

JOHN 16:5-15
ADVOCACY

Floodlit buildings are part of our view of the city. This is not the season to appreciate them at their best, but they stand out. Our Church building is floodlit at times and stands out as you travel along Lanark Rd; people see the building when otherwise, at night, they would simply drive on past. Jenners was once floodlit in pink lights as a sign of support for people suffering with breast cancer; the building stood out in Princes St, among other floodlit buildings. The Forth Bridge is floodlit! Maybe you've not noticed floodlit buildings, but now you will! The thing about floodlighting is that when it is done well, you don't see the lights; your eye is not drawn to the lights unless you happen to be a lighting engineer who is full of the technical wizardry! When floodlighting is done well, your eye is drawn to the building, to the place where the lights shine and then you learn to appreciate the building in a new way; there are things we see about buildings when they are floodlit that you can't or don't see at any other time. Have a look the next time you see a building doused in floodlights.

Jim Packer, a preacher and theologian was going into a church building one night to preach on part of John 16: *"He will bring glory to me..."* (John 16:14) and as he walked into the building he saw that it was floodlit and he realised that this was the perfect illustration for his text. The floodlights on the church building, making the building stand out, was a picture of the work the Spirit does to draw people to Jesus and to glorify Jesus. The Spirit is the "hidden floodlight shining on the Saviour...it is as if the Spirit stands behind us, throwing light over our shoulder, on Jesus who stands facing us." (*Keep In Step With the Spirit p.66*) It is never the Spirit's job to draw attention to Himself; His job is always "look at Jesus; see how good Jesus is; listen to Jesus; go to Jesus and find life; taste Jesus' gifts of forgiveness, joy and peace".

As part of the conversation that Jesus has with His disciples on the night before He died, the disciples are full of grief; their hearts are heavy and sad. He has talked about leaving them, going away, dying on the cross and being raised, and then returning to the Father. There are lots of big issues for the disciples to deal with all at once. How can they cope with it all? They are desolate at the thought of Jesus going away; they are not sure they can cope on their own. Then Jesus says *"I tell..."* (John 16:7) They are really not sure about that; how can Jesus' leaving be for our good? *"Unless..."* (John 16:7) Here is the promise of the Spirit, another "Counsellor", advocate, helper, the Spirit of Jesus who will carry on the work that Jesus started and who will be with the disciples always and everywhere. Jesus goes away and God will send the Spirit; this is life after Jesus and the Spirit will help and bless Christians all over the world.

What is the Spirit's job? Jesus tells us: *"When He..."* (John 16:8ff) There is something quite specific for the Spirit to do in the world and in us; all of it, in one way or another, centres on Jesus. *"He will..."* (John 16:8) The Spirit's job is to convince us to believe in Jesus and here's how that process works for us and for the world. The Spirit's job to convince people: I can't convince you of anything about Jesus and for faith; I can tell you how good Jesus is, but it is the Spirit who convinces us to believe and persuades us in our hearts and minds to follow Jesus. Here's something of how that process works, something of the way in which the Spirit goes about His business.

"in regard..." (John 16:9) What do we need? Do we need anything? We are part of a generation that has become self-sufficient in almost every way and for many people that is their view of life. They know that life is not perfect, but anything they need, they can sort for themselves. The Spirit has a different view: His first job is to create a sense of need in our hearts, an awareness that not everything is good and that we need to sort things out in some way or another. The Bible calls some of this need "sin" because we have not believed in Jesus or we have not followed Him; we have got things wrong, we have fallen short of the mark, we are not as good as we might be; or even we have rebelled against God. This is not popular language in our twenty-first century world, but our deepest need is that we have fallen out of

love with God and can't get back! We can't sort this for ourselves. But the Spirit is not making us aware of need and leaving us there; that would be a counsel of despair. There's more.

"In regard..." (John 16:10) Our sense of need is put right by Jesus. Righteousness is a strange word; it can mean several different things. It can talk about us being the right kind of people; it can talk about the things we do in life, either right or wrong; it can talk about our relationship with God and it's this last that it means here. We have a sense of need; we have fallen out of love with God; we have been made aware and we want to set it right. How do we do that? We look to Jesus. Jesus is going to the Father and His ascension ten days before Pentecost is God's seal of approval on everything that Jesus has done. Jesus has died and Jesus is raised; Jesus' going to Father says to the world that Jesus' work is done and that what Jesus has done has worked. He is our salvation; the Spirit convinces us of that because God has set His seal of approval on Jesus. The second part of the process is to draw us to Jesus, attracted by His love, power and grace, convinced by the Spirit that Jesus is someone to believe in!

"in regard..." (John 16:11) There is a battle that still goes on in us. We believe but... there are doubts; there are questions; there are times when Satan tries to tempt us away from Jesus and persuade us that faith is a sham, that faith is empty, or that we are still stuck in sense of sin and failure; that forgiveness isn't real. The Spirit's job is to persuade us that Satan is a busted flush, a mouse with microphone, a defeated enemy. There is no-one left to condemn us when we are in Christ and all that the apostle Paul writes about us in Romans 8 is gloriously true - we are the children of God, we will share in Jesus' glory, we will be heirs of that glory and nothing and no-one can take that away from us and or can break the chain that binds us to Jesus. The Spirit convinces us of that so that we can follow Jesus with resilience and perseverance and patience and faithfulness.

Let me take you to Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. Peter is preaching to a great crowd on the street, a crowd from all over the place, gathered there to celebrate because Pentecost was one of the great Jewish feasts. Peter starts to preach; the Spirit gives him courage to stand up in public and declare his faith, the same man who 53 days before had denied knowing Jesus and who has been hiding behind locked doors, afraid. Now, here is the same man standing preaching, given strength and power by the Spirit. He tells people about Jesus, explaining everything about Jesus of Nazareth. It's what happens at the end that shows us how the Spirit works: *"Therefore let..." (Acts 2:36)* is Peter's summary. *"When the..." (2:37)* The Spirit convinces them of their need, their sin, and they are cut to heart with that sense of their need, failure, that something is wrong and needs to be put right. *"Repent and..." (2:38)* The Spirit points them to Jesus; Jesus is the One who can bring grace and forgiveness; Jesus is the One who can meet your deepest need. *"Those who..." (2:41)* So many people were persuaded to follow Jesus, convinced by the Spirit.

Go back to what I said earlier: I can't convince you of anything. I can tell you the story, but it is the Spirit's job to convince us to follow Jesus. He doesn't want to draw attention to Himself but wants to point us to Jesus. We used to call the Spirit "the Holy Ghost" and I think that scares us; we're not sure that we want to know about ghosts and we're not sure that we want a ghost to live in us. "The Spirit" is better, because here is the essence of Jesus with us, living in us, living on in the world even after Jesus has gone.

Pray for the Spirit to be at work in the world to persuade and inspire people to come to Jesus; only the Spirit can work that transformation in the way people think, in what we believe, in the way we behave. Let us open our hearts to the Spirit being at work in us: pray that He will lead us to be disciples, and that He will lead us closer to Jesus; pray that He will help us understand Jesus; pray that He will strengthen us in our faith; pray that He will walk with us all the way through life; pray that He will help us to be strong, faithful, persevering disciples. That's His job; that's what God gave Him to us for.