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Matthew 12:22-28

Sculptor Spirit Series: "Spirit Security"

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Last week we asked, "What is the Holy Spirit up to in our lives?" We talked about one really good answer: renewal. The Holy Spirit is constantly bringing renewal to sinners like you and me. Every day, the Sculptor Spirit would conform you to a Christ-like cycle of death and resurrection, repentance and forgiveness, penitence and pardon. That's the Holy Spirit's work in you: renewal.

Today let's talk about a second crucial work of the Holy Spirit. Let's call this one "security" -- Spirit security!

When I think about security, a friend named Mark comes to mind. A member of my former church in New York, Mark retired early from the police department. He then embarked on a second career. Mark provided high-level, private security for many celebrity clients: movie stars, recording artists, political figures.

One time, without ever naming the client's name, Mark told me about a young, hugely-famous pop star he guarded. It was impossible to keep this celebrity safe in public situations, he said. Why? Because this superstar hated taking Mark's advice, preferring to ignore any and all security precautions. But then she would freak out whenever she found herself in a potentially-unsafe, out-of-control situation. And this happened time and again, according to Mark.

I've never had my own private security like that, have you? But if you did, would you listen to him or her?

Guess what? One of the most important things the Holy Spirit does in my life, and in yours, is security. Not like Mark

and his celebrity clients. The Holy Spirit delivers a completely different level of security. When it comes to our faith – when it comes to that fragile, tenuous, precious spiritual connection that humble, human sinners like us have with our holy, majestic God – the Holy Spirit provides security. Personalized, highest-level security. Spirit security!

See, we need all the security we can get. This world of ours is dangerous, right? We have to deal with crazy people, scary illnesses, financial jeopardy, old age, and all kinds of frightening events. But it's not just the physical, material stuff out there. There's another type of danger all around us. It's in the spiritual world in which we live.

The Bible says that spiritual warfare is a real thing, in all our lives. I know, the modern, high-tech world has a hard enough time believing in God – let alone accepting that there's a powerful, personified evil presence out there who would do us spiritual harm. We don't see the devil. We may not interact directly with the forces of evil. But they're out there. They're opposed to us, and to anything that's from God.

Ephesians 6:12 says, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

Jesus said, to some of his enemies, "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire" (John 8:44).

And there's 1 Peter 5:8. "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."

One time Jesus' enemies actually accused him of being in league with the devil. In today's Gospel lesson, he rebuts their accusation. "Why would I cast out demons if I'm on the side of the devil?" he asks. "No," Jesus declares, "I drive out demons by the Spirit of God!"

From start to finish, in his public ministry, Jesus faced constant opposition and harassment. Remember the 40 days in the wilderness, right after his baptism, and the temptations Satan threw at him there? Recall the Garden of Gethsemane, that place of severe temptation and trial, the night before he was crucified? And so many times, in between, when he was tired, worn out, or feeling embattled, Jesus turned to his heavenly Father in prayer, and relied on the Word of God for his strength.

Life in the Spirit, for Jesus, was a life of vigilance against spiritual danger, and a life of resistance against evil foes. Life in the Spirit, for us, can be nothing less. Prayer and God's Word are our best weapons. All through our lives -- with every step we take, in every situation we face -- the Spirit of God is present, active, supporting, encouraging, guarding, nudging us to prayer and the Word of God.

What's the Holy Spirit up to in your life? Today's answer? Spirit security!

You see, Satan's goal is simple. He wants to pull you away from faith in Jesus Christ. He'll try to get you to doubt God's Word, forget God's promises, neglect your prayer life and your spiritual health. The devil will lie, deceive, distract, tempt, trick, cheat, and try anything to keep you from believing in Jesus Christ for your salvation. Because the devil knows that nothing in this world can ever separate you from God's love for you in Christ Jesus. The devil knows that Jesus alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The devil

knows that there is no other name under heaven, other than Jesus, by which you are saved. So he wants to cut you off, any way he can, from Jesus.

And what does the Spirit do? What is Spirit security all about? Keeping us safe, by keeping us connected to Jesus!

Jesus said it (John 14:26): “The Counselor, 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.”

And (John 15:26): “When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.”

The Holy Spirit testifies to us of Jesus, and reminds us of Jesus’ words. “The Spirit gives life,” Jesus said (John 6:63), “The flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.”

So life in the Spirit, for the Christian, just like for Jesus, is a constant cycle of vigilance and resistance. The Holy Spirit is trying to increase your daily dependence on prayer and the Word of God. Just like for Jesus, these are our best weapons in the fight against temptation, against Satan’s attacks. Don’t be like that pop star celebrity, who refused to listen to my friend Mark. Let Spirit security keep you safe. Let Spirit security keep you connected to Jesus, now and forever, through daily prayer and the Word of God. Amen.