

May 17, 2020

Sixth Sunday of Easter

Year A

Acts 17:22-31

Psalm 66:8-20

1Peter 3:13:22

John 14:15-21

PRAYER OF ILLIMINATION

Come Holy Spirit, our helper and advocate: open our hearts and minds this day, entice us with your presence. spark us with a word of life— a message that we may share with others as we seek to live Christ's love in the world. All this we ask in the name of God, who creates, redeems, and sustains us. Amen.

John 14:15-21

15”If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

16And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever.

17This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

18”I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you.

19In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live.

20On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

21They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

“The Promise of the Holy Spirit”

In this part of John’s Gospel, we go back to the night of Jesus’ final meal. Jesus is in his last teaching session providing them the needed guidelines for life after the cross. Here, Jesus tells them of another advocate, ‘the Spirit of truth’ which they already know. Jesus says, “You know him because he abides with you and he will be in you.” What is it that the disciples need to hear from Jesus about the purpose of the Holy Spirit in this moment? We need to find a meaningful understanding of what difference the Holy Spirit actually makes for our lives.

In verse 12 Jesus tells the disciples; “Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will do the work that I do and in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.” Jesus first describes the Holy Spirit as ‘another advocate’. If the Holy Spirit is another Advocate then that means there has been an Advocate already, Jesus. To have seen Jesus at work is to anticipate the work of the Holy Spirit. For the disciples, Jesus knows that they will need the Holy Spirit to be able to do great works in teaching and proclaiming the Word.

Jesus knows that the disciples must be feeling anxious. It’s a normal reaction to uncertainly they were encountering that evening. Jesus has made it clear that his days are numbered, that his time of departure is at hand, and so he makes very effort to prepare them and affirm them, so that they will be ready.

During this pandemic, haven’t we all felt anxious or are feeling anxious at one time or another? I know I have. It’s been kind of a roller coaster for

me. There are times when I think I am okay, then there are other times that I just can't get myself motivated to do anything. I know from experience that when I can't do anything, that my brain is on overload. The overload is stressing about what is going to be the normal for us when they reopen our state. What will be different? Will anything be the same? Or is nothing to change? I am sure that the disciples were probably thinking the same thing.

Jesus wants to put the disciples at ease. He wants them to understand that he is not going to abandon them. That he is not going to leave them orphaned. During this time of the pandemic have you felt like an orphan? Alone and no one to care for you? Away from family and friends. The disciples felt that Jesus was leaving them, and it left them feeling empty and afraid. They have grown to love him and he them. He was their friend, their brother, and their Lord. But Jesus wanted to reassure them that they would not be alone, that he was leaving them the Holy Spirit. He was preparing them for the coming of this Spirit.

In Karoline Lewis book, "Unfettered Spirit: Spiritual Gifts for the New Great Awakening" she wrote: As helper, the Spirit empowers members of the body of Christ to serve and care for their neighbors. As comforter the Spirit comes alongside us, bringing hope to the hopeless and comfort to the grieving and suffering in our midst. In this idea of the Spirit serving as advocate, we see the Spirit giving witness to Jesus, putting forward his case to humanity. The image of counselor speaks of one who offers so many possibilities for us to engage one another in Jesus' healing presence. (pg. 28)

We can take comfort in the promise that we are not alone. Even as I sit here in my apartment lone writing this, I know I am not alone. By the Spirit Jesus is here with me. He is in my heart and is everything that I am. Because

of the Holy Spirit I can rest assure that wherever I am, whatever I do He will be with me always. So, when I am feeling alone and not sure of myself, I just turn my thoughts to Jesus and talk to him as if he were right here with me.

Easter Sunday when we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, it doesn't end there. These last weeks during the Eastertide promises that the presence and power of Jesus will extend beyond the empty tomb, we begin to see that Jesus is with the disciples teaching them of how to go on after he is gone. He is preparing them to receive the advocate that will help them to continue Jesus' work. As we approach Pentecost Sunday, we continue to see Jesus with the disciples, but we don't have that privilege, we don't get to see Jesus like the disciples do. Instead we have learned to believe in Jesus because of the works the disciples did.

Jesus is with us forever, whatever we do, wherever we go he is always with us by way of the Advocate, the Holy Spirit. We never have to worry about being left orphaned. Through the Holy Spirit we are always able to be in communion with our Heavenly Father through Jesus Christ. By way of the Holy Spirit, Jesus comes to us as a Comforter, as our Counselor and as our Helper.

In verse 15, Jesus speaks of keeping his commandments. Those who keep the commandments of Jesus demonstrate their love for Jesus and God. It is the obedience to the commandments that show one abides in Jesus. The question is, what are these commandments that Jesus speaks of?

So, what are these commandments that we are suppose to obey? The commandment to love one another as Jesus has loved. By living out this command we demonstrate that we are abiding in the Spirit.

We need to continue the disciples work by constantly spreading the word of Jesus' love for all. We are the disciples of Jesus and we can continue his work through our church. By loving one another and sharing our gifts from the Holy Spirit we can make an impact on our community. We can show the love that Jesus has for us by loving our community and helping wherever and whatever is needed. It may cause us to get out of our comfort zone, as it did for the disciples. But I know that with Jesus as our guide, he will help us.

As we continue to help in the community, let us be thankful to God for what we have, who we are, and for what we are about. With God our Creator, Jesus our Redeemer, and the Spirit that lives in us there is nothing that we can't do.

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEEK

Daily Feast, Feasting on the Word, Year A

John 14:15-21

Reflection

What if we were to recognize that Christ is truly present among us when we keep his commandments to love and serve one another?

Look around you in your community – your church community as well as the greater community in which you live and serve – and see where you can discern that outline around the picture of Jesus on the move. See wherein the familiar life of the group of people, you can discern the presence of the Spirit of truth.

Response

Which of the images of Jesus pictured here is most popular and known to your congregation?

Which of these images is less the object of your focus and response?

CLOSING PRAYER

We thank you Lord for all you have given us. We thank you for your creation. You give a home and food to sustain us. We thank you for the sun and moon, for the stars at night. We thank you for the rain and wind.

Lord, we ask that you place a healing hand on those who are sick with the Covid 19 disease, and for all who are suffering illness or injury. Give those suffering from pain the strength to endure and comfort those who are grieving. Watch over your children in Kenya and all around the world.

We ask that you give our leaders of our government and all governments wisdom and strength to lead this country and all countries to help everyone not just those who are wealthy. Show them your love and mercy that they will show that love to all not just the privileged.

We pray for all those who work in the medical field, for firemen and police, for all essential workers. We ask that you keep them safe while they work to keep us safe by allowing us to stay home.

We pray this in your Son's name who taught us to pray; Our Father who art in heaven...

In Christ's Name,

Pastor Karen

