

“What you’re seeing here is relationship without any overlay of power. We don’t need power over the other because we are always looking out for the best. Hierarchy would make no sense among us.”

This quote from William P. Young’s book “The Shack” comes from the lips of Sarayu, the Holy Spirit. She is describing her relationship to the Father and Jesus within the Trinity. And while this book got a lot of criticism, primary for portraying God the Father as a black woman, it held a lot of deep insights as well. As I read it long ago, I was most enamored with this character, Sarayu, portrayed as a young Asian woman embodying the Holy Spirit. I was fascinated because I had always had a hard time picturing the Holy Spirit, and as a visual person, this made it hard to relate. Was the Holy Spirit subordinate to the Father and Son? Was the Holy Spirit embodied beyond a dove or a flame of fire? Was the Holy Spirit conscious, a person, or just an “it”?

And as I read more and more about the Holy Spirit, I began to develop an image which was similar though not the same as Sarayu. I pictured a sparkling mist that you could only see out of the corner of your eye. I would later be introduced to a very different image (check out tomorrow’s video blog for more on this), but for now, that would have to do. And as I read about the Holy Spirit’s work, in both the Old and the New Testaments much to my surprise, this image seemed to fit quite well. Yesterday we talked about the Spirit’s role in creation. But He was also present in those who made the items for the temple (Ex. 31), judges and kings who ruled in God’s name (see the whole book of Judges), and prophets who spoke God’s words (2 Sam. 23). She was present in Jesus’ ministry and then came Pentecost which we celebrate this coming Sunday.

And in it all, this hard-to-see mist, empowering people without relating to them, seemed to fit. We don’t see conversations with the Spirit as we do with the Father and the Son. We don’t see the Spirit commanding or directing as we do with the other Two. Instead we see Him empowering people, reminding people, and encouraging people in their mission.

So while I so often saw the Spirit as subservient to the other Two, this is not the case. While the quote is from a book of fiction, I think it speaks truth. Hierarchy makes no sense in the Trinity. To say the Spirit is less than the Father is to say that God’s empowerment is less than His creation of us. It doesn’t make sense. God is at work in this world, and He presents Himself to us in three distinct ways: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. All three are God, and all three are equally important. What would have come of us without the Spirit’s role in creation? Or Her empowering of people to carry out God’s mission, or His direction to the prophets?

I would encourage you to get a good concordance and look up all the verses that specifically mention the Holy Spirit. Read them, and then come up with your own image for Her. And as you do, ask how He has been empowering you for God’s mission throughout your life.

Questions to ponder:

Obviously, what do you picture when you picture the Holy Spirit?

What is the Spirit’s role in God’s mission, separate (or at least different) from the Father and the Son?

Pray that you might be sensitive to the work of the Spirit in you this week.