HUDSON'S HOPE CHAPEL

The Church's Most Important Guest

June 14, 2026 · Series: Special Service · Luke Hughes-Bunger

Main Passage: John 14:15-27 (ESV)

Big Idea: Christ shepherds His church through the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit.

Introduction

Most of us know the feeling of walking into a classroom and seeing a substitute teacher at the front of the room. Before the lesson even begins, the room starts asking questions. Will today be normal? Does this person know the plan? Is someone still leading?

That simple picture gives us a doorway into this passage. Over the next few weeks, Hudson's Hope Chapel will hear from guest preachers and visiting pastors. Some voices will be familiar. Some will be less familiar. Their personalities, stories, rhythms, and ways of explaining Scripture will differ.

That is good for a church. It reminds us that Christ gives gifts to the wider body, not only to one congregation or one preacher. Faithful preaching matters deeply, but the church has never finally rested on a preacher's personality or a familiar voice in the pulpit.

The deeper question is not, "Who is preaching this week?"

The deeper question is, "Who is leading the church?"

John 14 meets us there. Jesus is speaking to His disciples on the night before the cross. He has told them that He is going away. They have followed Him, heard Him teach, watched Him heal, and seen His authority. Now their world is about to change in a way they can hardly understand.

Into that fear, Jesus gives one of the most tender promises in the passage: "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:18).

John 14 teaches us that Christ has not abandoned His church. He sends the Holy Spirit, who dwells with His people, teaches them through Christ's Word, and ministers Christ's peace to troubled hearts.

Point 1: Christ Has Not Left His Church

In John 14:16-18, Jesus promises "another Helper" who will be with His people forever.

That word "Helper" carries the idea of one who comes alongside to strengthen, comfort, teach, advocate, and help. Jesus is not promising a vague religious feeling or a spiritual atmosphere. He is promising the personal presence of God with His people by the Holy Spirit.

This matters because the disciples are afraid of being left alone. They cannot imagine life without Jesus' visible presence. They are troubled because their Master is going away, and they do not know what the future will look like.

Jesus does not tell them to keep a good memory of Him and do their best. He does not leave them with a religious institution and no living presence. He says, "I will not leave you as orphans."

His departure does not mean abandonment. His ascension does not mean absence in the way they fear. The Son will ask the Father, and the Father will send the Spirit in the Son's name.

So the church is not fatherless. The church is not abandoned. The church is not trying to keep a dead teacher's memory alive. The living Christ is present with His people by the Holy Spirit.

This connects closely with what we have been hearing in Hebrews. Hebrews has shown us that Jesus is our greater High Priest. He speaks a better word. He opens the way into God's presence. He intercedes for His people. He is the great Shepherd of the sheep. He is the same yesterday and today and forever.

John 14 adds this comfort: the exalted Christ has not left His people alone. He shepherds His church by sending the Holy Spirit to dwell with us.

That is not only a doctrine for church life in general. It is a comfort for real people in real weeks. When circumstances change, Christ has not changed. When leaders travel, rhythms shift, or familiar patterns feel different, Christ has not stepped away. When your own life feels unsettled, your prayers feel thin, or the future feels unclear, Christ has not left you as an orphan.

The Holy Spirit is not God's way of making the Christian life more mysterious. He is God's way of assuring us that Christ has not left us alone.

Point 2: Christ Still Speaks to His Church

In John 14:25-26, Jesus explains how the Spirit will help His people:

"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."

This is one of the places where we need to be clear about the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Many people hear "the Spirit" and immediately think of feelings, impressions, impulses, or private messages from God. Scripture does teach that the Spirit comforts, convicts, gives assurance, produces fruit, and helps us pray. But in this passage, Jesus puts the emphasis somewhere very specific.

The Spirit teaches and brings Christ's words to remembrance.

First, that promise had a particular meaning for the apostles. They had walked with Jesus. They had heard Him teach. They had seen His works. After His death, resurrection, and ascension, the Holy Spirit would enable them to remember, understand, and faithfully bear witness to Christ.

This is one reason we can trust the apostolic witness in the New Testament. The Gospels and apostolic teaching are not the disciples doing their best to preserve vague memories about Jesus. Christ promised that the Spirit would teach them and bring His words to remembrance.

There is also ongoing pastoral comfort here for the whole church. The Spirit continues to bring Christ's words to bear on Christ's people. He opens the Scriptures to us. He makes the gospel clear. He convicts us where we excuse sin. He comforts us where we are crushed by guilt. He steadies us where fear is louder than truth.

So we should say carefully what this does not mean.

It does not mean new revelation equal to Scripture. It does not mean private impressions that outrank Scripture. It does not mean using "God told me" as a shortcut around wisdom, counsel, humility, or the plain teaching of the Bible. It does not mean following our feelings as if every strong emotion were the voice of God.

It does mean the Spirit makes Christ known through Christ's Word. He takes the truth of Scripture and presses it into the real places of fear, grief, sin, decision, obedience, and hope.

This is wonderfully freeing. We do not need to hunt for hidden messages from God in every coincidence. We do not need to live as though guidance depends on perfectly decoding our inner impressions. We do not need to panic because we do not feel spiritually impressive.

Open the Word. Listen to Christ. Pray for the Spirit's help. Gather with the church. Receive faithful preaching. Ask for wise counsel. Obey what is clear.

The Spirit does not lead us away from Christ's Word to something deeper. He leads us deeper into Christ through His Word.

This also shapes how we listen to preaching, especially when the voice in the pulpit is different from what we are used to. The first question is not, "Did this sound familiar?" The better question is, "Was Christ made known? Was the Word opened? Were we called to trust, love, and obey the Lord Jesus?"

Christ still speaks to His church by His Spirit through His Word.

Point 3: Christ Still Shepherds His Church

In John 14:27, Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you."

We should feel where that promise sits. Jesus gives peace on the night before the cross. That means His peace is not the removal of all trouble. It is not the promise that circumstances will become easy. It is not fragile optimism or a naturally calm personality.

Jesus gives peace while the storm is still coming.

The world can give certain kinds of peace. It can give distraction, temporary comfort, pleasant circumstances, a sense of control, a quiet afternoon, a paid bill, a good medical report, or a conflict that finally settles down. We can be thankful for ordinary mercies like that.

But Jesus gives a deeper peace.

He gives peace with God through His own blood. He gives peace that can look honestly at sin and say, "Christ has paid for it." He gives peace that can look honestly at suffering and say, "Christ is with me." He gives peace that can look honestly at death and say, "Christ is risen."

He also gives peace to His church in seasons of weakness, change, and ordinary need. The church's future does not rest on personality, novelty, perfect circumstances, or everything feeling the way we prefer. It rests on Christ.

The Holy Spirit applies that peace to us. He turns our eyes back to Christ when fear turns us inward. He brings Christ's words to mind when circumstances shout louder than Scripture. He steadies the church under the voice of Christ.

This does not mean we pretend our troubled feelings are not real. Jesus is speaking precisely because His disciples are troubled. He does not shame them for being afraid. He gives them His Word and His peace.

So we bring our feelings under Christ's Word. We do not deny them, but we do not let them have the final word. Christ has the final word.

When you feel unsettled, start with these questions:

- What has Christ said?
- What has He promised?
- What has He commanded?
- What does His Word make clear?

Then ask the Spirit to bring that Word to bear on you.

Christ still shepherds His church, and He does it by His Spirit, through His Word, with His peace.

Application and Conclusion

John 14 gives us steady comfort for the weeks ahead and for the ordinary Christian life.

Christ has not left His church. Christ still speaks to His church. Christ still shepherds His church.

So do not reduce the Holy Spirit to a feeling. Do not reduce church life to the preacher's personality. Do not reduce peace to easy circumstances.

Receive the comfort Jesus gives. Open the Word with expectation. Pray for the Spirit's help. Come ready to hear Christ's Word, even through a different servant and a different voice. Encourage those who preach. Listen with your Bible open and your heart prayerful.

And in your personal life, bring your fears, transitions, family burdens, church questions, and uncertain circumstances under the Word of Christ. The same Christ who died, rose, ascended, intercedes, and reigns also dwells with His people by the Spirit.

Whoever stands in the pulpit, Christ has not left His church. The Spirit is here to make Christ known through Christ's Word, and the peace Christ gives is still enough for His people.

Discussion Guide Questions

1. Why is the substitute-teacher picture a helpful doorway into John 14?
2. Why is the deeper question not "Who is preaching?" but "Who is leading the church?"
3. What does Jesus mean when He says, "I will not leave you as orphans"?
4. Why is it comforting that the Spirit is the personal presence of God with His people, not a vague religious feeling?
5. How does John 14 connect with the Hebrews theme that Jesus is our greater High Priest and great Shepherd?
6. What does it mean that the Spirit brought Christ's words to remembrance for the apostles?
7. How does the Spirit continue to bring Christ's Word to bear on the church today?
8. Why is it important to distinguish the Spirit's ministry from simply following our feelings?
9. How should this passage shape the way we listen to preaching, especially from different voices?
10. What is the difference between the peace the world gives and the peace Christ gives?
11. Where are you tempted to look for peace apart from Christ?
12. What is one practical way to become more dependent on the Spirit through the Word this week?