

## **The Advocate**

In our study of Paul Young's book – The Shack, and having seen the movie, the portrayal of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit, cause us to expand our minds around the possibilities of the three dimensions of the Trinity.

Jesus, was God incarnate, an expression of God in the flesh, so most of us gravitate around that image of Jesus.

In The Shack, God the Father takes two forms – the first is a loving black woman. The second is an indigenous man – not especially tall, nor handsome, nor remarkable in any way.

An expression of God and the Holy Spirit is more difficult.

Today I want to spend some time on the third aspect of the Trinity – The Holy Spirit. In today's passage from John, the Holy Spirit is referred to as an Advocate. An advocate – a supporter, a backer, someone who champions the cause of another. Someone who is willing to go to bat

for another. Throughout Scripture the Holy Spirit is referred to as the Spirit of the Lord, the Paraclete, Holy Ghost, Counsellor, Spirit of Truth, and Advocate among other names. The word spirit, comes from the Greek and Hebrew – pneuma, ruah. It means breath or wind.

Pneumonia.

I often say, it is essential to appreciate the context. When does this happen in the life and ministry of Jesus? What has already happened? What is about to happen? In this case, it is late in Jesus' ministry. He has told the disciples that he must die. He washes their feet and calls them to work at cultivating the heart of a servant. I wonder how you feel about that. Is that an attractive thing....to cultivate the heart of a servant. Certainly it is a quality we admire in others and we benefit from that. But is it something we want to cultivate within ourselves? He breaks bread with them in what has come to be known as The Last Supper. Much to their shock and disbelief, He predicts that Peter is going to deny even knowing him. He exhorts them to love one another

as He has loved them. And then He shares with them, God's promise, never to abandon them, even after he goes to the cross, is raised from the dead, and ascends to heaven. God will not abandon His children. He will send another to be with them forever- The Holy Spirit. The Advocate.

I want to speak for a moment about this concept of the Spirit of God within us and how we are in the Spirit of God. Jesus as God. God as Jesus. Holy spirit as God. God as the Holy Spirit. God in us. Us in God.

I shared a couple of weeks ago about a theology professor to whom I had the opportunity to minister. I asked him what his favourite Bible verse was. He thought for a moment and then said, "Not a verse really but a phrase....**In Christ.**" In Christ. The Apostle Paul says that "God is not far from each one of us, for **IN** him we live and move and have our being". In The Shack, Paul Young explains to Mack, the central character, that it is only because of the Spirit of God in us, that we are truly able to forgive and accept forgiveness, and to love and be loved,

and to reconcile and be reconciled. The Bible tells us this again and again in many different ways.

In Christ. God in us. Us in God.

Those of you who's parents have passed away.....when your surviving parent passed away, no matter how old you were, 5 or 50.....when the second parent died, did you feel orphaned? Many adults report being surprised that when their surviving parent dies, they get this strange feeling. Even though they are an adult with a job and a house and a family, this feeling of being orphaned comes over them.....at least initially. It is not a good feeling. It is frightening. It can be overwhelming. It is scary!

Jesus knows that His disciples are scared about being left alone without Him, abandoned, or orphaned.

In verse 18 Jesus brings words of comfort, "I will not leave you orphaned.....the world will no longer see me, but you will see me."

Jesus goes on to say, "...you will know that I am in the Father, and you

in me, and I in you.” You and I are connected to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit in such a way that nothing can ever separate us from that love – nothing.

I wonder how often we embrace that? I wonder how often throughout the day, we remember that the Spirit of God lives in us and that we live in the Spirit of God? I wonder what difference it would make to us to remind ourselves, that we can be forgiving, and patient, and helpful, and unselfish, and generous, and non-judgemental, not relying solely on our own strengths and abilities, but we can do all of these things that we don't think we can do, because, not of us, but because of God in us! Not us....but God in us. The power of the Holy Spirit.

Is that how you go through your day? If not, I wonder what difference it would make to you and to those around you.

I have a friend who, many years ago, glued a small red dot to the face of his watch. I asked him what that was about. He told me that it was

to remind himself to slow down, to relax, to breath. Every time he noticed that dot, he remembered to do just that.

What if you and I stuck a red dot on the faces of our watches, and every time we noticed that dot, it reminded us that the Spirit of God is in us, and that we are in the Spirit of God – connected to love – orphaned no more, never forsaken, always loved? What would that be like? Would we remember God more often during our busy days?

Toward the end of today's passage, one of the disciples asks Jesus how He will reveal Himself to them. That's a reasonable question. How are you and I to know that the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, the Advocate is alive and well and living in each of us? And Jesus responds, "Those who love me will keep my word and I will come and make my home in them."

Keeping His word, "Loving God with all your heart, and strength and mind, and loving your neighbour as yourself." Doing unto others as you would have them do unto you. Putting God first. That is loving God.

That is keeping God's word. That is God, revealing Himself to us – in good deeds, in acts of kindness, in compassion, in love, in service –

The Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit. The Breath of God. The Advocate. A connection that lasts a lifetime and beyond. God is here.

Amen