

Jesus tells them they will do greater works than him after he is gone

The disciples must have been confused—I can just imagine their response...

What are you talking about—greater things than you?

Don't you remember how we tried and failed?

Matthew 17 and Mark 9—we couldn't cure the boy with epilepsy

They needed Jesus' help

But now Jesus was leaving them and they wouldn't be able to go with him

He wouldn't be able to help them out or fill in when they got stuck

But Jesus promises that he won't leave them "orphaned" or alone

*"I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you."* John 14:18-20 NRSV

I'm leaving and you can't follow me to where I'm going

But I'm coming to you, however, not everyone can see me—but you will see me

It is the promise of the Presence—which must have felt completely unsatisfying

Letting go of their constant companion for this ethereal sense that he was with them

Particularly when I talk with folks that are struggling and talk about Jesus constant presence

They find it unsatisfying because they want something tangible and real—

They want answers, healing, or whatever is needed to meet their situation

As one friend said to me, "I want Jesus with skin on"

But this is what Jesus says—you won't be alone—my Spirit will come and be with you when I'm gone

Various translations use a slightly different word—but they are all the same Spirit

Counselor

Advocate

Helper

Holy Spirit

Holy Ghost

Also... The Living Christ

The Presence

Often, we think of Jesus leaving, and that "someone else" was coming—the Holy Spirit

But Jesus has said multiple times—and will say it again—that he and the Father are One

We cannot parse them out as different—they are One

The same is true of the Spirit—we don't have 3 separate persons of the Three in One

They are all the same—yet manifest in a wide variety of ways

Like the elephant in the room—you feel a rope, I feel leather, he feels a tree trunk

While we may apprehend something different, there is only One God

We cannot separate out God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit

They are all One

Jesus clearly said that he would come to us... and he has!

Jesus continues his conversation... and ultimately it becomes a prayer over these followers he loved

He calls them to this intimate dwelling with God—to see themselves abiding in Christ

To see themselves intimately abiding in the vines—connected to the root stock of the vine

He tells them that he will give them his Peace, which is greater than the troubles around them

He tells them to love one another

He tells them to remember his teachings—and that the Spirit will help them remember

He tells them that he has chosen them and that they are his friends, not his servants

Even though they are still confused, Jesus prays for them—that they will know what he knows

That they too will be One with God

The confusion persists through the next days and weeks of his crucifixion, resurrection, and afterwards

Through visits following his resurrection and seeing him leave this earth

The confusion persists until the day of Pentecost—some 7 weeks later

We pick up the story in Acts 2

*When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Acts 2:1-4 NRSV*

People around them were confused—but the apostles had surprising clarity

People thought they were drunk, but Peter said no, this is the Spirit

Devout Jews from every nation heard in their own language

Peter spoke with power and clarity

People were persuaded and gathered together in community

Peter and John healed a man on the temple steps

The early church began to form

Saul, a persecutor of the Jews, was blinded by the Light and began to follow Jesus

Gentiles came to know Jesus

When Jesus left his Spirit on earth—the fullness of God became known

We weren't limited to the physical presence with one man traveling around his region

The Spirit transcends all of creation and can be known by all folks everywhere

This is what Jesus was talking about when he said he was leaving

And why it was so important

It is what changes everything

In the Gospels—Peter stumbles and the disciples struggle at times

But when filled with the Spirit, they are transformed and filled with God

With the Presence of the Living Christ, there are no limitations

Christ is, and can be, everywhere at once

This same Spirit is present today and empowers us to live full lives transformed by the Spirit

It is here and everywhere around the world—not bound by time or place

Christ's Spirit is intimate and personal, guiding each of us day by day

This Spirit is enough—calling us to be faithful as we walk together

In that, our world is transformed

We are transformed