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SERIES: Holy Ghost Stories v.1
MESSAGE: "Jesus Has Left the Building"

DATE:

Bottom Line: The Holy Spirit inside you is better than Jesus beside you.

Object Lesson: None

Message Description: Most of us know something about God. We know a little more about Jesus. But what about the Holy Spirit? Is it a ghost? Is it a force? Is it even an "it?" The Holy Spirit is a mystery for sure. In this message, we will remove some of the mystery of this mysterious part of faith. And in doing so, discover the path to a fulfilling life in an empty world.

CONNECTION – The "Holy Ghost" seems more scary than spiritual.

- A. **PERSONAL STORY:** I loved ghost stories as a kid. I think it mostly began when I went to summer camp. At camp, the counselors would tell us ghost stories on our campouts. This was before attorneys.
Favorite: Green lady floating above the dining tables... never walked by the dining hall. Still won't.
- B. **GHOSTS:** There's something about ghost stories that are one part fascinating and more parts terrifying. There's obviously a market for it, because there are dozens of shows about ghosts. For me, especially as a kid at camp, I sort of wanted to see the green lady, but I also realized even at a young age there are some things you can't un-see, too. So I just avoided the dining hall at night.
- C. **HOLY GHOST:** So it makes perfect sense that, as a kid growing up in church, when the "Holy Ghost" was mentioned, I was one part intrigued and more parts terrified. Or at a minimum nervous.

Here's how I understood it (and I bet a lot of us see it, too):

God is the **judging** one.

God is the **judging** one.

Jesus is the **loving** one.

God is the **judging** one.

Jesus is the **loving** one.

And the **Holy Ghost** is the...

Well, what is this Holy Ghost?

Myths: It's just a feeling. Or an emotion. Or voodoo. Or a literal green lady-like ghost.

God is the **judging** one.
Jesus is the **loving** one.
And the **Holy Ghost** is the **emotions** one.

God is the **judging** one.
Jesus is the **loving** one.
And the **Holy Ghost** is the **voodoo** one.

God is the **judging** one.
Jesus is the **loving** one.
And the **Holy Ghost** is the **green lady'ish** one.

Or maybe just not as important. Kind of the forgotten one.

God is the **judging** one.
Jesus is the **loving** one.
And the **Holy Ghost** is the **mysterious** one.

- D. **NOT SURE ABOUT THIS GHOST:** One thing I knew for sure, it was mysterious. We didn't really talk about it too much, which unfortunately only added to the mystery. But it always felt a bit unnerving.

I would hear the "Holy Ghost" lives inside of you. And the adults felt comforted by this news! And I'm like "listen, I've seen poltergeist! And I've seen pictures of tapeworms. Nothing living inside of you is helpful! That's not gonna be good for anyone. That's not okay...at all."

TRANSITION: *We don't talk about the Holy Spirit as much as we probably should. Especially considering that Jesus made a pretty big deal of this "Holy Ghost."*

TENSION – As a Disciple, you were assured with Jesus beside you, but afraid when Jesus is away from you

- A. **TENSION** – Let's pretend we are disciples...

PICTURE OF LAST SUPPER

- B. **IMAGINE BEING A DISCIPLE:** I know it's hard to imagine, but for a moment, pretend you are a fisherman. Or maybe you connect better with the tax collector (that's a church joke)... Dreams long gone... You're like a lantern without a light. But you hear there is a Rabbi unlike any other... One day he walks by and offers you the opportunity of your lifetime – to be a disciple. Huge deal... And your light turns on! For the next three years, you watch and are amazing at his teachings, his miracles, how he treats people...

You won't say it out loud, but you begin to wonder if Jesus could just be the Messiah. The one your people have waited so very long to see.

Your people have spent thousands of years waiting and looking, waiting and looking, and waiting and looking some more. It's impossible to overstate the significance of your emotions. Being Jewish, you know all the prophecy. But then God went silent for 400 years and **your ancestors wondered if he had abandoned them.**

And now, you think he might be in your midst. And you are one of his closest followers. It's almost too good to be true. It's almost too good to believe. Is he finally here?

LOTS TO FEAR: There is still a lot to be afraid of. Rome is still in charge... Taxes are oppressive. But if Jesus is actually the long awaited Messiah, then it's only a matter of time before the overthrow begins.

When Jesus is with you, you feel much better. Of course, when Jesus is away from you, you feel more afraid. Lantern off, then on... Nobody is blaming you. You feel (Opposite of the fruit of the spirit) ignored by some. Hated at times by others. Sad and depressed. Troubled. Of course, these feelings drive you to be more aloof and even rude at times. Other times, selfish and self-seeking. When Jesus is with you, things seem right with the world and in your world. But when he is away, you sense a lack of what you want the most – peace, hope, love, and joy.

THEN JESUS DIES: Lantern off. The day after you are sitting with Jesus at the Passover feast in this upper room, he is arrested and crucified. Which, btw, is *not* Messiah behavior. The long awaited savior doesn't die by the hands of the Romans. He conquers the Romans! He establishes your nation over them! He puts YOU over them, because after all, you are one of his closest guys.

But now he is dead, and you are in hiding, because the very people who killed Jesus are looking for you, too.

REPEATING THE PATTERN: It's the same pattern over and over.

You're **assured** with Jesus beside you,
but **afraid** when Jesus is away from you.

RESSURECTION: And then the **impossible.** It was prophesied, but you didn't see it coming. You weren't at the tomb counting down from ten on that fateful Sunday morning. In the middle of your fear Jesus draws near. He is back from the grave. You touch his nail scared hands and feet. You touch his sword-pierced side. And you are bolder than ever! Light is brighter than ever!

You are more assured than ever...

After the resurrection, you are
more **assured** than ever!

You're more bold, more confident, more sure of the pending Jesus take-over movement!

TRANSITION: *Then he tells you something that must have seemed completely insane:*

John 16:7 (NIV)

“It is for **your** good that I am going **away**.”

You and your friends are prepped and ready for the Messiah takeover. You are just waiting for Jesus to pull back his robes and exposed the giant “M” on his chest. It’s on. Rome is about to go down, and you are about to be the guy!

The nation thought God had abandoned them, and now, Jesus is saying it will be better if he abandons you!

TRUTH – The Holy Spirit is a person, who relates to us in person, and who indwells us when we personally accept Jesus

- A. **TRUTH – CRAZY, RIGHT?** I mean, can you imagine. You’ve been waiting your entire life... for the Messiah, and not only is he here, he was crucified and is not back to life. I mean, that’s the guy you follow! That’s the guy *everyone* will follow.
- B. **UPPER ROOM:** The night before Jesus was crucified..., he warned the Disciples that he would need to leave them. Of course, they didn’t fully understand (what’s new).

John 14 New International Version (NIV)

¹ “Do not let your **hearts** be troubled. You believe in God; **believe** also in me. ² My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am **going there** to prepare a place for you?

³ And if I **go** and prepare a place for you, I will **come back** and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. ⁴ You know the way to the place where I am going.”

- The Disciples collectively scratched their heads. This seemed a bit outlandish, even for Jesus.

⁵ Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are **going**, so how can we know the way?”

- Where we get the phrase, “doubting Thomas.”

¹² Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even **greater** things than these, because I am **going** to the Father.

- Again with the “going away” stuff.
- Greater than Jesus? That should have knocked them to their backs.

¹⁵ “If you love me, keep my commands. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you **another advocate** to **help** you and **be with** you forever— ¹⁷ the **Spirit** of truth.

- Disciples must be thinking, “How about YOU be with us forever. Because when you are with us, we feel much better. We don’t want ‘another’ advocate...we are good with you, Jesus!”

²⁶ 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.

- This “Holy Spirit” will be your guide. Your helper. Your support.

²⁷ 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.

- Peace. Isn't that what we really want? Financial peace. Relational peace. Spiritual peace. Career peace.
- It's what the Disciples wanted, too. And they knew that it was available with Jesus by their side. But they must be thinking, “Don't leave us with peace. YOU are the peace.”

How can you leave us with peace if you are the peace?

- C. **A LITTLE WHILE LATER:** Jesus taught about some other things, then he circled back around to all this “leave” stuff:

John 16:7 New International Version (NIV)

⁷ But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

- Again...how is this even remotely possible? It's in my “good” for Jesus to stay, right?

- D. **BETTER THAN JESUS BY YOUR SIDE?** Can you imagine?

What could be better than Jesus at your side?

Or to ask it another way:

What could be better than Jesus at your side?
Who could be better than Jesus at your side?

Is an “advocate” better than Jesus?

- E. **THE HOLY SPIRIT IS BETTER:** This “Advocate”, or as he is also called, “counselor,” is the Holy Ghost, or Holy Spirit as he is better called.

The Holy Spirit

What is the Holy Spirit? I'm not going to attempt to explain God. Parents bring little kids to me all the time with unanswerable questions, and this should be one of them. I realized how ludicrous it would be for anyone to say they were going to explain the Holy Spirit. The Bible says we cannot fully understand God, and I am certainly not the exception to that rule. But here is what I can explain:

The Holy Spirit is a person, who relates to us in person.

He does things to us and for us, things that we normally associate with personal activity. He teaches us. He comforts us. He guides us. He encourages us.

- The HS indwells us when we receive God's gift of forgiveness through the sacrifice of Jesus for our sin.

The Holy Spirit
is a person, who relates
to us in person,
and who indwells us when we
personally accept Jesus.

Which is why we often wonder if he is a force, or emotion, or our conscious. It is the Holy Spirit who makes you new. Who gives you life. Who makes you alive.

TRANSITION: *When we begin to understand a little more about the Holy Spirit, we can begin to understand why Jesus was so adamant that he leaves.*

APPLICATION – The Holy Spirit inside you is better than Jesus beside you

- A. **BACK TO OUR IMAGINATION:** So Jesus ascends back to heaven, and you and the other Disciples wait. It's feels like the light in your lantern is back off. Jesus Christ, the one you have spent the last three years following, the one you have dedicated your life to, just ascended to heaven. You saw it with your own eyes. You and the people who have become as close as your own family are all gathered in Jerusalem in someone's house, waiting. You know that something is coming because Jesus told you about it. He said to wait, but you don't know exactly what (or in this case, who) you are waiting for. Maybe you are getting tired of wondering how many more days before something (what, you have no idea) happens.

Suddenly, a sound fills the whole house. And something dramatic seems to enter the room and touch each of you individually. And then it happens.

Acts 2:4 New International Version (NIV)

⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit...

The Holy Spirit comes upon them and they are indwelled.

Lantern back on!

Not just you and the Disciples, either. But everyone who put his or her faith in Jesus was indwelled by the Holy Spirit.

- B. **WHY JESUS LEFT:** And this is why Jesus left. When Jesus was beside people, they experienced some peace, but when he was away... well, we all know what happened. Jesus knew he had to go so they could experience more. He had done his job – he had paid for your sin and conquered death. Now, it was the Holy Spirits turn.

Here's why:

The Holy Spirit **inside** you is better than Jesus **beside** you.

When you put your faith in Jesus, you are made new from the inside out by the Spirit of God. When the Holy Spirit regenerates us, He not only acts upon us and in us in a way that changes the disposition of our souls; He comes and dwells within us.

- C. **POWER IN YOU:** As a Jesus follower, we are a living temple of the Holy Spirit of God. Inside you lives the counselor, guide, giver of life, the advocate, and the helper. The very Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead lives in you.

The **same** Spirit that brought Jesus to **life** is **alive** in you.

It really is an astounding truth that the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you.

And that very Spirit can resurrect your life, too.

- D. **LIVE IN LIGHT OF THE SPIRIT:** Start living like the spirit is alive in you.

It's time for us to **live** as if the Holy Spirit is **alive** in us.

It's time for us to start listening to that quiet voice of the HS. It's time for us to start believing we have all that we need. It's time for us as Christians to begin finding the fruit of the Spirit from the Spirit, not from temporary solutions.

TRANSITION: It's hard to fathom something being better than Jesus beside us, but Jesus believed him leaving was way better than him staying.

LANDING – Personal story of me needing a reminder that the Holy Spirit is alive in me, too.

- A. **PERSONAL CONCLUSION:** Can I get real with you for a second? Several years ago I wasn't doing too great. I was struggling. I was striving for worth, value, ... Or to say it another way, I was struggling to find peace, patience, kindness... I was talking with my dad one day expressing how I was feeling. He listened patiently for a long time (I'm an external processor). After I was finished, he looked at me and said something so basic, yet so profound:

"You already **have** what you **need**, you just don't **know** it."

- B. **GOD TO YOU:** I think that is exactly what God would love for you to hear today, too. **That story is in you...you just need to allow his power to be experienced by you.**

PRAYER