

THE FATHER WOULD SEND ANOTHER ADVOCATE
Sermon for the 6th Sunday of Easter 2020
John 14:15-21

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 today is our Gospel, John 14:15-21: ¹⁵ **“If you love Me, you will keep My Commandments. ¹⁶ I shall also ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. ¹⁷ He is the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see or know Him. You know Him, because He remains with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ I shall not leave you as orphans. I am coming back to you.**

¹⁹ **“Only a little while longer and the world will not see Me any longer, 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, that you are in Me and that I am in you.**

²¹ **“The person who has My Commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me. The person who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I shall love him and show Myself to him.”**

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

Dear friends in Christ,

During the extra time spent at home these past couple months, I have had more spare time to “search the Scriptures,” and how refreshing it has been! One thing to realise is that no matter how often we open the pages of the Bible; there is always something more for it to teach us. That is one of the wonderful things about the Bible. It presents God’s plan of salvation simple enough to understand that Jesus has saved us from our sins with His death and resurrection. Eternal salvation is ours – praise be to God!

One of the many themes that we find in all of Scripture is that *we do not go looking for God*. Instead, it is God who searches for us. In fact, every time we try to find God, we get into trouble. Conversely, all the wonderful things that happen in the Bible always begins with God. When looking at our Gospel lessons this Easter Season, they all seem to show how no one can meet the risen Christ unless God makes the introduction.

A few moments after Jesus had spoken the words of our text, He reminded the disciples that they did not decide to follow Him, but that He had called them. He said, “*You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you...*” (John 15:16). The Word of God tells us that Jesus has actively sought out and called His church together.

Today’s Gospel continues that teaching of the upper room from last week’s Gospel. In a few hours, Judas would lead a band of soldiers into Gethsemane to arrest Jesus, and then, on the next day, Jesus would die on the cross to take away the sins of the world.

Jesus knew that His time was short. He knew the confusion and grief that would attack His disciples over the next few days. He also knew that after His crucifixion and resurrection, His mission to mankind would change. After He ascended, His people would not be able to see Him. How would He call His church together then? How would people know that He was with them if they could not see Him? Today’s Gospel answers those questions.

Jesus had physically been with the disciples, but the time was drawing near for Him to go to prepare a place for them in the Father’s house.¹ However, He would not leave them all alone. When speaking some final words to them, He said, “**¹⁶ I shall also ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever.**” They would have no need to fear a future without Jesus guiding them because He would send another Advocate. What is an advocate? Quite simply it is one who appears in another’s behalf: a mediator, defender, intercessor, or even a helper.

When the Father sent His only Son Jesus into the world, He was sent as the first Advocate. John wrote in his First Letter, “*My little children, I am writing this to you that you may not sin. If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous One*” (1 John 2:1). The image here that John portrayed is one of a trial before God’s court. Jesus is the Advocate, that is, the Mediator between God and man. As such, He is our defender, our intercessor, who always presents evidence in God’s court of justice in favour of our pardon. The righteousness of Jesus Christ is standing on our side. Of this particular text, Luther once wrote: “*This text should be written with golden*

¹ John 14:3

letters and should be painted in the heart. Therefore you should get understanding and say: ‘Christ, I know Thee alone as the Advocate, the Comforter, and the Mediator; and I do not doubt that Thou art such a Person for me but cling firmly to this with my heart and believe’” (Luther’s Works, American Edition 30:236). As our Advocate, our Intercessor, the One who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life², Jesus appears before the Father on our behalf, and we have eternal life. This is the way that we describe Jesus as our Advocate.

However, now Jesus, the first Advocate, promised a second Advocate to the disciples, “**to be with (them) forever.**” Does this Advocate perform the same role as Jesus? That is, does He stand before the Father in His court as the Mediator?

This Advocate, Jesus calls Him “**the Spirit of Truth**” is, of course, the Holy Spirit. While the living Christ is the One who intercedes at the right hand of the Father³ placing His incorruptible life at the service of His people⁴, this second Advocate, is not the defender of the disciples before the Father, but their counsel in relation to the world. After the departure of Jesus, the second Advocate, the Holy Spirit, would continue His work and remain for ever with and in the disciples. The Holy Spirit would always help them as they expressed their love to the world and each other for Jesus. A few verses after our text, Jesus told the disciples that “*the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you everything and will remind you of everything that I have told you*” (v.26). The disciples could not fully understand everything Jesus was teaching them, but the Father, in Jesus’ name, would send the Holy Spirit to teach them everything and remind them of all that Jesus had said. The sending of the Spirit from God on Pentecost had that special purpose. We know that that marked the beginning of the Christian Church on earth, and the disciples began to fulfil the command of Christ to make disciples of all nations by baptising in the name of the Triune God, and by teaching His truth.⁵

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth, just as Jesus is Truth, but the Spirit reveals the reality of God and keeps us connected with Jesus. He is God, equal with the Father and the Son. This is what it means when the Scriptures speak of the Holy Spirit as the Advocate.

Sadly, not everyone is excited about this Advocate. Jesus said that “**the world cannot receive (the Spirit of Truth), because it does not see or know Him.**” The Eternal Advocate, the Spirit of Truth, had inspired the Apostle Paul to write, “*This is so, because the way of thinking that belongs to the sinful nature is hostile to God. For it is not subordinate to God’s Law. Indeed, it cannot be. ⁸ Those who are in the sinful nature cannot please God*” (Romans 8:7-8). In another letter, Paul wrote how “*an unspiritual person does not receive the things of the Spirit of God. For they are foolishness to him, and he cannot know them because they are discerned spiritually*” (1 Corinthians 2:14). And yet another time he wrote, “*You also were dead in your trespasses and sins. ² You once led your lives in those sins, following the ways of this present world and the ruler who governs the air, the spirit who is now working in the people who disobey*” (Ephesians 2:1-2). By nature, all people are born into this world as heathens. Even as we begin to develop in our mothers’ wombs, we are already enemies of God who have no desire to know Him. As long as we are part of the sinful world, we neither hear nor see this Advocate. It is as if He does not even exist.

It is just as we have seen in the Gospel readings throughout this Easter Season. Within ourselves, we do not have the resources we need to know Jesus. Martin Luther expressed this well when he wrote the explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed: “*I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him.*”

So how can we know Jesus? In today’s Gospel, Jesus spoke to His disciples and said, “**You know Him, because He remains with you and will be in you.**” How do we get to the point that the Eternal Advocate, the Holy Spirit, is with us and in us?

All this Easter Season, we have seen that it is Jesus who must show Himself to His disciples. The disciples in today’s Gospel heard the Word of God from the very mouth of God – the mouth of Jesus Christ. He is the One who planted the Holy Spirit in their hearts. The Holy Spirit used the Word of God from the mouth of Jesus to bring them to faith. Their contact with the Holy Spirit had come through Jesus – in His visible presence.

Our contact with the Holy Spirit also comes through Jesus – as He comes to us in Word and Sacrament. He continues to use the Word of God as we hear it and as God combines it with the water of Baptism and the bread and

² John 14:6

³ Romans 8:34

⁴ Hebrews 7:25

⁵ Matthew 28:19-20

wine of the Lord's Supper. So we see that God the Holy Spirit uses the Word to plant faith – a faith that trusts in the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ. So we see that God the Son and God the Holy Spirit always work together. As Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome: *“Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ”* (Romans 10:17). Again, Martin Luther expressed this well in the explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed: *“The Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith.”*

We can see how the First Advocate, Jesus Christ, works with the eternal Advocate, the Holy Spirit. The Son of God became human as He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and we read that *“When Jesus had been baptised, He immediately came up from the water. At that moment the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming on Him”* (Matthew 3:16). The Holy Spirit even brought Simeon and Anna to the infant Jesus in the Temple.⁶

The first Advocate, 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 Advocate, the Holy Spirit, offers this forgiveness, life, and salvation to us through the Gospel. It is this other Advocate who gives us the faith that believes and receives the gifts that the first Advocate won for us. As these two Advocates work together, they transform us from disciples of the world into disciples of Jesus Christ.

Today's Gospel tells us of the blessings we receive from the Eternal Advocate – the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit offers 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. The Eternal Advocate – the Holy Spirit sees to it that our life with Christ goes on forever. May it always be so. Amen.

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

PRAYER FOR THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Lord, our God, You alone know the plans that You have for us and our world, but we rejoice and worship You because we know that they are loving plans. In Your goodness, You spread life, love, beauty, and joy throughout Your creation. In Your grace, You lighten the misery of our sinful lives, and bless us with pardon and peace. If it is your will that we must pass through troubles, enable us to turn them into opportunities, for Your glory.

We give You our warmest thanks for the precious gift of Your Son, Jesus, whom You have sent that we may have life in all its fullness. We praise You that He has humbly come into our world, has taken on Himself our sins, and has carried them to death on the cross. We glorify Your name for our release from the power of death, and for our sure hope of heaven through His resurrection.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the privilege of being Your spiritual priests, as we pray in Jesus' name. We thank You for Your promise to hear all our prayers. Keep us close to Jesus each day in faith and love, gladly hearing His Word and following Him, wherever He leads us. Send Your Word out into the whole world, that it may achieve what You have planned for it. Let us as Your representatives, whom You have called out of darkness, proclaim Your light in this dark world. Give us the courage also to speak Your word of judgment when people reject Christ, the Cornerstone.

Bless Your Church on every continent. Renew Your people to be a loving fellowship of believers, a family of trust and prayer, and people who are ready to serve the needy in love.

Lead all the nations of the earth along the ways of justice, righteousness, and peace. Look with special favour on our country. Give to our Prime Minister, to the Premiers of each State, to our cabinets and parliaments, to our police and to our courts, such qualities of heart and mind that they may carry out their duties earnestly, wisely, and fairly. Protect us from all enemies, both within and without our country. Remove all strife from us. Inspire obedience to all law and order. Fill all citizens with love of holiness and moral purity. Grant that all who work in industry may find joy in their work and receive proper rewards for their efforts. Give satisfaction to those who work in the professions, as they work for the good of all. Give those who farm the soil favourable weather. Bless their work of feeding the world.

Bless all our loved ones, and make our homes places of peace. We remember especially the sick, the troubled, and the bereaved. In Jesus' name free them from the burdens of their pain and sadness.

⁶ Luke 2:22f

Keep us standing strong and steady in faith. We know that the day is surely drawing closer when we shall be able to gather together again unhindered in Your house. In the meantime, keep us in Your care. Since serving You is never useless, give us the opportunity to be busy in Your work. In Jesus' saving name we offer You these prayers. Amen.

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Acts 17:16-31

¹⁶ While Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was irritated in him when he saw that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ Therefore, he had discussions in the synagogue with the Jews and with the God-fearing Greeks and in the marketplace every day with people who happened to be there. ¹⁸ Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also had conversations with him, but some were asking, "What might this scrap-collector want to say?" Others were saying, "He seems to be one who proclaims foreign divinities," because he was telling the Good News about Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹ They took an interest in him, brought him to the Areopagus and asked, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?" ²⁰ For you are introducing some astonishingly strange things into our ears. Therefore, we want to know what these things mean."

²¹ All the Athenians and the foreigners who were living there spent their time doing nothing but either saying or listening to something quite new.

²² Paul stood in the meeting of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I see that you are very religious in every way. ²³ For, as I walked around and carefully observed your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: 'To an unknown god.' Therefore, I am telling you about what you are worshipping, although you do not know about it. ²⁴ God, who made the world and everything in it, is the Lord of heaven and earth. He does not live in temples made by human hands, ²⁵ and human hands do not serve Him as if He needed anything. He Himself gives everyone life, breath and everything else. ²⁶ From one man He has made every nation of mankind to live all over the earth. He has set the times allotted to them and the boundaries inside which they should live, ²⁷ that they may search for God and perhaps feel their way to Him and find Him, although He is not far from each one of us. ²⁸ For in Him we live, move and exist, as even some of your poets have said, 'For, we also are His offspring.' ²⁹ Therefore, since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the Divine Being is like gold, silver or stone, like an image that the art and the imagination of a human being have formed. ³⁰ Although in past times God overlooked such ignorance, He now commands people everywhere that they should all repent, ³¹ because He has set a day when He is going to judge the world justly, by a Man whom He has appointed. He has provided everyone reason to believe this by raising Him from the dead."

1 Peter 3:13-22

¹³ Who is the one who will harm you if you are eager to do good? ¹⁴ However, even if you were to suffer because of what is right, you would be blessed. Do not be afraid of what they are afraid of and do not let yourselves be intimidated! ¹⁵ Rather, in your hearts regard Christ the Lord

as holy! Always be ready to make a defence to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that you have but do this with gentleness and respect! ¹⁶ Keep a good conscience, that those who make fun of your good life in Christ may be ashamed of their slander! ¹⁷ It is better to suffer, if it is God's will, for doing right than for doing wrong.

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the Righteous One for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the human nature but made alive by the Spirit, ¹⁹ through whom He also went and preached to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ who were disobedient long ago, when God waited patiently, in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared. In it only a few people, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. ²¹ That also prefigured baptism, which now saves you, not by washing dirt from the body but by guaranteeing a good conscience before God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. ²² He has gone to heaven and is at the right hand of God, after angels, rulers and powers have been made subordinate to Him.

John 14:15-21

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