

Glorious Absence

'I tell you the truth: it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go I will send Him to you...When He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth' (JN 16: 7, 13).

Jesus must decrease in order for the Spirit to increase. Certainly, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Son—no competition there! But Jesus chooses to forego His bodily presence with us in order to endow us with His living, unseen presence--the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit. Through the Spirit at work in us, Jesus claims that He will accomplish bigger and better things than His own rather impressive ministry on earth.

'I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in Me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in My Name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask Me for anything in My Name and I will do it' (JN 14: 12-14). Ascension reminds us: Jesus must leave earth in order to make us great. Glory overcomes grief, the pain of change, when we submit our losses to the Spirit who overtakes us and empowers us to do what we would not do in the presence of the more powerful one.

Jesus is our model; the servant is not greater than his master. And every servant of His must forego the tendency to so deify our leaders that we fail to see how Jesus is calling us to become more—to do what He chooses to do through us in the absence of the one to whom we may tend to defer on the basis that (s)he has power we do not. Pentecost levels that ground. The Spirit is an equal opportunity employer.

Pentecost reminds us that He wants to do mighty things through us. And however mighty and vital each of us is to His Kingdom come on earth, Pentecost insists that we not congratulate ourselves too much. Our bodily presence will fade out too; mortality reminds us that we are expendable and must always quicken others, especially younger ones, to take their places on the team.

I just returned from France where one of my best friends and colleagues—Werner Loerschter--just handed off nearly 25 years of leadership of Living Waters in that country. What a guy! What fruit! All things considered, France has represented our work better than any other nation, significantly due to Werner and his wife Charlotte's leadership. In the Spirit of Ascension and Pentecost, they labored for over five years to identify and disciple a younger couple to take over the work.

Last weekend in Lyon France, together with Living Waters leaders from around the French-speaking world, I had the privilege of presiding over this handover. It was glorious. And not without a little grief. I love this couple more deeply than I can express, know the new couple only slightly, and feel the loss of a season rich with the splendor of the kingdom. Yet I know that my friends must

decrease in order for the Spirit in their land to increase; new wells must be dug by new people in new ways. Humbling. Hard. Splendid: the rhythm of the Kingdom.

Next year will be the 40-year anniversary of Desert Stream Ministries—40 years of me at the helm. Lord, have mercy. In Werner and Charlotte's noble reflection, I catch a glimpse of my own mortality and pray for clarity as to who will receive the baton from me. Pray for me to face this Pentecost bravely, with expectancy. May none of us grip what God has entrusted to us so tightly that we fail to release others into their full measures. May we welcome the eclipse of our labors by Jesus' glorious presence in those who follow us. Bon courage!

Please take time to watch our new video and become '[Chaste Together](#).'