

**Sermon**  
**27 May 2018**  
**West Kirk of Calder & Polbeth Harwood**

By: Rev Dr Jonanda Groenewald

Reading: John 14:15-21

Baptism: West Kirk

---

A missionary named Herbert Jackson was a given car when he arrived on the mission field. It had just one tiny wee problem – it would not start without a push.

But after pondering his problem, he devised a plan. He went to the local school near his home, and received permission to take a few children out of class, so they could give his car a push to get it started each morning.

As he travelled the area, he would either park on a hill or leave the engine running.

He used this ingenious procedure for two years. At the end of two years, he needed to return home due to health problems, and a new missionary came to replace him.

Of course, the car stayed with the new missionary, so Jackson began to explain his arrangement for getting the car started.

As he did so, the new man took a look under the bonnet. And then he said: "Why, Dr. Jackson, I believe the only trouble is this loose cable."

He connected the cable, stepped into the car, turned the key, and to Jackson's astonishment, the engine roared to life.

For two years, the only trouble with that car was a loose connection. The power was there all the time. It was just not connected to the engine!

.....

There is such a power source for us in life too, a source that we need in order to get going in the right direction, and that power source is the Holy Spirit.

God loves us very much, and that is why he sent us his Spirit, so we can always be connected to him, even though we can't see him. It is because of what Jesus did for us and God's Spirit living within us that we can have a relationship with God.

.....

Relationships...

If you really love somebody, you know things about them no-one else does. For instance, this week, when I was a commissioner at the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and I had to leave before the boys even got up in the morning; I decided to pack their school bags and set out their school uniforms and clothes for their activities every day, because I just *knew* that my husband wouldn't manage sending

them to school and for all their different activities in the proper outfits without some guidance from me. And guess what? They STILL got it wrong some days, the 3 of them!!

But sometimes, my hubbie and I just need to look at each other, and we'll know exactly what the other one is thinking...

And I think it's something along these lines that Jesus is trying to explain to his disciples in the passage we read today.

Something that is hard to understand; hard to explain; an invisible connection between people who are close to each other, who love and understand each other.

Like the connection between God and Jesus, between Jesus and his disciples, and between the Holy Spirit and all those who believe in Christ.

The disciples were scared. In this passage Jesus is comforting them, explaining to them that he has to leave, but that he wasn't going to leave them alone. He would send his Spirit to be with them.

And then he explains it by making use of 2 metaphors:

- He calls the spirit a Counsellor,
- and then he also says that he will not leave them behind as orphans.

Now these 2 images are closely connected.

“Counsellor” is taken from the language used in a Court of Law. The Greek word used here is “Parakletos”, which literally means advocate, intercessor or helper. Somebody who will speak on your behalf, if, for instance, you are in a Court of Law and you are not able to defend your own case. Somebody who will fight your corner.

And who, of all people in the world, needs such an advocate most? Those who don’t have someone to fend for them, like orphans.

In Biblical times, orphans literally had no-one to take care of them. There were no social structures in place to make sure that they were okay – they didn’t have social services or adoption agencies to fend for them. And of course they were the ones who most needed someone to fight their corner.

Jesus is making use of this imagery to illustrate to his disciples that hard things are going to happen to them when he is not there anymore, but even if they feel as alone and vulnerable as the most vulnerable of all people, orphans, they needn’t worry, because he will send an advocate to fend for them.

And not just any advocate, the Spirit of Truth, who will be with them forever.

And last week we celebrated that on Pentecost, Jesus did just that. And therefore, not a single one of us will ever have to be alone, because God’s Spirit lives within us and connects us to God in a very special way.

So basically, this passage tells us that if we love God, there will be a special connection between us. His Spirit will live within us, and that will give us the power we need to get through life.

.....

And this is important, because life can sometimes be very hard. Sometimes things happen to us that can make us feel isolated and alone, as if nobody understands us, understands what we are going through; as if the whole world is against us and there is no hope that things will change any time soon – at times like these, we feel almost like orphans...

Orphans who need an advocate.

But in the Holy Spirit we HAVE an advocate, someone to fight our corner when we need it most.

If you have a relationship with God, this advocate is a given.

If you have a relationship with God, you will always be able to have peace in your heart, no matter what happens to you.

It's no co-incidence that the symbol for the Holy Spirit and the symbol for peace is one and the same thing – a white dove.

The theme of the General Assembly was “peace be with you”. The moderator gave each one of us a wristband with the words “peace be

with you” written on it. And we had to exchange it with everyone we met, sharing the peace with each other.

So I brought mine today, and I would like to give it to ..... And can I ask that you share it, hand it over to everybody who goes to church when you meet them later today and throughout the course of the week, so we as a congregation can see how far and wide we can spread the peace of God this week.

(Today, ..... and ....., was given the sign of the Holy Spirit, to dwell in her heart forever. God gave her two amazing parents, to look out for her and love her, and ....., every single day on their journeys through life. Teach her, through your example of family life, to always have a relationship with her heavenly Father too – so that there will never be a loose connection in her life.)

A car with a loose connection can't do what it's been made for properly. If we have a loose connection, we won't be able to do what we were made for either... But if we make sure that we are always connected to God through his Holy Spirit, no mountain will ever be too high for us to climb – because the peace of God will surround us all the time.

Amen