

Well, this time of the year can be a joyful time for many, but the reality is, a lot of us are not quite as joyful or happy deep inside as we want to be- the holidays for many can be the most stressful time of the year, or even the most depressing. Many people struggle with loneliness this time of year— in fact, I was just talking to one of my best friends the other day and he said he felt so lonely on Christmas day, unfortunately Christmas for him came with a family tragedy. This loneliness and depression is the story for too many people during the holidays and I think it is attached to a loss that is magnified during the holidays— loss of companionship — loss of a loved one — or the longing to return to a place or time when everything just seemed right.

Well, I don't know where you are in your heart right now, but the Scripture for this morning is the perfect Scripture for coming into a new year, regardless of where your heart is. This passage is about love and eternal assurance— the promise we have from Jesus that we will never be alone because He loves us and has given us the greatest gift we could ever receive.

So this morning, in whatever is going on in your heart, whether you are in a place of peace and joy or fighting back depression and loneliness, I pray that this message will fill you with a lasting assurance of God's love through the Holy Spirit. And I pray that from now on, every time you come to this time of year, you will always remember the amazing gift of the Holy Spirit— I pray that the Holy Spirit will fill you right now even as I speak, and you will go into 2023 overflowing with the gift of the Holy Spirit- renewed, revived, and ready to conquer the new year in Jesus name— Amen?

Let's turn to the passage for this morning, [John 14:15-24](#) The Word of the Lord for us.

John 14:15–24

NIV

“If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—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. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”

Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, “But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?”

Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

This morning we're going to focus on the gift of the Holy Spirit. Now this is different than the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit distributes gifts of the Spirit to each believer but the ultimate gift, the most perfect gift, is the Holy Spirit. I want to tell you, if you have no other gift— if the only gift you have is the Holy Spirit, then you really have the only gift you'll ever need. So if you are coming to church wondering whether the gifts or talents you have are enough, or wondering if your gifts even make a difference, or whether you really even matter in this world— you need to know that you, as a follower of Jesus, have the only gift you'll ever need, the Holy Spirit. Don't get caught up too much trying to figure out what gifts of the Spirit you have, I would say don't even focus too much on the gifts of the Spirit right now. Instead, turn to the Holy Spirit, set your focus on Him, and surrender to Him. This morning we will focus on the gift of the Holy Spirit and what his presence means for us.

First, there are two conditions that are apparent upon receiving the Holy Spirit— the first condition is that you are a follower of Christ— and by follower of Christ, I mean one who truly loves Jesus, a true disciple of Christ. Jesus started off here with the words, "if you love me..." so this the first condition — loving Jesus.

The second condition is really the proof of love for Jesus, keeping his commands. Alright, let's talk about this for a minute. I think we can learn a lot about the nature of true love through what Jesus says here— if you love me, keep my commands... and later in v. 21 he says, "whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me."

This is the true nature of love, if you love someone then you will do whatever it takes to keep the person around or to show them that you love them--- and the funny thing is, if you're brave enough to venture into the territory of loving someone, you'll find out real quick that throwing all of your lovey-dovey affection on the person is not a sustainable way of proving your love— in fact, that can be a good way to push a person away- right? Sometimes a good strong hug is appropriate— a lot of times it's the worst thing!

I'll give a real-life example- alright, Yam comes to me and says, "honey, the garage is a real mess, honey, could you clean the garage for me please, honey?" and I, sensing that now is a really good time to show her I love her, walk up to her, and give her a great big hug— and I walk away. Then a month goes by, and she comes back to me and says, "uh honey, the garage is still a mess... can you clean the garage for me please?", and I, sensing that this is again a really good time to just assure her heart that I love her, give her a great big, long hug..." and I walk away. So, another month or couple years go by and this time, she comes to me really, really annoyed about the garage and what do you think will happen if I try to hug her again--- not happenin! I'd be more likely to get a swift uppercut to the gut! Love is proven by sacrifice.

One more story- I was watching the reality show called Hoarders- it's a show about a crew that helps hoarders overcome their hoarding problem — now this is serious hoarding- I'm not talking about excessive clutter, this the hoarding that completely takes over a person's home with mountains of stuff, boxes, and garbage [NOTE: if you are someone you love is dealing with this problem, please seek professional help and extend your love and grace to them]— well one gentleman was encouraged to enlist the help of his lady friend, one of his best friends who had no idea of the extent of his problem— the camera showed when she came into his house for the first time, she was absolutely flabbergasted, and I'll never forget this— she just started yelling over and over again— “you don't love me!” “YOU DON'T LOVE ME!” It was kind of funny but that raw moment caught on a live reality TV set was really profound — that moment captured a powerful spiritual reality about love— the essence of true love is unselfish sacrifice and we can get so cluttered inside our hearts with our own selfish desires, wants, and needs that when the people closest to us try to step inside our hearts, they find there is no room for them.

I don't mean to give advice about love, but the truth is, if you love someone you're going to do what it takes to keep them around, and true love is always backed by sacrificial action- selfless sacrifice. God loved us so much that He paid for our sins through the sacrifice of Jesus so that He could keep us around— and the way that we prove our love for Jesus is by keeping his commandments--- the beauty of this is that His command is that we love each other- [John 15:17](#) “This is my command: Love each other.” So, we prove our love for God by loving each other and loving each other means that we are following what Jesus teaches, keeping his commands. Every one of Jesus' commands is about loving God and others. I think it's amazing that Jesus talks about loving Him and keeping his commands as He teaches about the Holy Spirit because we cannot do that without the Holy Spirit.

So back to the gift of the Holy Spirit- there are two conditions that come with receiving the Holy Spirit, they are loving Jesus and keeping his commands— simply put, if you love Jesus and love others as Jesus commands, then the Father God will send an advocate, the Holy Spirit, to help you and be with you forever. If you love Jesus and follow his teachings, you will receive the Holy Spirit, who vouches for you and confirms you are His.

At the end of this message, I'm going to take a few minutes to give you the opportunity to ask for and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit- a very special gift reserved only for those who believe in Jesus and follow him. You might know already that you have the Holy Spirit within you, this is the time to focus on the gift of His presence. Some of you might have questions or may not be sure if you really have the Holy Spirit— this is the time to receive that full assurance from the Father God- the gift of the Holy Spirit is His promise to us!

Now, let's turn our focus to the Holy Spirit for the rest of this message. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth and the Spirit of truth is unacceptable to the world— the world cannot accept the

Spirit of truth--- so at first, the Holy Spirit's work within you is going to seem alien to the world you know- at first, especially in our culture, the Holy Spirit's work might tilt your equilibrium— His work might throw you off a little bit as he begins to chip away at the influence of the world within you. If you've accepted Jesus and then you start to feel unsettled by the Word of God, this is an indication that the Holy Spirit is starting to chip away at the world's influence in your heart- don't resist His work!

If you are in that place right now, I encourage you to set your focus on the Holy Spirit and trust Him. [Proverbs 3:5-6](#) says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." Lean not on your own understanding, trust in the Lord and He will show you the truth because He is the Spirit of truth that is different than the kind of truth you've learned from the world— and because His truth is different than the world, the world is not going to like what you stand for. But that is ok because you don't need the world, the Holy Spirit is all you need— don't let yourself be deceived! Trust in the Lord, not in your own understanding.

Now I'm going to take the final minutes of this message to just highlight the great work of the Holy Spirit and who He is for us as found in Scripture. I hope that these statements will minister to your heart and bring warmth where you need it. I have Scripture references for every one of these statements that you can get from my sermon manuscript available in the lobby.

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity ([Matt. 28:19](#); [1 Cor. 12:4-6](#); [2 Cor. 13:13](#)). He is fully God from the beginning ([Gen. 1:2](#); [Job 26:13](#)) and personal in nature, not a force or an it, and He carries out the saving work of God on earth as God ([Lk. 1:35](#); [Jn. 14:26](#); [15:26](#); [16:13-14](#); [Acts 5:3-4](#); [Tit. 3:5](#)). The personal nature of the Holy Spirit is such that He has a mind ([Rom. 8:27](#)); a will ([1 Cor. 2:11](#)), emotions that can be grieved ([Eph. 4:30](#)); the ability to speak and hear ([Jn. 16:13](#); [Mk. 13:11](#); [Acts 1:16](#)); and He can be sinned against as humans can sin against God ([Matt. 12:31](#); [Acts. 5:3](#); [Heb. 10:29](#); [Is. 63:10](#)). This means that the Holy Spirit is not a mere influence from God but a personal being, the third person of the Trinity. He is God personally living with you and within you, in intimate communion with your spirit. He speaks to you and hears you. He reveals the will of God to you, and He feels every emotion you are feeling.

The Holy Spirit is a seal and a promise for your eternal inheritance ([2 Cor. 1:22](#), [5:5](#); [Eph. 1:13-14](#), [4:30](#)). This means that you have been marked for ownership— God has claimed you as His own and marked you for eternity. The presence of the Holy Spirit within guarantees that you are set for eternal life with God. Nothing can steal His presence from you, and nothing can take away your inheritance.

The Holy Spirit empowers and gives you all that you need to live a thriving spiritual life. He strengthens you in times of dire weakness; He gives you gifts that you might effectively love

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and serve him and others ([Eph. 3:16](#); [1 Cor. 12:1-11](#)). He gives you boldness to speak about Christ and what He has done in your life ([Acts 2:4](#); [7:55](#)). The power of the Spirit is yours to accomplish God's great plan and purpose for your life.

The Holy Spirit refreshes you and renews your heart ([Jn. 7:37-39](#)). In those times of weariness where you are left feeling dead inside, the Holy Spirit calls you to come and drink from His well. He will restore you from the deepest part of your soul until you are overflowing. If you are weary, dry, and dead inside, come to him now, come to him now, and drink from the well that never runs dry.

The Holy Spirit is your comforter— your helper--- and your confidence ([Jn. 14:16](#), [15:26](#); [Rom. 8:16](#), [26](#)). When your heart is troubled and you need a comforting touch, the Holy Spirit is with you to calm your fears. When you have nowhere to turn and you're in desperate need of a helper- He extends his loving hand and sits firmly by your side to help you through. When you have lost all confidence and your heart deflates, He becomes your confidence and rebuilds your faith.

The Holy Spirit gives you direction ([Acts 8:29](#)); He will lead you in God's way so that you will never, ever lose your way. He will remind you of the words of God and counsel your heart when you need it. He will give you words to speak in the right time when it is your time to speak for Him ([Jn. 14:26](#); [Lk. 12:12](#)). You will not shrink away in shyness when you need to step out. He will guide you and lead you, and you will know by His Spirit that you will not fail. Even if you stumble He will pick you up and lead you gently in His way.

The Holy Spirit convicts of sin, righteousness, and judgment ([Jn. 16:8-11](#)) - He shows your heart what sin is, He instructs you about what is righteous, and He brings godly judgment to your heart so that you know what is good in God's sight.

The Holy Spirit baptizes you, immerses you in his wonderful love. He sanctifies you and makes you holy, totally set apart for God ([Matt. 3:11](#); [Acts. 1:5](#), [8](#); [2:4](#); [1 Cor. 6:11](#); [1 Pet. 1:2](#)). When the filth of this world and your sin has darkened your soul, let the Holy Spirit wash over you and make you clean again. Open up and receive his cleansing power. He will wash you completely and wipe away that awful dirtiness. This is His work; all you need to do is open your heart to Him.

The Holy Spirit fills you with the fruit of the Spirit ([Gal. 5:22-23](#)), He is the source of your love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control— by the Holy Spirit your heart will be filled with all of these things and more, so live by the Spirit,

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surrender to the Spirit, and go with Him. All of this is yours, say come Holy Spirit! Come Holy Spirit! Come Holy Spirit!

I want to take this last moment to give you the opportunity to respond to the Holy Spirit. If you are not a follower of Jesus and you want to give your life to Him and receive the Holy Spirit— I invite you right now where you are seated to simply say yes to Jesus. Open your heart to Him and let Him in. You can do that right now. If you are a follower of Jesus and you are not sure that you even have the Holy Spirit— I invite you right now to ask Jesus for the Holy Spirit and He will come into you and open your eyes to His presence. Even if you are certain that you already have the Holy Spirit, I invite you right now to receive a special touch from Him and be immersed in His presence— that you might have a deeper recognition of the Holy Spirit within you. I invite you right now to respond to the Holy Spirit— in fact, I invite everyone here right now to pray this prayer out loud with me--- Dear Jesus, I believe in you, I believe that you are alive today, I believe that you are God. I give my heart and life to you, to follow you all the days of my life. I ask for the gift of your Holy Spirit right now. Fill me with your Holy Spirit in Jesus name, I pray. Amen.