his own unique way.



***Lord, thank you that we are not alone.
Thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit
bringing your truth into our lives.***

Now walk to the right of the church building to find panels 2 and 3.



THE WORD FOR TODAY

**“The world cannot accept him,
because it neither sees him nor knows
him. But you know him,
for he lives with you and will be in you.”**

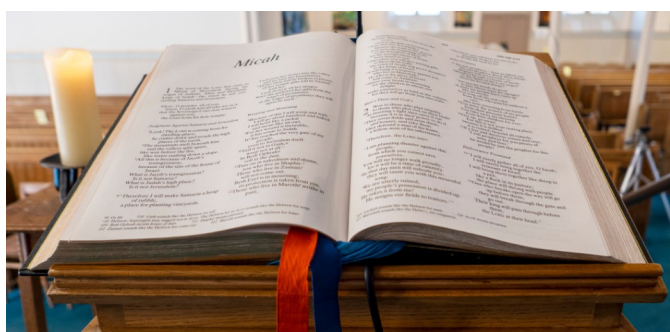
2

“The world” in John’s writing is all unbelievers—those who have rejected God. They will not receive the gift of the Holy Spirit as they would neither be aware of him nor be able to work out who he was.

Those who believe in Jesus, however, have this gift within them, a living presence, making himself felt. There is nothing spooky or strange about this Spirit, just a reassuring warmth from the presence of a recognised and much loved friend.



***Lord, keep me close to you.
Help me to know your Spirit in my life,
and trust his help and guidance.***



THE WORD FOR TODAY

**“I will not leave you as orphans;
I will come to you. Before long,
the world will not see me any more,
but you will see me.
Because I live, you also will live.”**

3

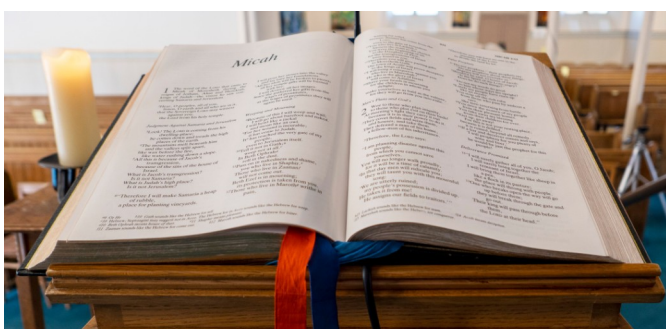
Jesus knew his disciples would be bereft without him—he had been father and mother to them for so long. But he has a plan for their future; a two-stage plan.

He reminds them of what he has said before—that after his death he will rise again. They will see him again, alive, in the flesh. And they will know for certain that there is life for them beyond death just as there is for Jesus. This is the first stage of his plan for them.



***Lord, thank you for Easter
and your triumph
over evil and death.
Thank you for the hope
it gives us
of life for ever.***

Now walk along the back of the church—panel 4 is on the back door.



THE WORD FOR TODAY

**“On that day you will realise that
I am in my Father, and you are in me,
and I am in you.”**

4

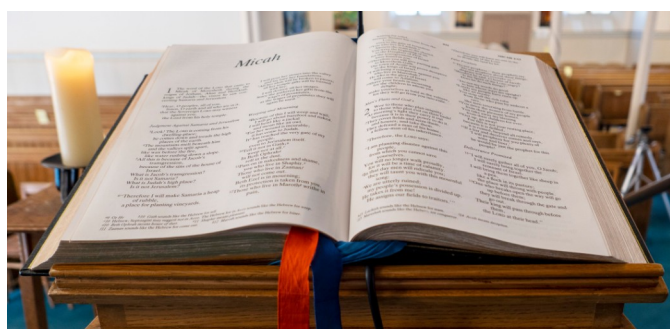
The resurrection brought to the disciples a whole new way of thinking. This Jesus they had become so close to really was God incarnate. He was living, and he would never die. They had not lost him, and indeed they never would.

We who follow after them have the same reaction to Easter though Jesus doesn't stand in front of us in the flesh. But we encounter him in the Spirit living in us—he is real! We know that he is living and that we have a future life to look forward to.



***Lord, you are a living Lord, not a figure of history.
We can know you with us
if we just believe.***

Now walk further and turn left to find panels 5, 6 and 7



THE WORD FOR TODAY

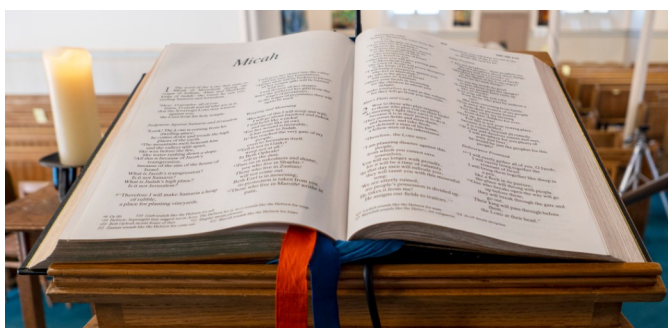
“If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching.”

5

We know the truth of what Jesus says about loving and obeying, because it happens in our own lives. If we love Jesus, we do try to follow his teaching (not always succeeding!) because it is a natural response to what he has done for us—far more than we deserve.

And he goes on giving to us. He promises that he and his father will come and make their home with us. What a lovely feeling that is—that we can be God’s home! The Holy Spirit is indeed the most wonderful gift. A life-changing gift for every day of our lives, and for ever.

*Lord, I do love you.
Help me to follow you more
closely day by day.
Lord, come to make your home
in my life, I pray.*



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“These words are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me. All this I have spoken while still with you.

6

But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

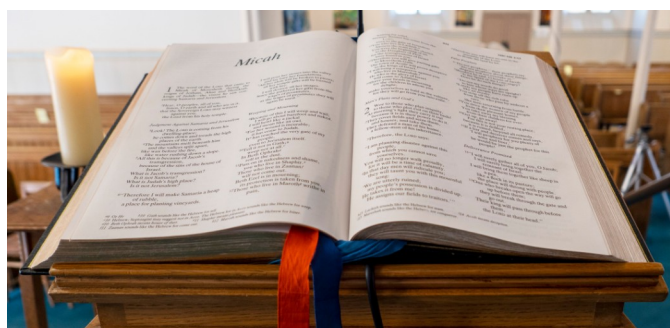
The second part of Jesus’ plan is that his followers will continue to know his presence with them, not just in the period after the resurrection, but also after he had returned to his Father in heaven. They would know it through the Holy Spirit.

Without the Holy Spirit, we would not have had the Gospels and the other books of the New Testament, some of which were written long after Jesus had been around, inspired by the Spirit. We believe that the Holy Spirit can help us to understand what the Bible says to us, can help us to pray, can help us to make wise decisions. The Spirit’s is the wise guiding voice of Jesus.



***Lord, thank you for the wise guidance of your Spirit.
Help us to seek it and trust it in all things.***

Panel no. 7 is on the church wall behind the cairn on the right



THE WORD FOR TODAY



**“Peace I leave with you;
my peace I give you.
I do not give to you as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled
and do not be afraid.”**

What a sought-after commodity peace is! Not just the absence of conflict, but a feeling deep inside that everything will be all right. You will have everything you need. That’s what you get with Jesus. That’s what you get with his Holy Spirit living within you.

The words of one of our favourite worship songs give us our last prayer:

*Jesus, be the centre, be my source, be my light, Jesus.
Jesus, be the centre, be my hope, be my song, Jesus.
Be the fire in my heart, be the wind in these sails,
Be the reason that I live, Jesus, Jesus.
Jesus, be my vision, be my path, be my guide, Jesus.*

(Michael Frye, © 1999 Vineyard Songs, CCL 98176)



If you find it difficult to believe in the God you’ve been reading about—or if you would just like to know more—there are plenty of opportunities in our church life. For further information please contact John Young, by telephone on 664 3067 or by email on JYoung@churchofscotland.org.uk .



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