

The Spirit is Victorious Through the Word

John 14:23-27 • 2022-06-06 • Pentecost Sunday



A lot of nations have recently employed the tactic of power projection. That's when a nation will tout its powerful nuclear weapons arsenal, give a demonstration of its missiles, or deploy its biggest naval vessels. Our nation has continually practiced power projection by its deployment of aircraft carriers across the globe. The mere display of powerful naval forces can send a strong message. It has been praised as an effective strategy for deterring wars. Seeing a nation like ours with more than twice as many aircraft carriers as any other nation would make someone think twice about starting a war. The same can be said for any nuclear weapon nation. When a nuclear-armed nation demonstrates what its long-range missiles can do, people pay attention. Don't you sometimes wonder why God doesn't employ more power projection tactics? He could command the world's attention with a grand display of power. Why doesn't he? There was a disciple of Jesus who once wondered the very same thing and asked Jesus about it. Today we consider Jesus' response in John 14. He assures us that he does give us his power.

God has made grand displays of power in the past. He has used miracles of fire, storms, and great famines to display his might over all nations. He let his glory show at the dedication of the tabernacle and temple. And when the Son of God took on human flesh, he showed his glory to the shepherds. Some of the prophets had grand visions of glory and of Jesus in all his might. But those events were few and far between. And they were often seen only by a few. Why doesn't God project his power to all the world more? It might seem like he does the opposite. Instead of showing himself to all the world in power Jesus visibly left and ascended into heaven. And it seems like he has held back from projecting his power to the world. It wasn't seen when the disciples were first persecuted. Jesus didn't portray his might to the Roman Emperors when they tortured his people. And today the spiritual warfare seems to rage on in this world without any visible power projection by God. Has our peace and protection failed us? We may at times wonder.

Why doesn't Jesus show his glorious power to everyone? Jesus told his disciples that soon he would be going, and they wouldn't see him. He was soon going to return to the Father's side. Judas, son of James, called Thaddaeus, wondered about Jesus' plan. He asked, *"But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?"* (Jn 14:22)

Jesus' response makes clear that God's presence doesn't always come with a grand display of power. It is often revealed in the smaller things. *"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."* God's presence is revealed in us through our love! His love leads us to love him back. All who love Jesus will naturally respond by obeying him. If you have anyone in your life that you love, you like to do good things for them. You don't do it because you have to. You do it out of your love for them. That's the way it is for Christians. They know God's love for them; they love God; and they live for God. That is how God's presence is seen by the world! God fills us with love so that we keep his teachings. And when this is the case Jesus promises that he and the Father will make their home in us! How is that for a power projection?

Christians may not appear as a grand projection of God's power. But that new life and obedience is the work of God who is present. When the world sees Jesus' disciples obeying his teaching, they see someone who has God with them and dwelling in them! Your fruits of faith are a sign that God is active in your life and that he is your God. It is a visible way for this world to see God's power. When you serve God as a faithful husband or wife, the world sees someone who knows God's love and loves him. When you faithfully obey Jesus' teaching to love God above all things and love your neighbor, God's power is on display. It is a small but very significant indicator of the power and presence of God.

Conversely, all who claim to love God reveal an absence of love for him when they do not obey his word. *"Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching."* A Christian ministry or teacher who speaks against God's Word is empty of the presence and power of God. That is not God's working but their own and the devils' working. They might be claiming to project the power of God by their teaching or their lives. But if they live and teach contrary to the truth of God's Word, they do not love God. They are like the ship which claims to sail for God. But Jesus says they are really flying the flag of the enemies of God.

How do we identify God's power projection to this world? It is found through his Word which is given by his Spirit. *"All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."* Once again it may not seem like a grand and powerful display. But God is present with his people. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit. He is called our "Advocate" or "Counselor." The Spirit works to bring us God's power.

And he does his work through the Word of Christ! *"All this I have spoken, ...the Holy Spirit will teach you all things... remind you of everything I have said."* You never have to doubt if the disciples of Jesus accurately recorded the correct words. The Holy Spirit did the work. He made sure they remembered the works and words of Jesus. With him accuracy is not an issue. Today we are used to security cameras showing us past events. We are accustomed to news cameras and cell phones capturing live events. There is clear evidence of what someone says and does. But far more accurate

and trustworthy is the testimony of the Holy Spirit. That is why the apostle Paul reassured us, “All Scripture is God-breathed.” (2 Tim 3) Not only did the Spirit speak through the prophets in the Old Testament. He gave the New Testament disciples the truth. Jesus refers to the Spirit as “the Spirit of truth.” The Holy Spirit is not a man that he needs to lie or might make a mistake. His Word is always good!

Jesus kept his promise to send the Holy Spirit! Before he left, Jesus instructed his disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the promised gift from the Father. He was going to project his power! The disciples waited. Ten days passed and still no sign of anything different. The city of Jerusalem started to fill up for the annual festival of weeks, a harvest festival commanded by God for the people of Israel. Luke records that the city was filled with people from all over. The disciples were gathered in a place and eagerly waiting for what God would accomplish.

The outpouring of the Spirit in power may not have been what some were expecting. He wasn't yet going to come down from heaven in bright splendor with all God's angels. He wasn't going to display his might and force all nations to bow in fear. God had a different plan. With the sound of roaring and what looked like tongues of fire the Spirit made known he was pouring out the promised gifts. The disciples were empowered to speak the Word in many languages. The people gathered from all over the Roman Empire began to hear the wonders of God spoken to them in their native language. It wasn't a miracle of healing. It wasn't a vision or appearance of Jesus. It wasn't even a sign from an angel. Yet God began to bring a real and powerful peace that day. It was the Spirit working through the power of the Word. The disciples shared the Word and offered the gift of baptism on Pentecost. And on that day three thousand believed and were added to the number of those who were saved through faith in Christ.

God's power projection brought peace to a war-torn world. Pentecost had once celebrated the ingathering of the first harvest. But it would be celebrated as the first big harvest of the New Testament Church. It was the first harvest of the Spirit bringing many people to faith in the risen Jesus. And the kingdom of God grew in a way which many did not expect. It didn't grow by force or a display of power. It grew by an outpouring of peace from Jesus. That peace was shared through his Word by the working of the Spirit.

This is how the Lord has always worked! He wasn't in the earthquake, wind, or fire when Elijah hid in a cave. But he came with a gentle whisper -the powerful Word. God didn't project his power in the people of ancient Israel through their army. Instead, he had the priest among the people carrying the ark, a fairly small box containing his Word and symbolizing his presence with his people. The message is clear. And Pentecost included the outpouring of God's gifts to grow his church. Once again it was through the Word. The Spirit works through the Word.

And today he continues to send his Word to change this world. Here are some of the words the Spirit reminded the apostle John to record. *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”* The word of Christ promises peace!

We are in a world filled with troubled hearts and with fear. You can try to project a strong, powerful stance, but it won't remove those fears or calm hearts that are troubled. There have not been a few recent shootings including the school shooting that killed nineteen children and two adults. An additional sixteen were injured. In response to the dangers our town's mayor and school district have indicated they plan to increase the security measures in the schools. That's a good thing, but it can't fully calm troubled hearts. There is no guarantee of safety when this world gives us an offer of peace. When the TV commercial offers a new drug that can fix your ailments, it always has to include disclaimers. It lists all the possible side effects of taking the drug. That's because they know they can't make any guarantees. Even the top surgeon or doctor might tell you that they have a good chance of providing you with a cure. But they can't promise the cancer will be gone forever. Even our nation's grandest displays of power with its aircraft carriers can't give us the guarantee that there will be peace. Many argue that the old way of aircraft warfare is soon going to become obsolete. They say that the hypersonic missiles under development will make every aircraft carrier vulnerable. There is no guarantee of peace even with the greatest display of power in this world.

But Christ says, *“Peace, I give you. My peace I leave with you. I do not give to you as the world gives.”* Jesus' gift of peace is guaranteed. When the Son of God declares that you are at peace with God, you know it is true. He suffered and died to win that peace. The greatest power projection began with a man hanging on a cross. It was what looked like a display of defeat and sorrow. But it was not an ordinary man on the cross. It was God's Son on display for all the world. That man, the Son of God, was pierced in the side and verified as dead. The Spirit testifies it is true.

But the same testimony is given through the Spirit that the eyewitnesses saw him alive again. And as sure as he rose from death his gift of peace is real. It is guaranteed! Not even death can take away the peace we now have in Christ! Our sins are forgiven. He rules over all things in heaven. He will raise up our dead bodies and take us to glory.

Why doesn't God show himself to the world? He does! The Spirit is victorious through the Word. Even though there are wars, rumors of more wars, shootings, cancer, and the crushing weight of our sin and the grave, we have peace from Christ. He tells us, *“My peace I give you...Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”* His peace is yours as the Spirit works through the Word.