

John 14:15-21  
May 21, 2017

*In final words to his disciples on the night of his arrest, Jesus encourages obedience to his commandments and speaks of the Spirit, who will be with them forever.*

The holy gospel according to John, the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

[Jesus said to the disciples:] <sup>15</sup>“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. <sup>16</sup>And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. <sup>17</sup>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.

<sup>18</sup>“I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. <sup>19</sup>In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. <sup>20</sup>On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. <sup>21</sup>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.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen.

Some Sunday's our Lectionary that we follow for the appointed texts of the day doesn't seem to always get it right; however, today it seems the Holy Spirit was right on the money with our Gospel passage and truthfully with our first and second readings as well. In John's gospel text Jesus lifts up the promise that I

consistently try to embed deep within the brains of these 5 amazingly gifted and wonderful youth before us today. The promise that we will never be abandoned. That no matter what happens in life. The mistakes they will make. The struggles they will encounter. The fears that will at times overcome them. The doubts that will inevitably creep into their minds at one time or another during their ongoing journey of faith. Those periods in life where worship simply doesn't seem to matter, be important, or relevant (and yes, we have all been there – myself included). Moments when we may not even feel worthy enough to stand before God or our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. Times when God seems so distant. Jesus Christ nowhere to be found. The Holy Spirit M.I.A. (missing in action). I know from our conversations over the past 2 years most of you have already had those experiences. The promise Jesus makes that the disciple's needed to hear that night before Jesus would die on the cross. The promise we all need to hear is that you (we) are not alone. Jesus will not abandon you (us) just as Jesus did not abandon those first disciples he called to follow him.

He proclaims to those gathered disciples that Thursday evening so many years ago these words, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever." In these words we hear and see many things. We see the relationship of Father and Son. Jesus trusting confidently in God to

hear his prayer and then to send to those whom Jesus loves the Holy Spirit. An Advocate. The very presence of God with them as Jesus departs from them. And we also find in these words the very heart of God. That of a giving God. A God who will not abandon God's people whom God loves. A God who will not abandon all of creation that God loves. A God who will not abandon you whom God loves. The same giving heart of Jesus, the Son of God, who will give of his life. For you. For me. For us. For the world. All people. So that we may live. This is God and who God is. Giving us the Holy Spirit so that the presence of Christ continues to dwell in us and subsequently us in him.

Once again we have 5 very wonderful statements of faith prepared by these youth. Although, I do have to admit part of me was a bit frustrated after initially reading each of them through the first time. None of the papers mention the Holy Spirit. Not one. Had I errored and failed in my teaching? I know we talked about the Holy Spirit. The Apostles' Creed and specifically the third article which of course is expresses our faith in the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In fact, this is what Martin Luther writes as to his explanation of the work of the Holy Spirit:

I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy, and

kept me in the true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith. Daily in this Christian church the Holy Spirit abundantly forgives all sins – mine and those of all believers. On the last day the Holy Spirit will raise me and all the dead and will give to me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true. (*Luther's Small Catechism* Pocket Edition; Augsburg Fortress, 1989; p.23)

In my angst about the apparent absence of the Holy Spirit in these papers my recollection of these words of Luther shed some light on the situation at hand. The Holy Spirit is not absent in these papers. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit's imprint is all over these papers. In each key stroke that was typed. In every thought that went into them. Through the teaching of a pastor whom at times wonders if anything coming out of my mouth on those Wednesday evenings is heard and absorbed. Through the teaching of parents, grandparents, family, friends, and Sunday school teachers. Through all of us gathered whom are called to be advocates to these youth, to stand alongside them, to love and encourage them, to rejoice their presence with us, to see and utilize the gifts they have, to pray for them, and to bear forth the presence of the Holy Spirit just as they are called and filled with the Holy Spirit and reveal that presence to us.

The Spirit was and is at work. Opening their eyes to God's grace and presence in the world. Assuring them of the promise they are not alone, they are loved by God, they are forgiven, and will live with God forever. Coming to them in

prayer. Always listening. Always near. I would love to read each one of these papers out loud because they are the work of 5 wonderful, young theologians. Talking about God and what God means to them. Proclaiming God's grace and unconditional love. Lifting up the promises of God for all to hear. Not only are they theologians but they are evangelists. They are proclaimers of the gospel or that is, the good news of Jesus Christ. They are vessels of Christ's love and light to their family, this community of faith, their peers at school, and to the whole world that God loves desperately. Each and every person. When initially we may not think the Holy Spirit is present, let us look again. Let us listen. Taste. Touch and we will indeed know the Holy Spirit is present.

Katie, Anna, Gavin, Ellie and Olivia the Holy Spirit, in the words of Luther, has called each of you through the gospel, enlightened you with his gifts, made you holy, and kept you in the true faith. Praise and thanks be to God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit now and forever. Amen.

**Main Point:** The Holy Spirit is present even when we may not think so or see the Spirit. The Spirit teaches us, gives us the ability to trust God and speak the words of the promises of God and live out those words through action.