

**Michael Gehring**  
**“The Paraclete”**  
**Acts 2:1–12**  
**John 16: 5–15**  
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Misunderstandings; there seems to be so much of it these days and I guess that’s always been the case. No wonder people say that polite conversation at dinner parties should not include politics and religion. Misunderstandings, they are all around us. Sometimes they don’t amount to much and sometimes they can have far reaching implications.

Have you heard the one about the new monk who is assigned to the Scripture room where the monks copy the texts by hand? This was back before the invention of the printing press. He notices that all the monks are copying the Scriptures from other copies, so he goes to the senior monk and asks, ***“Shouldn’t these copies be made from the original?”*** The elder monk responds, ***“Well we’ve been doing it this way for centuries but quite right. There could be a scribal error.”*** He takes a copy with him and disappears to the basement where the ancient manuscripts were kept. He’s gone a long, long time. Finally, they send someone down to check on him and there’s the old man sobbing over a dust covered manuscript. The young monk asks what’s wrong and the old monk with tears in his eyes says, ***“the word is celebrate not celibate.”***

Misunderstandings, they happen all the time. And certainly, there’s a lot of misunderstandings that happen in the church and in theology. Today we are continuing in the series on the Apostles’ Creed and we’re focused on the line: ***I believe in the Holy Spirit.*** When it comes to understanding the work of the 3<sup>rd</sup> person of the Trinity, there are a lot of misunderstandings.

Fred Craddock tells about a time when he was speaking at a seminary on the West Coast ***“and just before the lecture, one of the students stood up, and said, “Before you speak a word, I need to know if you are Pentecostal.” The room grew silent, and Craddock stood. He looked around for the dean of the seminary, and he couldn’t find him. The student continued with his quiz, and Craddock was sort of taken aback so he asked, “Do you mean, do I belong to the Pentecostal Church?” The young man said, “No. I mean, are you Pentecostal?” Craddock said, “Are you asking if I am Charismatic?” The student said, “I am asking if you are Pentecostal.” Craddock asked, “Do you want to know if I speak in tongues?” He said, “I want to know if you are Pentecostal?” Craddock said, “I don’t know what your question is.” The***

**student said, “Obviously, you are not Pentecostal.” And he left. (James Dennis, Sermon “Free Air” May 15, 2005)”**

The difficulty of the young man’s questioning is that he was looking for a litmus test to see if Craddock aligned with his beliefs. And we should have some compassion for the young man, because don’t we all do that in one way or another? Don’t we all want to remake God in our image and confine God to a box demanding that God behaves the way we command?

I believe that there are several mistakes people make when it comes to the Holy Spirit. One is to ignore the 3<sup>rd</sup> person of the Trinity all together. Perhaps people do so because they are bound by a modernist worldview, or fear of the emotional excess which is demonstrated in some Pentecostal churches, or fear that someone is going to ask you to pick up rattlesnakes. If you’re visiting with us today, relax, you are safe on that issue because I don’t care for snakes.

The other mistake people make is to over focus on the signs and wonders that sometimes accompanies the work of the Holy Spirit. People can become spiritual junkies. They have a mountain top experience and they want that experience over and over again. And it can kind of become like a drug where successive experiences have a difficult time meeting the first experience so one has to ramp up the adrenaline. CS Lewis, before he became a Christian, made this mistake with aesthetic intuitional experiences.

It is a great mistake to ignore the Holy Spirit and it is also a mistake to focus on the signs and ignore the 3<sup>rd</sup> person of the Trinity. Jesus said, ***“Nevertheless I tell you the true: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you... When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”***

The Paraclete, the Advocate, the Comforter will come and remind you of all the things I have told you. Jesus said, I will not leave you orphaned when I go away. I will send you the Holy Spirit and the power of God will rest upon you. We need the Spirit’s empowerment so that we can live as faithful disciples.

I was talking on the phone with Bishop Wilke, author of *Disciple Bible Study* a year ago and he told me this story. He said many years ago, long, long, before he was elected Bishop, he was burned out in the ministry. He was trying to do it all by his own power. He was trying to be the perfect preacher. He was reading all the books. His wife was pregnant. The burdens of the world weighed down upon him. He was exhausted trying to balance all the responsibility and it felt crushing. He was thinking about quitting his church and the ministry.

He had heard about E. Stanley Jones, the famed missionary to India and he went to a meeting that he was holding in Salinas, Kansas.

E. Stanley Jones preached a sermon about receiving the Holy Spirit. He said ***“the Holy Spirit was God. The Holy Spirit was God’s presence. The Holy Spirit brings the spirit of Jesus to us. There’s nothing to be afraid of. Are you afraid of Jesus? It’s not the Holy Ghost; it’s the Holy Spirit. All you’ve got to do to receive is just submit.”*** Dick went forward and surrendered.

He prayed to himself, ***“Lord, I’m exhausted. I give up.”*** And then he said, ***“Mike, I literally heard a voice.”*** And God said to me, ***“It’s about time.”*** Dick said he literally felt the world rolling off his shoulders. And then he asked God, ***“But who’s going to look after it all.”*** And God said, ***“I will look after it. All you have to do is be faithful.”*** Dick said, ***“It changed my life. I just gave it all over to God and trusted the Spirit with it all.”***

What about you? Are you burdened today? Do you just feel wearied by life? Have you been trying to carry too many burdens by yourself? If so, then let go. Give them over to God and trust the Holy Spirit to carry you through.