



Lesson 9 Spirit of Holiness

**Jesus promised His followers
three things:**

- 1. Their lives would not be easy**
- 2. They would never be alone**
- 3. In the end, all will be well**

But all is not well now and that raises the question of how...how does God get us from here to there?

How does God put things right?

The word in the Bible for putting things right is judgement. Unfortunately, many today, drawing from the concept of a judge in today's court system, understand judgement to mean nothing more than condemnation and punishment.

In contrast, in biblical times, good judges did more than condemn or punish. They worked to set things right, to restore balance, harmony and well-being. Their justice was restorative, not just punitive. The final goal of judgement was to curtail or convert all that was evil so that good would be free to run wild.

This kind of justice doesn't always happen in a satisfying way in this life. So people of faith have trusted that God can continue to set things right on the other side of the threshold of death.

God's restorative justice will have the last word with universal repentance, universal reconciliation, universal purification, universal "putting things right."

That means that everything that can be punished will be punished; it means that everything that can be restored will be restored. It means the disease will be treated and healed, not just diagnosed. It means everything will, in God's ultimate justice, not only be evaluated, it will be given new value.

Read: 1 John 3:1-3

Does that mean there will be no cost, no loss, no regret, no mourning?

This is where the so-often misused image of fire comes in. Many a hell-fire and brimstone preacher has depicted fire as an instrument of torture, but it is far better understood as an instrument of purification.

Read: 1 Corinthians 3:9-15

Paul describes God's purifying fire as one that cannot consume "gold, silver and precious stones" because in so doing, God would be destroying something good, which would render God evil.

The cleansing or refining fire of God must destroy only the "wood, hay and stubble" of hypocrisy, evil and sin.

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:20-28

This understanding of God's restorative judgement is to guide us to change the way we live before death. To encourage us to use our wealth to make others rich, not to hoard it. To inspire us to empower others, not to advance ourselves. To liberate us to give and give so that we will finish this life having given more than we have received. To be secretive about our good deeds so we can defer any return of our investment to the future.

In fact, this hope encourages us to be willing to give up this life, if necessary, for things that matter more than survival.

Read: John 14:15-18 & 25-27

If we believe in judgement – in God's great "setting things right," we won't live in fear. We'll keep standing strong with a steadfast, immovable determination and we'll keep excelling in God's good work in our world. If we believe the universe moves towards purification, justice and peace, we'll keep seeking to be pure, just and peaceable now.

If we believe God is pure light and goodness, we will keep moving toward the light each day in this life.

Then, someday, when our time comes to close our eyes in death, we will trust ourselves to the loving Light in which we will awaken, purified, beloved forever.

Until then, the Spirit leads us along in that arc, toward restoration and healing. Like a mother in childbirth, groaning with pain and anticipation, the Spirit groans within us. She will not rest until all is made whole and all is made holy and all is made well.

Life will not be easy

We will never be alone.

In the end all will be well.

That is all we know and all we need to know.

Read: Psalm 98

Engage:

What one thought or idea from today's lesson intrigued, provoked, disturbed, challenged or encouraged you?

Can you recall a time when what seemed impossible – became possible and then actual for you?

How do you respond to the idea that life's troubles are like a refining or purifying fire?

Activate:

This week, hold on to the hope that God is setting things right. Notice what effect this hope has in your inner life and outer behaviour.

Meditate:

We are going to finish today with a 5 minute "Pause" meditation.