

The Spirit: I am with you.

Nelson Cathedral

May 10, 2026

R1 Acts 17: 22-31

NT 1Peter 3:13-22

Gospel **John 14:15-27**

Introduction

Last week I talked about how knowing the end shapes our understanding of the story – just like watching our favourite movie over and over. In the Bible, it is the resurrection of Jesus which is the lens that gives us focus and clarity about who Jesus truly is.

As we come to Jesus' words in today's Gospel reading, we may be surprised by the words of Bishop NT Wright who says, "As a result of this promised spirit, the spirit of Jesus himself, Christians now, remarkable though it may seem, are in a better

situation even than the followers of Jesus during his lifetime."

It would be easy for us to think, "how wonderful it would have been to be around 2000 years ago to see and hear Jesus in person". But the reality is that the people who saw Jesus, even walked with Jesus were at times confused by him. Even his closest friends denied and deserted him. It is only after the resurrection, that they fully understood - their eyes and hearts were opened to what Jesus was telling them.

So, let's unpack what Jesus' words mean for us today.

Another Advocate (Paraclete)

In these chapters, John records Jesus speaking words of assurance and comfort to his disciples as he tells them he was leaving, meaning his imminent death on the cross.

But what I find interesting here is that the names or roles given by Jesus for the Holy Spirit are the same or an extension of the names and roles given to Jesus. This means that the ongoing work of the Spirit will be a continuation of the work of Jesus during his disciples' lifetime and in ours.

1. In verse 16 we hear Jesus saying he will send "**another Advocate**". In John 2 verse 1 Jesus is also called an advocate, "But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the father, Jesus Christ the righteous".

This is a legal term where an advocate pleads your case before the judge to ensure your situation is heard. The assurance here is that no matter what we face, the Spirit who continues the work of Jesus in our lives, is there with us and for us.

2. And like a diamond with many sides, there are other aspects to the Spirit's role as advocate.

We can also use the words "**Helper**" and "**Comforter**" to represent the ongoing work of Jesus in our lives through the presence of His Spirit.

- As "Helper", the Spirit gives strength and energy to live for God and witness to his love in this world.
 - And as "Comforter", the Spirit provides extra strength when we face the most difficult of times. Strength to cope and take the next step forward, strength to face life once more. When we need the arms of Jesus around us, the Spirit is there.
3. Also, just as last week Jesus referred to himself as "the way, the truth and the life", now he refers to the Spirit as the "**Spirit of Truth**". The Spirit continues the work of Jesus by revealing the truth about God. And in verse 26 we have Jesus saying that the Spirit "will teach and

remind you of everything He has said”. The resurrection is the lens that points us to Jesus, because the Holy Spirit is the teacher and revealer of the truth about Jesus, helping us to remember and live out all that He did and said (25-27).

4. All this is possible because as Jesus said, the Spirit, his Spirit, will “**abide in you**”. But remember back to chapter 14 (vs 2) where Jesus talked about going to prepare a “dwelling place”, the place where we can abide with God. The places of dwelling that Jesus talked about (14:2) have now become places of indwelling (14:17 and 23) where through the Spirit, the Father and Son will dwell in each of us.

In this life we already dwell in the Father's house, because God through the Spirit lives in us.

Again, as words of comfort, Jesus declares he has not left or deserted us but remains with us through His Spirit. Rather than orphans we are now adopted as God's children.

And as God's children, with words that begin to describe our understanding of God as Trinity – one God Father, Son and Spirit – we are drawn into the life and love of God. As Jesus said, because of the sending of the Spirit, “On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I in you”.

As St Augustine pictured this relationship, the Holy Spirit is the bond of love between Father and Son, and because the Spirit dwells in us, we are God's children who dwell in the life and love of God.

Spirit-filled Life.

There is one final point as we unpack the words of Jesus and see what it means to be drawn into the life of God through his Spirit. Just as the Spirit brings Jesus' presence to us, now the Spirit brings the presence of Jesus to the world through us – regular people like you and me in whom the power of Christ has taken up residence.

In John 14 verse 14 Jesus says, you may ask for *anything* in my name, and I will do it”, but I do not think Jesus is offering us a “blank cheque” so to speak.

In verse 15, Jesus qualifies this by saying, “you will keep my commandments”, and later in verse 23, “if anyone loves me, they will obey my teaching”.

We can look back at John chapter 13 verses 34 and 35 to see how Jesus states his commandments as he says:

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

The “anything” we ask for is qualified by Jesus' command to love, because what we ask in his name is an outworking of Jesus' love for us and the love of God we have been drawn into.

There is I think an example of this in global politics at the moment, in the words that Pope Leo said during his Palm Sunday Mass on March 29, 2026. Here he rejected any attempt to invoke God in support of armed conflict as some are currently doing.

“Brothers and sisters, this is our God:
Jesus, King of Peace, who rejects war,

whom no one can use to justify war,” Pope Leo said. “He does not listen to the prayers of those who wage war, but rejects them, saying: ‘Even though you make many prayers, I will not listen: your hands are full of blood.’” (Isaiah 1:15).

These are confronting words as people in our world invoke the name of Jesus to justify acts of violence and war, people who ask for victory out of their own vain ambitions, not out of Jesus’ command of love.

But before we point the finger, the same is true of our society, even our own lives to a lesser degree, as we see the rise of division, conflict and violence; the targeting of minorities, antisemitism, prejudice.... the list can go on.

But the name of Jesus is first of all a name of love and peace which now lives in us and

transforms us, so we can be His hands and feet in this world.

Conclusion:

As we seek to live for Jesus, just as early Christians did, we can be confident that the Holy Spirit ushers into our lives the ongoing life and presence of Jesus. To experience the Spirit is to experience Jesus, and we are in turn, continuing the presence of Jesus in the world.

In the words of Gary Burge from his NIV commentary series:

God was at work on the cross in Christ to save us, so now God is at work in the Spirit to transform us. He is at work renewing us and loving us. This is the gospel.

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you”, Jesus said. “I do not give to you as the world gives.

Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid”.

Jesus has not left us but dwells in us by his Spirit. And as we leave here today, we take Jesus into our homes, our community and our world.

Amen.