

Preacher: Pastor Twyla

Scripture: John 14:15-21

The Promise of the Holy Spirit: ¹⁵ “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. ¹⁷ This 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. ¹⁹ In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹ They 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.”

One Sunday after church, a Mom asked her very young daughter what the lesson was about. The daughter answered, "Don't be scared, you'll get your quilt." Needless to say, the Mom was perplexed.

Later in the day, the pastor stopped by for tea and the Mom asked him what that morning's Sunday school lesson was about. He said "Be not afraid, thy comforter is coming."

In today's scripture text we find Jesus talking to his disciples, once again, about his impending death. But this time, since the disciples still did not understand, Jesus revealed more of **God's plans for them** in the future. Jesus sensed the disciples' growing anxiety, confusion and frustration with all of his talk about leaving them. So, he tries to comfort them by telling them God will send a Comforter, a Counselor, the Spirit of Truth, who will be with them forever after he is gone.

The Greek word for the Spirit that Jesus spoke is *parakletos*. I am telling you this because the word *parakletos* is a word that cannot be translated using merely one word. When we examine this word, we discover the richness and power of the Spirit that Jesus was talking about. The Greek word *parakletos* is used to describe someone who is “called in,” and includes the reason why the person is called in.

The word was used in every day conversation at that time to describe a person **called in** to be an advocate for someone in court, to describe someone **called in** to give advice in some difficult situation, a person **called in** when someone is depressed and discouraged to give them courage to face whatever was causing them to feel that way. Always a *parakletos* was someone **called in** to help in a time of trouble.

In the New Testament we find that the Holy Spirit fits this description. The translation of what Jesus called the Spirit, in today's text is the Counselor. At other places in scripture we read that the Spirit is called the Advocate, the Comforter, Author of Scripture, Convicter of Sin, Guide, Indweller of Believers, Intercessor, Revealer/Spirit of Truth, and the list goes on and on. So, when Jesus told his disciples that God would send to them the *parakletos*, they understood that this was someone very special being called in to help them. God sends this same Spirit—the Holy Spirit—the *parakletos*, to us.

In verse 16 Jesus calls the Spirit "another" Advocate, which assumes that Jesus also was an Advocate. Jesus and the Spirit have some similar functions. For example, Jesus and the Spirit both come from the Father and are sent into the world. Jesus communicates what he has received from his Father and the Spirit declares what he has received from Jesus (John 16:13). If Jesus glorifies God, the Spirit glorifies Jesus (John 16:14; 17:1). Both of them teach, bear witness to the

truth, and expose the sin of the world. And in both cases, the reaction is the same: the world refuses to recognize and receive Jesus or the Spirit (John 1:11; 14:17).

Yet calling the Spirit "another Advocate" does not mean he is "another Jesus." The Spirit continues Jesus' work without taking Jesus' place. As the Word made flesh, Jesus reveals God through the life he lives and the death he dies. But the Spirit does not become incarnate and is not crucified for the sin of the world.

The Spirit will disclose the truth about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, but will not duplicate these events. After Jesus' return to the Father, the Spirit remains with the disciples; but this does not mean the Spirit replaces Jesus. Rather, the Spirit reveals the presence of the risen Jesus and his Father to the community of faith.

Jesus tried to assure the disciples that they will know the Spirit is with them, even though those living apart from him and God, will not know the Spirit because they cannot see the Spirit. Only those who love Jesus and who obey his commands will know and see the Spirit. **Jesus teaches us that the evidence of real love is obedience. The two are intertwined.**

We know all too well how there are those who announce their love in words, but who at the same time, bring pain and heartbreak to those whom they claim to love. There are children and young people who say that they love their parents, and who yet do not honor them, causing them grief and anxiety. There are husbands who say they love their wives and wives who say they love their husbands, and who yet, by their inconsiderateness and their irritability and their thoughtless unkindness bring pain to each other. To Jesus real love is not an easy thing. It is shown only in true obedience to God.

There was a time when there were no laws about child safety seats and automobile restraint systems. Many young children who were not safely placed in car seats or belted in their seats died in car accidents.

Today laws prohibit children from riding in a car without special seating facing the right direction and properly installed. New parents must have the seat in place before taking a child home from the hospital.

A parent's love for a child is beautiful. Yet when a child's safety is at stake, it seems a parent's love is not always enough. Many parents needed a car seat and seat belt law to ensure the safety of their children.

The same is true of our love and devotion for God and other people. Feelings are not enough. We needed laws and boundaries in the form of commands to help us love God and others.

Jesus said that his followers show their love for him by obeying him. Love is more than lovely words; it is commitment and conduct.

Now remember Jesus said that those who live as though God does not exist, those who do not Love God and do not obey God's commands, will not recognize the Spirit. This means that the Spirit does not force itself on anyone, the Spirit is not a gate crasher into our hearts, the Spirit does not go where it is not recognized. The Spirit waits to be received.

Jesus shared with the disciples that the Spirit that would come to them would not only dwell around them, but the Spirit would also live in them, just as they would live in the Spirit. The relationship Christians have with the Holy Spirit is very intimate, so intimate that we see and feel evidence of the living Spirit in and through us. This greatly influences how we live. Others can see the Spirit through us also. This gives the Spirit more power, more ability, to assure us of its' presence, to reveal itself to others through us, and to reach more people for the building of the Kingdom and making this world a better place.

May 17, 2020 – “Loving Spirit”

A man by the name of Max DePree related the following heart-touching story: Esther, my wife, and I have a granddaughter named Zoe, the Greek word for life. She was born prematurely and weighed one pound, seven ounces, so small that my wedding ring could slide up her arm to her shoulder. The neonatologist who first examined her told us that she had a 5 to 10 percent chance of living three days. When Esther and I scrubbed up for our first visit and saw Zoe in her isolette in the neonatal intensive care unit, she had two IVs in her navel, one in her foot, a monitor on each side of her chest, and a respirator tube and a feeding tube in her mouth. To complicate matters, Zoe's biological father had jumped ship the month before Zoe was born. Realizing this, a wise and caring nurse named Ruth gave me my instructions. "For the next several months, at least, you're the surrogate father. I want you to come to the hospital every day to visit Zoe, and when you come, I want you to rub her body and her legs and arms with the tip of your finger. While you're caressing her, you should tell her over and over how much you love her, because she has to be able to connect your voice to your touch." God knew that we also needed both his voice and his touch. So, he gave us not only the Word but also his Son. And he gave us not only Jesus Christ but also his body, the church, and he gave us the Holy Spirit. God's voice and touch say, "I love you."

The Holy Spirit is always with us, even though we may not see the Spirit every single moment of every day. The Holy Spirit is there as our Comforter, our Advocate, our Counselor, and Guide. The Holy Spirit is there feeding us the truth that we are one of God's blessed and loved children, and empowering us to live in that truth. Amen.