

The Equipper

Message #3 in the series "Fresh Wind"

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Well, good morning St Paul's Church, and I want to say once again, happy Father's Day. I have to take a little moment of humility. I haven't wished my dad Happy Father's Day yet. So happy Father's Day. You are the best dad in the whole world. And

I'm so excited that I get to have you here with me this morning. So, I have seen all of you a couple of times. I've been up here the past couple of weeks, but I wanted to take a moment this morning just to introduce myself a little bit further so that before we head into the message, you can get to know me a little bit.

So, this is my beautiful family who you can also see sitting in the front row here. My mom, Beryl, my dad, Sean and me, and then my brother-in-law, Christian, and my sister, Aria. They are the most wonderful family I could have ever asked for. They have been such a blessing in my life. They are where I get my love for the Lord. They are where I get my love for music. And it has been such a blessing to be raised by this family and raised here in Lancaster. I grew up going to Hempfield High School, and I absolutely loved my time living here. And despite that, God decided that when I had to go to college that he was going to call me to West Palm Beach, Florida. Here's a picture of the beach across from my school. My mom loves showing people these pictures because, I mean, who wouldn't want to go visit there, right? I love my school. It has been such a blessing to learn there from so many different wise mentors and professors and staff members at school. I'm going to Palm Beach Atlantic University. It's a tiny little Christian college in West Palm Beach. I am a double major in dance and Christian Community Development, which basically means what I want to do is work internationally with different communities, particularly communities living in poverty, in order to help them reestablish themselves by starting businesses, getting loans and using their tools and crafts to thrive in society. And then I also have a minor in politics just to study as many things as I possibly can. Here's one of my wonderful groups of friends from school. This is a team that I was a part of this last year called the Discipleship Leaders. Only nine people in this picture were part of that team. The rest were our assistants and our leaders. And basically, what I did in that role is I was the head of discipleship for my dorm building, and I'll talk a little bit more about that later. But it was such a blessing to meet these people. And here's another wonderful group of my friends, getting to dress up and go out on the town to Worth Avenue, which is a very fancy little street on Palm Beach Island where we can't buy anything because we're college students. But we can walk around looking fancy and having fun together.

So, as we get started this morning, we are going to be continuing in this sermon series on the Holy Spirit. Now, we spent our first week looking at what it means for us to connect to God. The Holy Spirit brings us into an intimate communion with the Father. And then we transitioned in the second week to discussing the ways that the Holy Spirit comforts us in our pain and grief. We have a tendency to block ourselves off from God, but God is not concerned about those walls and brings us into this relationship of adoption with him. Both of these ideas are very internal. They talk about our relationship with God and how he's working and growing us on the inside, how he brings us closer to him. But today we are going to take a small transition, as we continue in John 14, to take a deeper look at the active work of the Holy Spirit, how the Holy Spirit equips us. If you're someone who likes to have a title to the sermon, I have decided to title this sermon "How We Go". We're going to talk about the ways that the Holy Spirit prepares us to live out God's calling on each of our lives. And we'll be taking time today to focus on two scriptures, first, John 14, and then transitioning into Luke 10. So would you start with me this morning by reading through John 14:21-26. I'm going to use my actual Bible so I can see it a little bit more clearly with my distance vision.

Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me and he who loves me will be loved by my father and I will love him and manifest myself to him. Judas not Iscariot said to him, Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us and not to the world? Jesus answered him. If anyone loves me, He will keep my word and my father will love him. And we will come to him and make our home

with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the fathers who sent me. These things. I've spoken to you while I am still with you. But the helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name. He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance. All that I have said to you. [John 14:15-26]

So, as we begin to look at John 14:21, we see that Jesus is telling us that keeping His commandments means that we love him. Now, this could sound like a very self-righteous statement, but we have read all of John, chapters 1-13, up to this point. And John, in his gospel, is extremely focused on helping us understand the character of Jesus. He has shown us that Jesus is loving. He has shown us that He is kind. We have seen him feed huge groups of people. We've seen him bring sinners into his circle so that he can love them. And just in the last chapter, we watched him wash the disciple's feet. We have understood now that Jesus is loving and serving. So, we know that when He tells us that obedience shows our love. It is coming from a place of love and truth. Really what Jesus is saying here is, you know that I love you, so here is how you love me back. And also, when he says this, this word, *keep*, those who *keep* his commandments, it's a lot deeper than just following the rule of the law. We have seen how the Pharisees and the Sadducees would take the law and keep it rule by rule. What he is saying here is much more than that. It's not memorizing a rule book but internalizing it. Those who are obedient and internalize what Jesus says, they are the ones who love him.

Jesus also uses this first verse to remind us of the power behind his words. If someone loves God, God loves them. They will be loved by His Father, by God. This reminds us that God and Jesus are intrinsically connected, and what Jesus is saying here carries a lot of weight as it represents not only His love, but through that, God's love. Also in this first verse, because Jesus is outlining the rest of his argument here, he says that he's going to manifest himself to us. Jesus who is God and loves us so much, if we keep His commandments, he will manifest himself to us. Well, what in the world does that mean? What do you mean Jesus? You're going to manifest yourself to us. For very good reason, this is the exact same question that Judas asks. This is not Judas Iscariot as the author wants to make sure that we know. He left in a previous chapter. This is sometimes Judas, son of James, Judas Thomas, we're not certain exactly who this Judas figure was, but we are certain that it is a disciple of Jesus sitting in his circle. And Judas, in complete confusion, asks "*Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us and not to the world*"? You see, back in chapter 13, in verse 33, Jesus says, "*Yet a little while I am with you, you will seek me. And just as I said to the Jews. So now also I say to you where I am going, you cannot come.*" So, Jesus just said that he was leaving and now he's telling them that he will manifest himself to them. So how is this going to work? Before Jesus gives his answer, he wants to reiterate his first point.

He once again repeats that we can love him by keeping his commandments. That that means God will love us. And that He will come. They will come and make their home with us. Now, I want to clarify in this passage - Jesus is talking to the 12 apostles. He's talking to his disciples. But these texts are so important for how we understand the way that God continues to connect with us now, being His disciples. So finally, we come to verse 24. Where Jesus says, "*whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word you hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me.*" This is extremely key to our understanding of the passage. Not only does it remind us once again of the power in what Jesus is saying as these words are coming from God, but it makes it clear that Jesus doesn't only mean obedience to the law. Now, Jesus highly values the law, the commandments that were given to generations of the Jews that came before him. And he uses them as the foundation of all of his teachings. What Jesus wants us to know is that we are called to be obedient to *His* words. The actual words that Jesus has spoken, that are shared with us through Scripture, we are called to be obedient not only to the law that is given, but to Jesus Himself. Finally, in verses 25 and 26, we get our answer to Judas' question. Jesus says "*these things. I've spoken to you while I am still with you. But the helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name. He will teach you all things and bring to remembrance all that I have said to you.*" It is the Holy Spirit who will manifest Jesus to us.

It is the helper who comes to guide us as we learn and who will, in the moment to moment situations of life, equip us to follow Jesus. There's a lot happening in this passage. We see Jesus making this argument about how he is going to leave, but the Holy Spirit will come and how that's going to direct us in some way or another. But I think it's easy to summarize it in this way. In obedience to Christ, because of our love for Him and his love

for us, we follow His teachings through the equipping power of the Holy Spirit. I'm going to read that one more time. In obedience to Christ, because of our love for Him and his love for us, we follow His teachings through the equipping power of the Holy Spirit. So how does this work? How does the Holy Spirit equip us? I mentioned before that I'm studying Christian Community Development at my school and that program is a part of our intercultural studies department. And as part of that department, we spend a lot of time looking at Scripture, trying to understand what it means for us to follow the calling that God has placed on our lives; to understand how we go, how we are sent. And Scripture is full of this idea. You see it in the Old Testament prophets. You see it in the law. You see it all throughout the Gospels, in the letters. But there's one particular passage that I have found especially helpful in understanding the ways that the Holy Spirit equips us. So now we are going to take a moment to transition over to the Book of Luke. Now we are making this change intentionally. You see, Luke is very key to our understanding of the Holy Spirit.

Being the author of Acts, Luke has a special understanding of what it means for the Holy Spirit to do his work. One of my favorite descriptions I ever heard of the Book of Acts was "following the Holy Spirit on the ground," the same way a journalist would follow a figure around to see what they're doing and how they're acting. This is what Luke does through the Book of Acts. So, if there is a gospel author that understands the way the Holy Spirit moves, Luke has a very good picture of it and is very good at conveying it in his writing. So now we're going to take a moment to read through the first six verses of Luke in Chapter 10. So, we're going to read Luke 10:1-6. And one reminder, there's a lot happening in this passage. We could probably do a six-week sermon series just on these six verses. But for today, we're going to be looking at this through the question how does the Holy Spirit equip us?

After this, the Lord appointed 72 others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Go your way. Behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no money bag, no knapsack, no sandals and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter first say peace be to this house. And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you."
[Luke 10:1-6]

So you may have noticed that there is no mention of the Holy Spirit in this passage. And you'd be correct. The Holy Spirit has not yet come into the disciples. But they have Jesus, and as we've just learned, it is Jesus' instruction that will be brought to us through the helper's guidance. So how will the Holy Spirit equip us? The first way that the Holy Spirit equips us is through prayer. In verse two of this passage, Jesus says "*The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few*". Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Prayer is the foundation of everything we do. God uses this verse as his first instruction as these disciples are going out. He's saying to them, I'm asking you to pray for others, and I'm also sending you. And so prayer needs to be the background of everything that you were doing. So what does prayer actually look like? I'm sure many of us have spent time praying when we wake up in the morning or when we go to bed at night, we pray before meals or when we have a difficult situation going on in our families. But what does it mean to start praying continuously, to pray as we go throughout our days and as we face momentary, difficult situations that we haven't seen coming? One thing that I have learned about prayer came to me through my discipleship leader role this past year. You see, one of the pieces of that role is meeting one on one with students who are struggling. So I would have girls come to me with Bible questions or with a hard situation happening with their friends or their family. And I learned very quickly that I do not have the answer to everything.

And it's funny how girls, especially freshman girls coming to college, even though you've only been there a year longer than them, really want you to have all the answers. But I didn't. And I received a very helpful piece of advice from one of my leaders of this group that helped me as I was in these different one on one conversations. And this piece of advice was this: while you are talking to someone, as they are sharing more thoughts and more emotions and things that you aren't quite sure how to handle, take a moment to pause. Stop for a second and as you are listening to them. Pray in your head, "God, I ask that the thoughts that you give me would be from you, and that the words I say would come from you." And take a moment in complete surrender

to give that one simple conversation over to God. You see, prayer is not just supposed to be something that we do at set times throughout the day, but it shows that we are completely surrendering every situation to God. And sometimes all you need to do that is a prayer where you say, "God, this is yours." It doesn't need to last for 20 minutes. It can be 3 seconds in your head during a difficult conversation.

The second way in this passage that we see the Holy Spirit equip us is through preparation. When we look at verses three and four of this passage, Jesus says, "*Go on your way, behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of Wolves*". We need to be prepared, right? That's a little bit terrifying, Jesus. And then he says, "*Carry no money bag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road*". So, Jesus, you're sending us out as lambs in the midst of wolves, and we're not supposed to bring anything with us? And to understand this, we have to turn back to verse 1 of the passage where it says, "*after this, the Lord appointed 72 others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go.*" The key to understanding Jesus's preparation is that these disciples have been learning from Jesus. You see, the 12 apostles are not being sent out here. They went out a chapter ago back in Luke 9. Jesus sent them out with a very similar instruction, and they've already returned. But these are 72 other disciples that have been disciples of Jesus throughout His ministry. They have been learning from him as he preaches and as he uses illustrations. They know what it means to follow the teachings of Jesus because they've been learning all about them. And this is also a helpful reminder to us because this is not just the core 12 that are being sent. It is a whole group of Jesus disciples. It reminds us that it is not only the top of the religious elite that are sent out, but it is all of us. And we all need to be prepared by learning from Jesus. So what does preparation look like?

One of the first ways and most important ways that we are prepared is through Scripture. Reading your Bible is, I'm sure, something you guys have been told to do many times throughout your life. You've probably heard the sermon on how you need to read your Bible every day, or you're not going to be a good Christian. And you've probably also heard the sermon on how you don't need to be legalistic about reading scripture. It is just there as an encouragement to you. I'm not here to say either of these things. What I am here to say is that the Bible is a love letter and that the Bible is a guidebook. God gave us this. The very words breathed from his mouth so that we can come to know him better and come to follow him better. If we are looking to understand how to follow the Holy Spirit, the Bible is the place to start. As we study it, just as Jesus told us to do with his words, we internalize it. And then when we face difficult situations or something that we didn't see coming, that word is already inside of us.

The second way that the Holy Spirit prepares us is through other readings. We have centuries of Christian teachings from people who have studied this word, from people who have walked with God and been faithful to him. And in this day and age, we don't only have readings, but we have videos and sermons and movie clips, all of which can help us understand what it looks like to follow God. If you're looking for a place to start, I always love to talk about C.S. Lewis. I love all of the works of C.S. Lewis, and I highly recommend if you've been looking for a book where you want to see what someone else has to say about Jesus, pull up any of his books, but I particularly love Mere Christianity. It was revolutionary for me in understanding what it means for Jesus to be Lord of my life.

The third way that the Holy Spirit uses preparation is through mentors. Now the idea of a mentor is something that some people are used to, but others are not. A mentor can look like many different things. It may be an older friend; it may be a family member. It may be a pastor or a spiritual leader in your church. But finding mentors, people who have taken time in the world and other readings who have been walking with God, finding those people and having them pour into your life is foundational for learning to follow the Holy Spirit. We learn through example often times, and mentors are one way that we can do that. For me, one of the most central mentors in my life has been my dad, which is fitting since it is Father's Day today. Some of my favorite memories from the past couple of years have been when my dad and I would take our lunch and drive somewhere with a beautiful view and sit there for probably longer than we actually had time for. And he would ask me about what God was doing in my life and what he was teaching me, the ways that I saw God moving and what I thought that meant for my future and for the next school year. Those conversations were so helpful to me in processing the ways that God is working and finding someone that is able to do that for you is an

immense blessing as you see the Holy Spirit move. So, the Holy Spirit equips us in prayer and also through preparation.

And the third way that we see the Holy Spirit equip us in this passage is through impulse. For this. We're going to look at the last two verses that we read, verses five and six.

Whatever house you enter first say peace be to this house. And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. [Luke 10:5-6]

So there is a lot to talk about in these two verses. You could talk about how we travel and decide where we're going. You could talk about a person of peace. But I want to focus on this word - IF. Jesus says, "IF a son of peace is there, and IF not, it will return to you". What we learn here is that as the disciples go, they do not know everything. They do not know what it's going to look like when they arrive. They do not know the people that they are going to meet. And this reminds us that we are never fully equipped without faith. We are never fully equipped without faith. I know I came this morning to talk about how the Holy Spirit equips us. Just to tell you that you'll never really feel like you're totally there. And the truth is that if we stop relying on the Holy Spirit inside of us, that if we decide that those teachings of Jesus that are in the recesses of our mind don't need to be brought up and brought forth, then how we go will never really be that effective. You see, we need to rely on the Holy Spirit as we move. It's a little bit complicated to talk about what following the impulse of the Holy Spirit looks like, how we make decisions and share thoughts that maybe we weren't planning to say originally, or how the Holy Spirit might convince us that this is the person we need to talk to, and so to talk about this, I'm going to close out with a story.

This past semester, I had the opportunity to travel to the Middle East. I have a professor that has worked in the Middle East for years and loves the people and loves the culture, and I have learned so much from him. So, when this opportunity came up, I was very excited. I would get to travel with him and some of my very closest friends to meet people that I've heard so much about. And when we arrived, I immediately absolutely loved it. The people were so kind. The food was delicious, and I was getting to interact with cultures that I had never met before. But I became very quickly discouraged. You see, our goal on this trip was to meet people from all over the world, people that might never have the chance to hear the name Jesus and to share it with them. And while I've always been very focused on serving and on discipleship, this whole idea of evangelism was kind of new to me. I've prayed with people before, and I've talked about what the Bible says, but to meet someone who hasn't even heard of Jesus and tell them about him was very new. And for some people on the trip, it wasn't new at all. They had seen people from across the world come to understand who Jesus is and what He's done for them. And so, after a couple days of feeling uncertain about what to do, I talked with my friend Sophie, who I learned was feeling very similar to the way I was. We talked about all of this and decided that it was time to just walk around and pray. You see, the place that we visited had all of these stands from different cultures, different countries, where you could learn about the products they had there or the events that were happening. And so, we decided to just walk and pray.

Now, a friend that had been on this trip had prepared a list for us of unreached people groups. And if you've never heard that phrase before, unreached people groups are nationalities of people that have never had the opportunity to hear the name of Jesus. And so, what we did is we pulled out this list, and as we walked, we prayed. We would alternate back and forth, reading a name off the list and praying for it. And before long as I was praying (praying over the country of Iran) I looked up and the stand was right in front of me. Sometimes the Holy Spirit works in mysterious ways. And so, Sophie and I decided to walk in. Okay. Our prayers seem to align with where we were walking. Let's go in. And so, we went into the stand and wandered around. A lot of the people working there seemed very busy, so there wasn't really time to stop for conversation. And as we were getting ready to leave, for some reason, we saw this box of tea that they were selling and decided, well, I feel like I should buy some tea. We've been in here for a while and I have a mom who loves tea and a best friend at school who loves tea. So, we'll stop and get some of that before we head out. And we got our tea and we walked up to the register, not expecting anything. And we set down our tea and started to check out. And out of nowhere, the girl said, "You're Americans!" That is not always the first reaction you get when a lot of people have never met an American before. But she was elated. And we said, "Yes, we are". And she told us

that she had learned a lot of her English by watching American television, which is extremely common when you travel to foreign countries.

And so, we started talking to her a little bit and she was just so excited to meet us. After about a minute of conversation, she said to us, "Oh, I just want to talk to you guys for hours". And after about three more minutes of conversation, she invited Sophie and I to a concert with her the next night. We were very excited because, you see, Sophie and I are people that are very focused on friendship. We love to build relationships with people and see what God is going to do with them. And so, we were so excited to be starting to build this relationship with this kind girl named Neera. And so, we headed out from there with our tea. And little did we know she had been so excited that half an hour later she texted us, asking us to get together that same night. And so, of course, we said yes, very excited to continue building this friendship. And a couple hours later, we met up with her outside. So, she came to meet up with us. And the first thing we noticed is that Neera, who is Muslim, had taken off her hijab. This was a very big deal. In Iran, it is illegal to not wear hijab. And so, we were very interested as to why she decided to remove it. So, we started talking and we started walking. And along our way, I saw a little girl in a stroller who had just dropped her bottle. And so, I quickly ran over to the little girl, picked up the bottle and handed it to her. And at that same moment, the mom that was standing with that little girl was asking for directions. And so, in a very confusing mix of Arabic and English and Persian, we tried to help her figure out where she was going. Now, our friend Neera kept insisting she can figure it out on her own. But we told her, no, we're going to stay and help her.

So, after that woman went on her way, we walked and talked for a little bit more and learned that Neera had been feeling very disillusioned with her faith. You see, her government had been doing things she disagreed with and saying that they were doing it because of their faith, and she didn't understand how they think these things could align. And so, after hearing these stories from her and after telling her a story about a little boy we had met earlier who is lost and couldn't find his mom and how we helped him, we found ourselves sitting on a bench. And after hearing a little bit more about how her faith had been really confusing her recently, she asked us the question, "why do you guys act the way that you act? Why did you stop and help those people? I don't understand. No one I know would ever do that". And she opened the door up for us to tell her about Jesus. Sitting there on that little bench in the Middle East, I got to tell this kind, sweet girl about what Jesus had done for her. And she was amazed. She'd never heard that story before. And so, we offered to her, "Hey, would you like to pray?" And we had a lot of peace about it. We felt like this conversation was going in a good direction. And so, when we offered prayer, she said, "Yes, of course". And so, we sat there and we held hands, which she loved. In Islam, typically you pray more in isolation by yourself. And so to hold hands while praying was just wonderful.

So we bowed our heads and I prayed to God thanking Him for our time together. And afterwards I looked at her and with tears in her eyes, she said, "That is the most beautiful thing I have ever heard. Can we do that again?" And we did. The next night we met up with her for the concert and ended up not going to the concert at all, but sitting and talking because she asked us what love means to us. And once again, we got to tell her about the love of Jesus. And we prayed again. And I'm continuing to pray for her and I continue to talk to her. I have a friend who's over in the Middle East and I get to text her and see how her day is going and offer to pray with her now and again. See, following the Holy Spirit's impulse doesn't necessarily mean you hear a voice whispering in your ear, telling you where to go. It might be the sense of peace when you see someone sitting alone at a table. Or it might be excitement when you hear someone talking about an event that's going on. You just can't wait to be there. The Holy Spirit works in mysterious ways. But when we have taken the time through prayer and preparation to come to understand the Holy Spirit more deeply, then following his impulse becomes an almost natural reaction because we are trusting that the voice of God inside of us. And this might not necessarily mean traveling to a foreign country and talking to someone who's never heard Jesus before. It may look like that. It may look like your neighbor who has been hurting, who just lost someone they love and need someone to care for them. Or it may even be your very own brother or sister in Christ that needs the reminder that they have the Holy Spirit inside of them too, and that He is working in their lives just as he is in yours.

Would you guys pray with me? Dear God, I thank you that you work in mysterious ways. I thank you that you give us ways to learn about you through your Word, as we pray, and as we read what you've told us, and as we

learn to follow you in the regular day to day lives and the patterns that we follow. You see, God, we know that you are inside of us, but sometimes it can be hard to know what it looks like to do anything about that. But you do truly equip those that you have called. And you have called each one of us. And so, God, as we move forward from this morning, I ask that you would be with us in our hearts and prepare us to see the ways that you have equipped us specifically and that you are going to use us in the next week and in the next month and in the next year and throughout our lives, as we learn to show people the truth and love that comes from you. Amen.