



**Jonesboro Heights Baptist Church**  
Sanford, North Carolina

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**A Promise Kept**  
**John 14:8-17, 25-27; 20:19-23**

A promise is a powerful thing.

Even the smallest promise can bring hope to the one who receives it. Promises kept build confidence and trust in the one who has made them.

But when a promise is not kept, disappointment, maybe even disillusionment comes.

On this Pentecost Sunday 2010, we're celebrating *a promise kept*.

In the passages from John's Gospel that we read a moment ago, we see Jesus making a promise—the promise that after he had gone back to the Father, the Father would send the Holy Spirit in his name.

You can imagine how bewildering all this must have been to his disciples. In this conversation he had with them the night before his death—a conversation that started in the upper room and continued on their way to the Mount of Olives—Jesus told them over and over that he was going away or going to the Father. The way he told them was somewhat cryptic—he said it, but in a way that wasn't completely clear to his disciples. Finally in chapter 16, the disciples questioned each other, trying to figure it out, and concluded, "We don't understand what he is saying" (16:18).<sup>1</sup>

Jesus responded by telling them, "I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father" (16:28). Then they began to understand.

Now Jesus told them all these things to prepare them for what was about to happen with his betrayal, arrest, crucifixion, and resurrection. And in the midst of all his talk about what was going to happen, *Jesus made this promise that the Father would send the Holy Spirit in his name*.

***The promise***

But what did the promise *mean*? What was it all about?

Well, if we look closely at what Jesus said here in our text, we can begin to get a better grasp on what he means.

Look at 14:15-18 . . .

<sup>15</sup> "If you love me, you will obey what I command. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—<sup>17</sup> the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. <sup>18</sup> I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

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<sup>1</sup> Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version*.

Do you see what Jesus was promising?

He had told them in 14:12 that he was going to the Father. Now he was saying that he would give them another Counselor or Comforter or Helper or literally, *Advocate*. That Advocate would be “the Spirit of truth,” who was already *with* them but would soon be *in them*. And through that Spirit, Jesus would come to them so that they would not be left like orphans.

His promise was a promise of *God’s presence*. In the broader passage Jesus talked about how he was in the Father and the Father in him (14:8-11), and in 14:23 he said that he and the Father would come and make their home with anyone who loves him and obeys his teaching. How would they do that? Through the Holy Spirit that the Father would give! Through the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son dwell in those who have trusted Christ and follow him. God is present with believers through his Spirit!

But look at what else Jesus said in 14:25-26 . . .

<sup>25</sup> "All this I have spoken while still with you. <sup>26</sup> But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

What was Jesus promising here?

While he was with his disciples, he had been their teacher. He had shown them his way, the Father’s way, and had taught them everything that the Father had told him to teach them. But now he was going away, and he would no longer be physically present during the time between his crucifixion and resurrection, then after he returned to the Father.

But God would take care of them, because the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father would send in Jesus’ name, would teach them all things and would remind them of everything Jesus had said to them! In other words, Jesus’ promise of the Spirit was a promise of *God’s guidance*. His followers would not be left to themselves to try to figure things out. The Spirit would guide them in the words and ways of Jesus, teaching them all things and reminding them of everything Jesus had said.

Yet that’s still not all that this promise was about. Look at 20:21-23 . . .

<sup>21</sup> Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." <sup>22</sup> And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples multiple times. This text tells us about one of those times. It was the evening of the day he had risen. The disciples had locked the door for fear of the Jews, yet Jesus appeared right in their midst. He greeted them with the familiar, “Peace be with you,” and then showed them his hands and side. We can only imagine how overjoyed they must have been when they saw him!

And then something incredible happened. He told them again, “Peace be with you.” Then he gave them a mission—*his mission*. “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”

How in the world could they carry out his mission in the world? How could they be sent by Jesus just as the Father had sent him?

Jesus took care of that.

When he said this, he blew his breath on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” You see, in Greek, as in Hebrew, one word can mean spirit or wind or breath. Jesus breathed his holy breath on them and told them to receive the Holy Spirit. It would be through the power of the Holy Spirit that they would be sent as the Father sent Jesus, that they would be able to accomplish his mission in the world.

So Jesus’ promise of the Holy Spirit was a promise of *God’s power for mission*.

A promise of God’s presence, God’s guidance, and God’s power for mission. That’s a huge promise, a God-sized promise, a promise that only God could keep!

### ***The promise kept***

And he did! We read about it at the beginning of our service today from Acts 2:1-21.

You remember the story, don’t you? It was the day of Pentecost, the “Feast of Weeks,” one of the three major Jewish festivals that people traveled to Jerusalem for. It came 50 days after the Passover, hence the Greek name “Pentecost.” It was the most popular of the feasts for pilgrims to come to Jerusalem. It was a joyous, festive time celebrating the barley wheat harvest, and a time of great expectations that the Messiah might soon appear. The fact that it came in the spring of the year made it much easier for travelers to get to Jerusalem, adding to its popularity.

So on that first Pentecost following Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection, the city of Jerusalem was filled with Jewish pilgrims from all over the Roman world. God poured out the Holy Spirit on his people that day so that they began proclaiming the gospel of Christ in foreign languages—not in their native Aramaic or the common Greek language everyone would have known, but in the native languages of all the different people who were there! The Spirit came on the church and filled Jesus’ followers, empowering them to proclaim the good news boldly and effectively. In fact, 3,000 people who were there that day became believers and were baptized!

Jesus had kept his promise!

### ***The promise today***

And he still keeps it.

God still dwells in our hearts through his Spirit if we are genuine followers of Christ. You may say, “But how do I know that? How can I know that God is with me?”

If you have put your faith in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, then God has made you his own. In Romans 8:9, Paul wrote: “And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.” If you’re a follower of Jesus, the Holy Spirit lives in you, and through him the Father and Son are present in you. You can be sure that no matter what you’re facing, good or bad, trial or triumph, God is with you! And because he is *with* you, he will *help* you as you depend on him.

The Spirit is still present in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ as well, and in this expression of his church known as the Jonesboro Heights Baptist Church.

Through the Spirit, the Father and Son are with us in all that we face and all that we do. His presence comforts us, challenges us, and judges us when we’re disobedient.

Through the presence of the Spirit, God shapes us as his people, individually and corporately. He is working to make us like Christ. As the church, we are Christ’s body through which he works, his bride that he loves, and God’s holy temple on earth that he is building (Ephesians 2, 4, and 5).

And because God is with us and in us through his Spirit, we can face whatever challenges

may come our way, we can do whatever he calls us to do, and we can become, both individually and corporately, who and what he calls us to be.

Through his Spirit he guides us and teaches us. As disciples of Jesus he guides us and works in us to develop the character of Christ in us, the fruit of the Spirit Paul talked about in Galatians 5:22-23—“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” As the church he guides us in the ways of Christ to accomplish his kingdom purpose in the world.

And what is that purpose? *Mission!*

But we can't accomplish that mission on our own. We have to have *his power*. And he gives us that power through his Holy Spirit!

You know, it really is appropriate that we have had the parent-child dedication service for a little boy from Ethiopia on Pentecost Sunday! It highlights for us the fact that God's grace is for all the peoples, and that the mission Christ gives us is to “make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19).

You see, though those who were there that first Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection were all Jews or those attracted to Judaism, the Spirit soon taught the church that the good news was for all the world. Aren't you glad for that? We wouldn't be included if it weren't!

The farther I go in the Christian life and ministry, the more I'm convinced that what God wants to create in his church is not a solid colored sheet with some embroidery in contrasting colors, nor even a patchwork quilt stitching together all different kinds of people, but rather a richly woven tapestry of people from all the tribes and nations and tongues of the earth.

And we can be a part of that, because the Spirit empowers us for Christ's mission.

*Jesus has kept his promise of God's presence, his guidance, and his power for mission through his Spirit.*

Are you living in that promise kept?

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