

Introduction

Welcome to St. Peter's Lutheran Church Estevan. Pastor Kleemola here to bring you a partial service for the Sixth Sunday of Easter – May 17, 2020.

Readings for the Sixth Sunday of Easter

First Reading: Acts 17:16-31
Psalm: Psalm 66:8-20
Epistle: 1 Peter 3:13-22
Gospel: John 14:15-21

Text for today's Sermon is taken from John 14:15-21

¹⁵[Jesus said:] "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

¹⁸"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."

Sermon – Our Paraclete

Christ has risen! He has risen, indeed! Alleluia!

Dear friends in Christ Jesus; One of the real blessings that we have as Lutherans is our hymns, as many of them provide sound doctrinal teaching accompanied by a melody that makes that teaching memorable. But sometimes we find some puzzling things in our hymns. For example, many of you are probably familiar with the hymn, *Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*. (LSB #686) In that hymn, the second verse begins, "Here I raise my Ebenezer, Hither by Thy help have come." Say what?! If people in the 18th Century when that hymn was written understood that,

then they were a lot more biblically literate than we are. Thankfully the editors of the *Lutheran Service Book* recognized that and included a footnote to explain this curious phrase: “‘Ebenezer’ means ‘Thus far the Lord has helped us’ and was the name given to the stone of remembrance that Samuel raised to God’s glory.” You can read about that in 1Samuel Chapter 7. Knowing that, the phrase makes sense. It’s saying, “I’m going to remember that it is by God’s help that I have come this far” – and perhaps that is a long way to go for the sake of an illustration.

So back to my original point. Another example of a word that not many people know that is used in one of our hymns is “Paraclete.” It comes up only twice in the Lutheran Service Book, and as one of those two hymns is difficult and unfamiliar in our congregation, the only hymn you’d hear it in is “*Creator Spirit, by Whose Aid.*” It is Hymn #500 in the LSB. It shows up at the end of the doxology in stanza 4: “To You, O Paraclete, we raise Unending songs of thanks and praise.” Before I went to seminary and we sang this hymn in a service, I wondered, “*What in the world is a Paraclete.*” Well, the hymn is about the Holy Spirit, and the context of the hymn clearly indicates that the Holy Spirit is a Paraclete. But what does that mean? Well today’s Gospel gives us the chance to learn about this word.

Once again, we are in the upper room with Jesus and the disciples on the night that Jesus was betrayed. In the Gospel we heard today, Jesus said, “**I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.**” (Jn 14:16–17) This is Jesus promising to ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit. In fact, Jesus said that the Holy Spirit already dwelt in the disciples even as He spoke with them.

The original Greek for this word is **παράκλητον**. **Παράκλητον** comes from two words. The root is the verb **καλέω** which means *I call*. The prefix **παρα** means *alongside* or *next to*. A **παράκλητον** is someone whose calling is to be beside you... to stand with you. **Παράκλητον** is the origin of the word **Paraclete** in the hymn. So a *paraclete* is someone whose calling is to be beside you.

Now, if you are in a court of law, the one who is beside you is your lawyer. In this context, your *lawyer* is your paraclete. If you are deep in grief, the one who is beside you is a comforter. In this context, the *comforter* is your paraclete. If you are struggling with a project, the one who is beside you helps you with the project. In this context, the *helper* is your paraclete. If your car won’t start on a bitterly cold winter morning, the one who will get out of the comfort of a warm

cozy bed to give your battery a jump is your paraclete. If you are on a battlefield, the one who throws his helmet on the grenade and then falls on the helmet is your paraclete. If you are mortally wounded in battle, the one who stays with you so that you don't die alone is your paraclete. You can see that the word paraclete is a very wide-ranging and versatile word.

So, what does a Bible translator do when he comes across the word *παράκλητον* and the editor in charge of the translation informs him that most of the people who will read this do not know what the word *paraclete* means? The poor translator must study the context and decide. Does he trans-late this as *helper, advocate, intercessor, counselor, comforter*, or any of the other words that might fit the context? It can be a real challenge. That's why you find so many differing translations of the same passage. In our Gospel reading, the ESV uses *Helper* and the NIV uses *Counsellor*.

Now that you know about the word *paraclete*, we can put it where it belongs in the text. Jesus said, **“I will ask the Father, and he will give you another *Paraclete*, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”** (Jn 14:16–17)

Jesus then went on to say, **I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.** (Jn 14:18–19) Here Jesus was speaking of the next few days. Later that evening, Judas would lead a detachment of guards from the temple to arrest Jesus in Gethsemane. In less than 24 hours, Jesus would die on a cross. He would no longer be with the disciples as He was before. The Eternal Paraclete would dwell *with* them and *in* them as they grieved the death of their Lord.

This is but one way that the Holy Spirit would be their Paraclete. Later on, Jesus would tell them another way in which the Holy Spirit will be their paraclete. Jesus will promise, **“The Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”** (Jn 14:26) This is Jesus' promise that when the disciples bear witness to their time with Jesus, the Holy Spirit will watch over what they say and improve their memories so that their words will be accurate and authoritative. This is one of the verses that give us confidence that the writings of the Apostles are the inspired Word of God.

So, Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to the disciples and He promises Him to us as well. Nevertheless, there is still a little detail that is important in the words Jesus used. Jesus did not say, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you *the* Paraclete, to be with you forever." *NO, He said, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you **another** Paraclete, to be with you forever."* To say that the Holy Spirit is *another* Paraclete means that there is more than one paraclete. Jesus Himself is the first Paraclete that the Father sent. He is the Paraclete who came to save us from our sins by becoming a servant... a Servant who sacrificed Himself on a cross.

Earlier in this sermon, I described a soldier who threw himself on a grenade as a paraclete to his comrades. Jesus is an even greater Paraclete than this. A grenade brings death here in time. Sin brings death in eternity. Jesus put Himself between you and the eternal death of sin by living a perfect, innocent life and then allowing men to nail Him to a cross. By His death, He became our Paraclete who rescues us from sin, death, and the power of the devil. He has given assurance that He is our Paraclete by rising from the dead. God the Father has called Jesus to our side to be our Paraclete... to rescue and protect us from sin, death, and the power of the devil.

On the other hand, neither you nor I could know anything about Jesus as our Paraclete, or believe on Him, unless it were offered to us and granted to our hearts by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Gospel. That is why it is so important for the Father to give *another* Paraclete. It is important for **the Spirit of truth to dwell with you and be in you**. For it is the Holy Spirit who calls you by the Gospel and enlightens you with His gifts. He calls you by the words of the Gospel when you hear it or read it. He calls you by the wet Gospel of Holy Baptism when water is combined with God's Word according to Christ's command. He places the Gospel in your mouth as you receive the true body and blood of the Lord as you eat the bread and drink of the cup of the Lord's Supper.

The first Paraclete, Jesus Christ Himself, purchased and won us from sin, death, and the power of the devil with His holy precious blood and His innocent suffering and death. He gives us the promise of life forever in heaven with His resurrection from the dead. The other Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, offers this forgiveness, life, and salvation to us through the Gospel. It is this other Paraclete who gives us the faith that believes and receives the gifts that the first Paraclete won for us. As these two Paracletes work together, they transform us from disciples of the world into disciples of Jesus Christ.

Not everyone is excited about this. Jesus said, **“The world cannot receive [the Spirit of Truth], because it neither sees him nor knows him.”** (Jn 14:17) By nature, all people are born into this world as heathens. Even before we are born, we are all enemies of God. We have no desire to know God. As long as we are part of the sinful world, we neither hear nor see this Paraclete. It is as if He does not even exist.

When the disciples of the *world* saw Jesus die on the cross, they celebrated. They thought, “That is the end for that troublemaker,” and they saw Him no more. We who believe in Jesus Christ know better. As Jesus said in today’s Gospel, **“Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me.”** (Jn 14:19)

The world can no longer see Jesus for it is spiritually blind. We who have the other Paraclete ... the Holy Spirit... know the real presence of Jesus not only in the sacraments, but also in the rest of His Divine Service as well as in our day-to-day lives. We are not spiritual orphans, but Jesus is always with us.

Today’s Gospel tells us of the blessings we receive from the *other* Paraclete... the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit offers to us the blessings Jesus bought for us with His suffering, death, and resurrection. The Holy Spirit offers forgiveness, life, and salvation to us through faith in Jesus Christ. Through this faith, God adopts us into His family. We become brothers and sisters of Christ and children of our Heavenly Father. God is with us in this life and, when this life is over, He will take us to be with Him in heaven forever. Amen

Prayer of the Church

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

For the faithful proclamation of Jesus Christ to those who do not know Him, that through hearing the Word of the Lord many may be brought to faith and to the knowledge of the truth.

For the Church of God here and everywhere, that all who confess Jesus Christ may be united in doctrine and witness, defended against all the assaults of the enemy, and eager to gather together around Your Word and Sacrament in love for one another.

For this parish, for the work of the Kingdom in our community, and for the resources to accomplish all that God desires, that His name may be glorified among us and His purpose fulfilled in our words and works.

For the agencies and institutions through which we love our neighbour and provide for those in need, for the destitute and homeless, and for everyone who suffers unemployment and under-employment, that we may aid them in their needs and assist them to find honourable labour to supply all their needs.

For the lonely who suffer the burdens of life without friendship or family, for those depressed or weary of pandemic measures, and for the fellowship of the Church, that we may bear one another's burdens and live in community with Christ as our head.

For the sick and those who suffer, especially Pattie Berday, Dean Euteneier, Gerald Olson, and Wanda Stang, that God would grant healing to their bodies, peace for their minds, and consolation in their grief and sorrows.

For love of godly things, that we may delight in God's Word and walk in His ways; and for the Spirit, that we may be led into all truth and kept from error and false doctrine.

For the nation, for those who lead our nation, for the end of the pandemic, for peace among nations, and for an end to terror and violence, that we may work for the common good so that justice may prevail, life be protected and truth abound.

O Lord, our God, as we recall the obedient life and life-giving death of Your Son for our salvation, we pray You to strengthen our faith and to make our hearts bold, that we may not fear but address our prayers to You in all humility. Hear us on behalf of Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, who even now stands before You on our behalf, pleading our cause with His own blood, until that day when we are delivered from the changes and chances of this mortal life and stand before You in heaven; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you.

The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.