



April 27, 2008

# Spirited Love

God has listened to our searching for holy presence. Spirit's gift comes as response to that listening. The language of relationship with God is Spirit-ed love. Love keeps this relationship in word and deed. Love casts out fear. Love does not abandon. Love is eager to do good. Love provides place. Through love we find, and are found, by God.

## Focus scripture John 14:15-21

Additional scriptures

Acts 17:22-31

Psalms 66:8-20

1 Peter 3:13-22

Holy God, Holy Spirit, you always seek our good and ever gift our lives. Come to us now. Remind us of Jesus' way and call to love. Empower us by your presence. Shape us as individuals and communities, that our love may indeed be spirited. Amen.

## Focus Scripture: John 14:15-21

Today's passage continues Jesus' farewell speech to the disciples. It is the first of four teachings in the gospel of John about God's Spirit. Here, the Spirit is described as "advocate," from the Greek *parakletos*. "Paraclete" has a range of meanings that communicate who Spirit is by what Spirit does. Among other things, paraclete can mean to encourage, help, or comfort. The use of "advocate" here comes from the way the word is used in other settings to convey the equivalent of a defence attorney. Spirit comes as a gift from God, just as John earlier portrayed Jesus as God's gift (3:16).

The emphasis in this passage is not so much belief in Jesus as it is love for Jesus. The importance of the Paraclete as "advocate" is one who supports and helps us as we seek to love. Such love is revealed in this passage through action. All five occurrences of *love* in this passage are verbs. The same is true of the remaining five uses of *love* in the rest of this chapter. Here the exercise of love is connected with keeping Jesus' commandments. Jesus had announced a new commandment in John 13:34: "love one another." Disciples keep Jesus' commands in acts of love in and for the community.

Power in Christian community is given a fresh understanding by Spirit's gift and love's command. Power is not the ability to coerce. Power comes in Spirit's gift and our openness to that gift. Our love does not earn God's love. Instead, our love is the way we keep faith with Jesus' expression of God's love. Jesus' revealing of power comes in the revealing of love.

The language of family is applied here to a variety of relationships. The imagery of God as "Father" continues. A new expression identifies the community

as not being left "orphaned." "Orphan" makes several connections. John declares that Jesus gave us "power to become children of God" (1:12). Jesus addresses his followers as "little children" (13:33). The language makes an interesting connection with Paul's word that we are "God's offspring" (Acts 17:29).

This longing for intimate relationship with God, and God seeking such relationship with us, flows through the other readings. Acts 17:22-31 asserts a universal human longing for God. Psalm 66:8-20 names the psalmist's approach to God in worship and God's openness to that seeking. 1 Peter 3:13-22 describes God's seeking in the farthest of places in its imagery of Jesus visiting the "spirits in prison." God's reach includes the places and people others might write off as hopeless. God's love knows no bounds.

Witnessing to faith is also an aspect of these additional scriptures. Paul's sermon in Acts 17:22-31 communicates faith to those of another culture in a way that takes social context seriously. Psalm 66 opens and closes with witness to God's actions and grace. 1 Peter 3 not only relates Christ's witness, but encourages our own witness. We are to seek good with gentleness, reverence, and fearlessness.



God seeks to create community by the gift of Spirit and the exercise of love. We, in turn, find the means to live in community by Spirit's gift and through love's call. Where and how have you searched for God; who helped you along that way? What has been your experience of Spirit's gift in your life and that of your faith community? In what ways might Christ's call to love change how you and your church respond to the situations you face?

Go to [www.spiritseasons.com](http://www.spiritseasons.com) and click on Spirit Sightings for international current events, links to this week's theme, discussion questions, and intercessory prayer suggestions.

