

5th Sunday of Easter  
John 16:12-22

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all  
Amen.

The text for our sermon for this Sunday is written in the book of John 16:12-23, which was our Gospel reading before

**12 “I still have many things to tell you, but you cannot endure them now. 13 However, when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will lead you into the whole truth. For He will not speak on His own authority, but He will speak whatever He hears, and He will tell you what is coming. 14 He will glorify Me, because He will take from what is Mine and will tell it to you. 15 All things that the Father has are Mine. That is why I have said, ‘He takes from what is Mine and will tell it to you.’**

**16 “A little while and you do not see Me any more; and again a little while and you will see Me.”**

**17 Therefore some of His disciples asked one another, “What does this mean that He is telling us, ‘A little while and you do not see Me; and again a little while and you will see Me,’ and ‘Because I am going to the Father’?”**

**18 Therefore they kept asking, “What does this mean that He is saying, ‘A little while’? We do not understand what He is saying.”**

**19 Jesus knew that they wanted to ask Him. He said to them, “Are you trying to find out among yourselves about this thing that I said, ‘A little while and you do not see Me; and again a little while and you will see Me’? 20 Truly, truly, I tell you that you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned to joy. 21 When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come. However, when she has given birth to her child, she does not remember her anguish any more, because of her joy that a human being has been born into the world. 22 Therefore you also have sorrow now; but I shall see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. **Amen.**

Dear friends in Christ.

Peace be with you.

The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ are more than just a once-in-a-lifetime set of experiences. They are unique in all of time and space. That's what makes the teaching of Jesus in today's Gospel such a challenge. We're in the upper room the evening before the crucifixion and Jesus is preparing His disciples for the next few days. In a few hours they would be in Gethsemane. Jesus would soon be arrested and taken before Annas and then Caiaphas, the high priest. The next morning, Jesus would stand before Pontius Pilate. He would spend much of the next day on a cross and in less than twenty-four hours, Jesus would be dead and buried in a borrowed tomb. Then on the first day of the next week, Jesus would bodily rise from the dead.

We, with our 20 /20 historical perspective, know that all these things will soon happen to Jesus. Jesus knew that they would happen. The disciples DIDN'T. Jesus had told His disciples that these things would happen, but the disciples weren't ready to understand what Jesus told them. There's a tension and a dialogue and action, a story involving conflict and drama that arises from the fact that Jesus must prepare His disciples for events that they can't understand until after they have happened.

The Gospel of John brings out this drama and tension as John gives an account of Jesus' words in that upper room. John the Evangelist dedicates five whole chapters of his Gospel to those words. Jesus, in His great love for His disciples, is giving them preparation and comfort for the upcoming ordeal. Even though the disciples don't understand, even though the disciples will endure terror and sorrow during these events, even though the events of the next few days will overwhelm them, the words of Jesus will sustain them through this ordeal.

The reading that we heard earlier begins at the point where Jesus has told the disciples all that they can handle. He Himself says, **“I still have many things to tell you, but you cannot endure them now ”** Even then, He has words of encouragement for them. **“However, when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will lead you into the whole truth. For He will not speak on His own authority, but He will speak whatever He hears, and He will tell you what is coming. 14 He will glorify Me, because He will take from what is Mine and will tell it to you.”** With these words, Jesus re-introduced the disciples to the Holy Spirit. He

also told them of the special role the Holy Spirit will have as they witness to the words and deeds that they witnessed while they were with Jesus.

So, even though the disciples didn't understand Jesus' words at the time, the Holy Spirit will bring those words back to them in crystal clarity. The Holy Spirit will help the disciples put the pieces together so that they could proclaim the Gospel to others. John the Evangelist Himself tells us, "**His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about Him and had been done to Him.**" [John 12:16.] That's the work the Holy Spirit does to bring these memories back to mind and enable them and us to understand.

This is very important for all who read the Bible. If we didn't have the Holy Spirit coming to help the disciples we wouldn't have the New Testament. Without the Holy Spirit, their thoughts would be confused and their memories would be foggy at best. With the Holy Spirit, their memories became sharp and accurate, and they understood the teachings of Jesus. Without the Holy Spirit though, there is no way that they could have written what they wrote but with the Holy Spirit, their writings are the power of God unto salvation.

These words about the Holy Spirit are important in another way. These words tell us how we can discern the true prophet from the false prophet. In today's Gospel Jesus said that the Holy Spirit will not speak on his own authority. He will take what is mine and declare it to you. He will never ever change what Jesus has already said. He will only tell us what Jesus has already said.

Down through the ages, there have been many false prophets who said that they had a word from the Holy Spirit. Even today, you can hear false prophets say, "I have a word for you from the Holy Spirit." or "I heard God say," In today's Gospel, Jesus tells us that the Holy Spirit will always and forever agree with the words that we already have in the Bible. If someone ever disagrees with the Bible, they are not of the Holy Spirit. They might be under the influence of a different spirit, but it is NOT the Holy Spirit. Jesus made it very clear that the Holy Spirit will not tell us anything new. Instead, He will clarify the things that has already been said by Jesus.

***Martin Luther explained it this way: In this way Christ sets bounds for the message of the Holy Spirit Himself. He is not to preach anything new or anything else than Christ and His Word. Thus we have a sure guide and touchstone for judging the false spirits. We can declare that it surely does not indicate the presence of the Holy Spirit when a person proclaims his own thoughts and notions and begins to teach in Christendom something apart from or in addition to what Christ taught. No, that betrays the presence of the loathsome spirit of lies, the devil, of whom Christ declares in [John 8:44](#): "When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature," that is, what he himself has fabricated.***

You know nothing has changed since Martin Luther preached these words. Our old sinful nature still entices us to believe something is true because it feels good. Our culture tells us to let our feelings be our guide. The devil tempts us to constantly search for the next mountain top experience. The forces of evil will do anything and everything to prevent us from finding the Holy Spirit where He has promised to be ... in the Holy Scriptures.

Today's Gospel account continues to remind us of the roles that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit take as they give salvation to us. We see the Father sending, the Son redeeming, and the Holy Spirit declaring. It is the Holy Spirit's role to declare the salvation that Jesus earned for us.

Jesus said, "**A little while and you do not see Me any more;** A little while after Jesus said these words, Judas betrayed Him into the hands of the enemy. Then the enemy mocked, tortured, and crucified Him. After He died, His friends laid Him in a tomb. He left their sight. They saw Him no longer. This is the work of Jesus that the disciples did not yet understand. This is also the work of Jesus that earned salvation for all people.

Jesus also said, "**and again a little while, and you will see me.**" Jesus didn't remain in the tomb. He rose from the dead and He lives forever more. The disciples saw Him again. The disciples witnessed Jesus as He redeemed the world to God.

The Holy Spirit came to the aid of these witnesses. He kept their memories sharp, and He helped them understand what they had witnessed. They were able to place the witness of their testimony into a written

form that will be with us forever. Jesus said, “**Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.**” [Matthew 24:35.]

Jesus Christ promised to send the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit proclaims Christ’s salvation whenever we hear the Word of God in its truth and purity. Through that proclamation the Holy Spirit establishes, maintains, and strengthens faith. Through that faith, the Holy Spirit delivers the gifts that Jesus Christ, our Redeemer purchased and won for us with His life, suffering, death, and resurrection. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son to give us eternal life in the presence of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. **Amen**

*Martin Luther, Luther's Works, Vol. 24: Sermons on the Gospel of St. John: Chapters 14-16,*

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. **Amen.**

### **Prayer of the Church Fifth Sunday of Easter 19 May 2019**

P You have promised, O Lord, to be our God, and we rejoice to be Your children by grace. Hear now the prayers of Your people for all manner and conditions of men.

*Brief silence*

P Your Church is set among many and great enemies, O Lord, and yet You have promised that no enemy will triumph over us. Give us such confidence in Your promise that we will not fear, and give us the courage of Your love that we may love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P You have promised us the gift of Your Spirit to make known to us all truth and to keep us in Your Word. Grant to us, O Lord, faithful pastors who will teach us Your Word and devoted church workers who will serve us in Your name. Bless those now preparing for church-work and also the Pastors of the AELC and the ULMA and inspire many to follow Your call. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P You are above all things, the Alpha and the Omega, and yet You have chosen to dwell among men. Give us a glimpse of Your glory, that we may know what is good and right and true, the perfect beauty of Your presence. Point us to Your majesty, O Lord, and to the promise of Your future, the holy city and new Jerusalem on high. Move us to offer to You our best for Your glory. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P You have given us both bread for the body and Christ, the bread of life. Prepare us now to receive with faith and thanksgiving His flesh for the life of the world and His blood that cleanses us from all sin. Unite us that we may believe and confess one faith, and bring us to that day when we shall be one people together at the table of our Lord. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P You promised our sorrows would turn into joy and we would not long remember the anguish of our labour. O Lord, deliver us from our tears and raise us with the saints of old to know You and to live in the joy of Your presence, feasting together in the marriage supper of the Lamb, in His kingdom without end. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Now, with confidence that You will grant us all things needful and all things beneficial to us and to all for whom we have prayed, we pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**