

The Great Bequest
John 14: 18-19, 25-27; Acts 2: 1-21
Don Lincoln

I recall a conversation with a man in his later years. A man of faith, who had lived well, thoughtfully, joyfully, carefully, prudently. And as we talked about his closing days, he told me one of his great concerns.

He said, "My parents had it better than their parents. Same for me. My siblings and I had better lives than our parents. We had more, did more, more educated, worried less. And – that's probably true for two of my three children – my daughters. But not for my son – a good man – but for some reason he never seemed to be able to get ahead.

I look at my grandchildren, I wonder if most of them will lose a rung on the ladder of life instead of gaining. But what I'm **most** afraid of is that I'll end up spending all my savings on medical care, or a nursing home, and there will be nothing left – particularly for my son, who really has no resources to fall back on."

I thought for a bit and asked him, "Do your children know you love them?"

"Oh yes – they certainly do. We say that to each other every time we talk."

"Do your daughters love their brother?" I asked.

"Yes – absolutely. They care about him, and have told me not to worry about him. If he needs help down the road, they will be there for him."

"Have your kids been through hardship, and come through without giving up, or destroying those around them, or abandoning a decent pathway along their journey?"

"Yes – they have all "been-there-done-that" like most of us – and they're still loving; still caring; still productive, not bitter, not mean-spirited."

I said, "Well – it sounds like their inheritance from you is MORE than sufficient – regardless whether anything is left in your bank account on your last day."

Jesus is leaving the disciples. This is His great bequest – "My peace I give you – not as the world gives, give I unto you." How does that happen? By **His Spirit**. Jesus leaves in bodily form, so He can come in Spirit.

"I am sending to you what my Father promised." The Comforter, the Advocate, the Spirit. But this was not some new and different spirit. This is **HIS** spirit. The same spirit

of Jesus, that invited His followers into the bonds of friendship while Jesus was here, the same spirit of Jesus that enlivened them in a love that bursts through the limits of their society's rules about who belonged and who didn't. A spirit of healing, hope and joy that was alive in Jesus.

It is HIS Spirit. That same spirit that He is sending.

I used think the Holy Spirit was a separate force sent to mess with me from the outside in. When in fact, it's God's spirit; the same spirit that was in Christ, who comes to live in you and me. It is Jesus' Spirit – which enables US – YOU AND ME – now to be the embodiment of Jesus Christ in the world. "It's not me," Paul writes, "but Christ within me." "When I'm at my best, when I'm aligned with God, it's Jesus at work within me. God, by His power at work within me; who is able to do infinitely more than we dare to ask or imagine or dream or think of – that's when I'm in God's will."

"I am in my Father, and you are in Me and I in you," Jesus says." "The Father and I will come and make our home with you."

This is not somebody else's spirit, some other kind of spirit, this is Jesus' spirit. Jesus says, "I'm going away – but I'm sending the Spirit." Not somebody else's spirit. "MY spirit. MY love. My generosity. MY hospitality. MY SPIRIT." That's what Jesus says. That's who comes to live in us.

The Spirit of Christ – **in whom** and **through whom** all things were created – in whom the world finds its very purpose and center – **in whom all things have their being** – that's the spirit that comes, through whom you and I can find peace with ourselves and love for the whole world in which we're set.

You and I know what that spirit is like and we know when it's not the one that's at work in us. Because Jesus's spirit is not a mean spirit but a spirit of care. Not a spirit of hatred but a spirit of love. Not a spirit of self-centeredness, but a spirit of self-sacrifice, self-emptying for the sake of the other, for the sake of the good.

They'll know we are Christians by our love – we will walk with each other; we will work with each other; we will guard each one's dignity – that's what the spirit of Christ looks like. That's what it is like when Jesus is living in you and me. This is Jesus living in us. It's not you or me, trying to be like Jesus. It's you and me getting out of the way and letting the Jesus in us do what Jesus does. It's Jesus – alive in us.

The guy in the opening illustration reminds me of my own dad. My dad is at his best when he gets out of the way and lets Jesus love – live in him. That's the spirit.

The spirit of the Living God – the God who loves the whole world. The spirit of Christ who welcomes the stranger, who sees in every poor lost soul the one sheep God is

searching for. The spirit of Christ who sees every hungry, every lonely, every outcast and imprisoned one as a child of God to be loved to wholeness.

THAT is the spirit promised to you and me. Jesus says, "I am the way." This is His way. The way of His Spirit, come alive in us and our living.

How do I know what that looks like? Just look at scripture and what happened after Pentecost. How do you and I know? After Pentecost, they met together. Ate together. Worshipped together. Prayed together. Shared all things with one another. Things they were never allowed to do. Male; female; slave; free; Jew; Gentile; rich; poor; Roman citizen; Pharisee – republican; democrat; northerner and southerner; urban and rural; young and old – they were ALL TOGETHER because all their own stuff had gotten out of the way and the living Christ met the living Christ in each one.

"It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." Ask Jesus to come into Your life – You GET His spirit. And if that's not the Spirit that's alive and at work in you, then maybe you need to ask Him to come in a new way, come afresh – or anew – or REALLY to come and dwell in you in power. That's how the world will know Him – when they see Him, when they see us.

May it be so. AMEN.