

With You And In You

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[0 : 00] Well, this morning, as I said, we're going to be continuing our study on John's Gospel. We've come to the second half of chapter 4, and we're going to read again at verse 15 to 17. Jesus said, If you love me, you'll keep my commandments, and I will ask the Father and He'll give you another helper to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. And our title today, as you can see, is taken from the words that Jesus uses at the end of verse 17, that speaking about the fact that God, the Holy Spirit, will be with you and in you. And that little title there captures two key aspects of the Gospel that are so incredibly important to remember, and yet are all too easy to forget. Here, Jesus is speaking about God, the Holy Spirit, and He's telling us that if you are a Christian or if you become a Christian, God, the Holy Spirit, will be with you and in you. Now, there's loads and loads that we could say about that.

I just want to focus on the two things that are on our headings there. I want us to think about the presence of the Holy Spirit, and I want us to think about the influence of the Holy Spirit. So, we'll go through these one by one. Jesus says that He will be with us by His Spirit, and that's speaking to us about the presence of the Holy Spirit. Now, this is a very, very rich passage of Scripture, and it's very important for lots of reasons.

This section is important because Jesus is giving us beautiful promises, in particular to His disciples, but also to us to strengthen and reassure us. That was particularly important for the disciples because they were approaching the reality of the cross. Jesus was going to depart, they were going to lose Him. That moment was getting nearer and nearer, and in these verses, He is reassuring them and comforting them. But at the same time, Jesus is also teaching us some very big and important lessons about how God's whole plan of salvation works. In particular, He's getting us to think about how God's plan of salvation is being unfolded across the ages of history. That's what the Bible is. You have God's plan of salvation being revealed, and that revelation is happening across the ages of history. That unfolding of God's saving plan is often referred to as redemptive history. It's just a fancy way of saying the fact that God's plan of salvation works itself out across the ages of history. In this passage, Jesus is teaching us something very important about it. But in order for us to see that, we need to just take a step back and look at that whole plan of salvation that God has. It starts in creation, way back in the beginning, when you have God and humanity together. That's what is established at the beginning of the Bible, God and humanity together in beautiful harmony, and that's what Genesis 1 and 2 describes. That harmony and that relationship is broken by sin. Because humanity rebels against God, there is now an alienation between God and humanity. God here, humanity here. Please, all of those of you who come here regularly know that my handwriting is terrible. Those who are visiting today have just discovered that my handwriting is terrible. But stick with me, you will be able to still follow what I'm saying. Sin has created this massive alienation between God and humanity, separated. Now, in response to that, God initiates a plan to put it right. That plan is foreshadowed in the Old Testament. Throughout the Old Testament, you have God beginning to outwork his plan of salvation. You see that being outworked in what he does with Abraham, what he does with the nation of Israel, what he does with the kingdom being established, what he does with his temple and tabernacle and sacrificial system. There's loads in all of that. Basically, that's just the stuff that happens in the Old Testament. All of that stuff is serving to bring God and humanity a bit closer together. What we're seeing here is the fact that the separation that's happened here because of sin is being restored.

Because that's what God wants to do. God comes closer. He meets with Abraham. He meets with Jacob. The nation of Israel is formed. God comes to dwell in the temple. It's closer, closer, closer. But in it all, there's still huge restriction. The effect of sin is still so real in God and humanity being together. Ultimately, in the Old Testament, the result is failure. Because everything in the Old Testament does not culminate in success. It actually culminates in failure. Because all these things that were established, the nation of Israel, the kingdom under David and the temple, by the time you reach the end of the Old Testament, they've lost them all. But that was deliberate. Because the Old Testament is only ever a shadow pointing forward to the full reality of God's saving plan. And that saving plan reaches its culmination in the coming of Jesus. Now, you'll have to bear with me in trying to draw something here. Do you know what this is a picture of? It's supposed to be a manger, a terrible manger. But it's supposed to be a manger, coming of

Jesus. Jesus comes. And the coming of Jesus culminates in the death of Jesus on the cross. And then, following the cross, three days later, you have an empty tomb. Now, there's no way I can draw an empty tomb. So it's just a, imagine that's a tomb and there's nothing in it. The key point is this. Old Testament all pointing towards the coming of Jesus.

[6 : 34] Jesus comes and he's born. And when Jesus is born, God is with us. Now, do you see what's happened? Humanity and God separated here. No, God is with us again. And that, of course, rings bells for those of us who've read the birth narrative of Jesus because one of the names given to Jesus is Emmanuel, which means God with us. And so you think, ah, it's all been fixed. God and humanity can be together again. Jesus has come to be among us. But after the resurrection here, Jesus returns to heaven. And so what happens now? You think Jesus is no longer with us. The disciples are thinking, you're with us, but you're going.

What's going to happen? Is God still going to be with us? And Jesus is saying, yes. He's saying, yes, I am returning to heaven, but I'm not leaving you because I'm going to pour out my spirit. And that happens on the day of Pentecost in Acts. And here in John 14, and he does it a little bit more in 15 and 16, he is telling the disciples that this is going to happen, that God, the Holy Spirit, is going to come and dwell with us and in us as God's people. And what I want you to see is that this plan to bring God and humanity together, to restore that harmony that we had here, is all being fulfilled. And the great goal is that God and humanity are together again, just like it was at the start. Now, there's an awful lot in all of that. And please do not worry if you don't understand it. I mean, I'm looking at that picture, and it's like, what a mess. But I hope you can see what I'm trying to convey. Now, there's lots of different aspects to that. Don't worry if you do not understand every detail. There's still so, so much for all of us to learn. But the key thing you need to understand is what God is trying to achieve. In that great plan of salvation, foreshadowed in the Old Testament, fulfilled in the new, what is God trying to achieve? What's his goal? He wants to be with you. God wants to be with you. And that's why when you go to the very end of the Bible, the culmination of redemptive history, you read these words. I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and the sea was no more. And I saw the Holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them. And they will be his people. And God himself will be with them as their God. That word there sums up everything that God is trying to achieve.

God wants to be with you. And in these verses in John 14, Jesus is telling us that until that day comes when we are taken to be with God in a new creation forever, until that day comes, he is with us through the presence of the Holy Spirit. And that work of the Holy Spirit coming to be with us is captured so powerfully in a particular word that Jesus uses in verse 16 of John 14. And it's that word there, the word helper. Now, if you're looking at another Bible translation, you'll see that sometimes that's translated the word comforter, sometimes counselor, and sometimes it's translated the word advocate. It's the Greek word *paraclete*. Now, they always say never, ever, ever teach congregations Greek words, but you guys look really intelligent. So it's no problem. It's a very important

Greek word, *paraclete*. And it's, I think, a very cool word to learn because it basically means somebody called alongside to help. So that word *para* means beside and *clay* comes from the Greek word to call. And it's conveying the idea of somebody called alongside to help.

So really that word, we don't have an English word that translates perfectly, but you could say it's something like this. A *paraclete* is an alongside, which isn't a real word, but you know what I'm trying to say. And here, the key point that Jesus is emphasizing is that even though he is returning to heaven, God is not leaving us on our own. He's come alongside us to be our helper. Now, that word, I love going back to that Greek word *paraclete* because I think it is so reassuring. I always think in engineering terms, that was my job before I became a minister, it's always the way my mind goes. So when I think of that word *para*, I think of parallel. And so I immediately think of a train track. I think of railway lines running through the country. Trains are so cool. I think when you grow up in Lewis and you have no trains, so exciting when you go and see trains on the mainland. So I think of a train track. So imagine a train track. And I need you to think of one of those train tracks. You've got two rails, you've got one of them. In a train track, when does the left track drift away from the right one? When does the left one drift away from the right one? Never. As you go into this week and as you go into the rest of your life, when does

[13:11] God the Holy Spirit drift away from you? Never. And the clay part of that word, that means as I said, to call. Think of all the times that you need to call out to God. Times when you're scared or tired or confused or lonely. Times when you're hurt or frustrated. Times when you're sorrowful. Times when you're suffering. Times when you're trying really hard and things aren't going well. Times when you're hoping for something good to happen. Times when you're longing for comfort. In all these moments our hearts cry out to God. And he's right there. He's always, always with you. But there's another key word that I want to highlight in there. You've got the word helper, but you've got this word here. Another helper. Another paraclete. Now that's such an important word because it's telling us that when the Holy

Spirit comes, he comes as another helper. What does that mean? It means that there was one before him. And that first helper, that first paraclete is Jesus himself. And that's just emphasizing so powerfully the unity of mission and purpose and ministry between God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. What Jesus starts, the Holy Spirit continues, the two working together in such perfect harmony. In that great work of redemptive history, the two great alongsideers who come to meet with us are God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. God the Son, God the Holy Spirit coming to be right beside us. And all of this teaches us the massive theological importance of the word with. And I don't think that I can exaggerate the importance of this word in terms of the gospel. It's at the very heart of our doctrine of God, the doctrine of the Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit forever with one another.

That's the very first thing John teaches us in his gospel. You go back to chapter one, that's what you'll discover in the first few verses. And at the heart of God's purpose in salvation is his desire and his determination to be with you. And you see this so incredibly clearly if you go back to the very start of the gospel, very start of the Bible, and you see the aftermath of humanity sinning against God. When humanity sinned against God, when that relationship was broken and that gulf that I tried to draw on the screen became a reality, what was the first thing that God said? What was the first thing that God said after the fall? Well, here it is. In Genesis three, eight to nine, they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day and the man and his wife hid themselves in the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, Where are you? And that question sums up the human condition because sin has left us lost. And when God asks us that question, so often it exposes us. Because when God says, Where are you? Often a response will be I'm racing off in my own direction. I've done that so many times in my life. If God says, Where are you?

It's like, Oh, I'm a way down doing my own thing. I'm wondering after answers. I've left the Bible behind. I don't need it anymore. I'm stumbling over doubts. There's things I can't get my head around. I'm drawn towards temptation. So even though God has said, No, avoid that. I'm still drawn towards it. I'm falling into sin. And sometimes when God says, Where are you? Maybe your honest answer is to say, I'm lying in a mess. When God asks us, Where are you? It exposes our sin. Our mistakes are foolishness. Our regrets. And so when God asks us, you know, Where are you? Our response will often be I'm going my own way and doing my own thing and drifting towards temptation and falling into sin. That's our kind of answer. But if we ask the same question to God, if we say to God, Where are you? There is only ever one answer. I'm right here. I'm right here. And it doesn't matter how far away from him we wonder. It doesn't matter how far we think our side of the train track has gone away from him. He's right there. Right there for us to call out to and to lean on. And whatever is going on in your life, that's his answer for you to I am right here.

I didn't know what Catherine was going to say this morning. And yet when she puts them up a slide saying nobody should be alone. It's the whole of the gospel summed up in one sentence. God saying, I do not ever want you to be alone. I do not ever want you to be lost. I just want to be with you. So these words speak to us so much about the presence of God in our lives through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. He will dwell with you.

[19 : 54] And that's a very important thing to remember when we talk about the presence of the Holy Spirit, we're not saying that he's in a specific place like in this building or in a cathedral or in a particular geographical location. He is in our hearts, in our presence as the people of God who worship together. But that's only half of what Jesus says. He says that the Holy Spirit will be with you, but he also says that the Holy Spirit will be in you.

And that's prompting us to think about the influence of the Holy Spirit. Now, I absolutely acknowledge that there's overlap between the two categories that I'm speaking about. So I know that I'm oversimplifying it a wee bit, but it's still extremely important for us to think about that. That a key part of the reason why the Holy Spirit comes to dwell with us and in us is because he wants to influence us. And these verses speak about that in a very helpful and a very beautiful way. Jesus describes all this in terms of speaking about God's commandments. In other words, Jesus uses the language of obedience. And you see that particularly in verse 15, if you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I want to say a few words about that statement because I think it's incredibly easy to read that sentence the wrong way around. And the reason I say that is because I have frequently read that sentence the wrong way around. And so when Jesus says, if anyone loves me and keeps my commandments, I will often read that backwards. And as I read that backwards, I turn it into a depressing theological equation. Now, let me explain what I mean by that. So I make it an equation. So I think, right, loving Jesus plus keeping commandments equals Christian.

But I read it backwards because I think to myself, I don't always keep this commandments. And then I start to doubt. I think I don't do that always. Do I love Jesus? Am I really a Christian? And all of that is to read it the wrong way around. Because the gospel doesn't function in terms of depressing mathematical spiritual equations. It's not what Jesus is trying to convey to us. What Jesus is trying to convey to us is not a mathematical equation.

He is conveying to us a relational expectation. And we actually have our lives that are actually full of these. If I love my children, I will speak kindly to them. I don't always speak kindly to them. Does that mean that I don't love them? Does it mean that I'm not their father? No, it doesn't. Of course it doesn't. It means that I'm not the finished article.

And I'm not yet what I want to be. It means that there's room for growth and for change. And that's exactly what Jesus is conveying to us here. And that's exactly how it works for us as believers. We love Jesus and because we love him, we keep his commandments. But we mustn't focus on the fact that sometimes we fail to do that and use that as a reason to doubt our love for Jesus. We mustn't focus on this side of it. We need to focus on that part of it. The fact that we do love Jesus and because we love him, we will strive to keep his commandments. Yes, we will fail as we go along. But because we love him, we want to serve him. But the crucial point being highlighted in this passage is that we don't do that on our own. God, the Holy Spirit comes to help us with that. And Jesus describes that magnificently. In these verses, he speaks about the helper coming to assist us. And he especially in these verses speaks about the Holy Spirit teaching us. And so he speaks about the Spirit as the spirit of truth. Later on, he talks about the Holy Spirit teaching us and in particular for the disciples helping them to remember all that Jesus said. They then wrote it down in the documents of the rest of the New Testament from those we learn more and more through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The rest of the New Testament speaks in other ways. It speaks of the Holy Spirit transforming us, speaks of the Holy

[24 : 40] Spirit empowering us, leading us and bearing fruit in our lives. All of this is to say is that a key part of the Holy Spirit's ministry is to influence us, to change us, to renew us and to shape us into what God wants us to be. And that's reminding us that God's goal in redemptive history is not just to bring us back to where we are meant to be.

It's also to restore us to what we were made to be. And he does that through the influence of the Holy Spirit working in our lives. Now this raises two or three crucial points.

I'm just going to mention them very, very briefly because as always my enemy, the clock, is winning and winning our weekly battle. I never went. I want you to think about three things. First of all, all of this challenges us to think about the influences in our lives.

And I had a lot I wanted to say about that but I don't have time. I just want you to think about that. What influences you? What do you want influencing you? What goes in your ears every week? What goes through your eyes every week? How does that influence you?

How does that influence you? Do you want those influences in your life? Or do you want God, the Holy Spirit, to be the biggest influence in your life? That is what I want so, so much.

[26 : 27] The second key thing I want to highlight is that this influence in work of God can be a key to finding greater assurance. And I want to highlight this because I know that there are people in here and people who are watching online who struggle with assurance.

You think to yourself, you know, I want to be a Christian. I'm not sure that I am. I don't know exactly where I stand. And sometimes as we struggle with assurance, we're thinking, how can I be sure that God has finished something in me? How can I be sure that He's finished converting me? And we can have asked that question, has God finished? Has everything fallen into place? Has God finished doing what needs to happen? It's the wrong question.

Don't ask yourself, has God finished doing something in making me this excellent Christian that I feel I need to be. Don't ask, has God finished something? Ask, has He started something?

And the way to answer that question is to think, has something changed in my life? Can I see a difference? And you won't see that difference between one second and another second. It's not hardly anybody has that kind of bolt of lightning experience where at 1159 I wasn't a Christian and at 1201 I was a Christian. Very, very few people have that experience.

Instead the process is gradual. And if you look back a year ago or two years ago or ten years ago, do you see a difference? Is there either seeds of faith growing that weren't there before? Oh, that tells you that God has started something. That tells you that He's started something. And that's all you need because He will take you on every step of the way. And last of all, I want to just show you one final thing from this, I'm skipping out a few slides because I got too much to say as always. I'm going to come to this last one because there's one final thing I want to show you in this passage. We're all talking about the fact that God wants to be with you and He wants to be in you. I'm going to just show you a final thing that the English translations of the Greek does not bring out, but I think it's incredibly important. In this chapter, Jesus uses an unusual word that doesn't appear anywhere else in the New Testament and He uses it twice. First of all, He uses it here. He says, believe in God, believe also in me and my Father's house are many rooms. If I were not so, would I go and prepare a place for you? And sometimes the older versions translated mansions, it's all pointing us towards the fact that God's goal is to have a place for you with Him in heaven forever. But He uses the word again here, that word that's translated home. It's exactly the same word in Greek and it's understandable why they've translated it that way. It's the same word, exactly the same word. Jesus says, if anyone loves me, you'll keep my word, my Father will love him and we will come to make our home with him. That's describing the Holy Spirit coming to dwell in us. Now this is so incredibly important. This here is describing God's goal in the end, that you would go to be with Him. But here Jesus says in the meantime, we will come to be with you. We will come to make our home with you and stay with you every step of the way. But the crucial point is this, the welcome that we receive then is entirely dependent on whether you welcome us or not. And as Jesus comes and knocks on the door of your heart again today, please, come presents yourestionacne. But the most important is that you often hear it come,