

## **“If I were preaching from this text . . .”**

*An Ashes to Fire* Preaching Resource

by Bob Broadbooks

*Ashes to Fire – Sunday 12*

May 29, 2011 – Easter 6

John 14:15-21

### **CHECK THE BOX**

Robert Morgan tells about a seed company that offers a special deal in their catalog. There’s a statement like this on their order form: “Check this box if you are willing to receive something of equal or greater value if what you order is unavailable” If they can’t send you exactly what you order, with your permission, they will send you something of equal value or something even better. All you have to do is check the box. Now not everyone is comfortable with such an offer. If they can’t have exactly what they think they want, they don’t want anything the company offers. But there is something exciting about being able to say, “Surprise me. Send me something better if you don’t have what I think I want.”

And our God works like that. Sometimes in our praying we demand something from God. We want Him to heal our ache or illness, or give us a bigger house, or make sure we have a certain amount of money upon which to retire. I think He is pleased when we are willing to just “check the box” and say, “Lord if I can’t have what I think I want, just send me something of equal or greater value. You know what is best.” I think God smiles when we get to that point of totally trusting Him.

I'm not sure the disciples were at that point in our passage. Jesus was trying to prepare them for His departure. He knew they were going to miss Him. He could anticipate they were going to feel like orphans—parentless, homeless, loveless, abandoned, unprotected and lonely. So He said, “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you” (vs. 18). They couldn't see it at the time but Jesus had something else in mind. He knew of something of equal or greater value.

He knew that he couldn't stay forever. He knew that He couldn't stay in this human body and continue to meet the needs of all the human beings to be born in subsequent centuries. He had a plan that was of equal and greater value. In verses 16 to 17a He says, “And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth”. The disciples could not have anticipated this. They wouldn't have known to pray for this. All they knew is that they were going to have serious separation and abandonment anxieties without Jesus living with them. But Jesus had a better idea. He would send His Holy Spirit to be with them every moment of every day.

And His plan was even greater when He explained that His Spirit wouldn't just be WITH them, but His Spirit would be IN them. Verse 17b reads, “The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you.” He adds emphasis by saying it again in verse 20, “On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.”

Jesus carefully chose His words. He said that His Spirit would act as a “counselor” to the disciples. That word speaks of help and guidance. The word counselor is understood in three ways. A counselor is:

1. Someone who gives advice about your problems—like an advisor or consultant.
2. Someone who has supervisory duties and gives direction—like a summer camp counselor.
3. Someone who pleads cases in court--like a lawyer or counselor-at-law.

All you must do is “check the box” as you ask for help from the Lord. You have the Holy Spirit on retainer. Jesus may not give you exactly what you think you need, but He has One who will be your consultant for sticky problems, your supervisor when you need directions, and your lawyer when the Enemy of your soul wants to imprison your life. The typical orphan only knows to ask for a parent but Jesus offers something of far greater value—the Counselor—the Spirit of truth.

The saints of the ages have learned to “check the box.” Do you remember Job? He had lost everything of value. His children died. His vast houses and possessions vanished. His health deteriorated dramatically. But yet he was able to say, “Though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him” (Job 13:15). He was saying, “God, you can go ahead and kill me if you want to. I am still going to trust you!” What was Job doing? He was “checking the box”. He was saying, “Lord, if you can’t give me what I am asking for, then just send me something of equal or greater value.”

The Apostle Paul struggled with some sort of problem he referred to as his “thorn in the flesh.” Some think it was a physical problem, perhaps poor eyesight. Three times he pleaded with the Lord to remove it from his life. But finally Paul had to just “check the

box.” He decided that God knew best and whatever He sent would be of greater value. And God said to Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” So Paul said, “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me” (II Cor. 12:7-10).

And Jesus, Himself, “checked the box” in the Garden of Gethsemane. Agonizing over his impending death, he prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as You will” (Matt. 26:39). And the Father, even though it was painful for both Him and His Son, sent not what Jesus asked for but what was of greater value to the Kingdom of God.

And I was thinking about you. Are you struggling with some issue? Perhaps you have even become a little bit demanding; requiring God to do what you want. Would you pray about “checking the box” today? Why don’t you just relax and admit your inability to see the whole picture. Let Him figure out the best way to send you something of equal or greater value.

I would suggest that if you will “check the box,” you will begin to see God work outside the box in ways you could never have imagined!