

Pentecost
May 23, 2021
John 14:25-27

What a year the last year has been. One year ago, on Pentecost Sunday, the church stood here empty. Yet, even though it was empty on that Sunday, it would be the last service that I would record standing in front of a camera in an empty church. As I think back to one year ago, I'll be honest with you, it was hard for me to preach to an empty church. As I would record those sermons and services it was hard not getting any reaction from people. A camera just sits there on a tripod. Sometimes, it took me a number of tries to at least get the words to come out the way I wanted them to come out. When it didn't, I would just start over, and over, and over... Sometimes, it would be kind of frustrating to do those sermons. On top of that, who likes to look at themselves on video? In the back of my mind there was this fear that someone may watch one of our services online and they would judge St. Paul's by what I said or didn't say on a particular Sunday. There would be no opportunity for anyone to ask any questions about us after the service. There would be no opportunity for you to welcome someone with all of your smiling faces. Those recorded services weren't always easy to do.

I suppose, it isn't much different for a teacher. When the last part of school year was shut down a year ago, it wasn't easy for anyone. Everyone tried their best, but it wasn't the same as having students sitting in front of you. Teaching wasn't always easy. There are those days when the lessons work exactly like you want them to. Then there are those days it doesn't. You've studied and prepped as best as you can, you can tell that your lesson just bombed when you see that puzzled look on the faces of your students who are saying, "Huh?" Please don't think that is any criticism of either of you (Randy and Nancy Willms). I would bet that if you asked any teacher if they have ever felt those kinds of feeling, they would be lying if they said that they never had those feelings of fear and failure at some moment in their teaching career.

In fact, I am certain that everyone sitting here today in the pews or watching this later online has gone through those same kind of fears and uncertainties in the careers that they have chosen. Ask anyone who is a parent if they have fears and uncertainties in their homes. There are those days that you feel like you are *Super-parent*. And then there are those days that are far less of a super-parent than you wanted to be. As hard as you were trying to hold back words of anger, they just come pouring out of your mouth. You didn't want to yell, but it was so loud that the neighbors down the street could hear those words. You fear just how good of a parent you might be.

All of this sounds pretty depressing, doesn't it? After all, today is supposed to be a day of celebration, isn't it? It was supposed to be that way for the disciples in our text. They were sitting in the upper room on Maundy Thursday. They were celebrating the Passover. Jesus would institute the Lord's Supper. On that night, Jesus would once again teach his disciples. In numerous times that evening, Jesus spoke about not being with them much longer. **"Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?"** (John 13:36) Jesus assured them: **"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."** (John 14:18) Not only does Jesus promise them that he will be with them, but he will send them someone special to also walk alongside with them. **"But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."**

At its core, the word that is translated as an **"Advocate"** can mean someone who comes alongside of you no matter what, someone who is with you through thick and then. I read this week that there are 270 different tribal languages in Cameroon. Translators were having a hard time trying to find a good word to demonstrate this idea of an **"Advocate."** So, one day, they watched the natives go off into the bush carrying bundles on their heads. There was always one person who didn't carry anything. They assumed he was the boss. But later they learned, he had a special job. If anyone fell over from exhaustion, this man would come and pick up the load and carry it for the man who was down. In their language he was *"the one who falls down beside us."* They used the same word for this verse. When we seem to be carrying things fine, the Holy Spirit is there giving us things like joy and goodness. When we are down, God sends the Holy Spirit to fall down beside us.

When we're hurting and afraid, He's our comforter. When we're lost and wandering, He's our guide. When we're confused and overwhelmed, He gives us wise and dependable counsel. In many ways, Jesus is assuring his people, both then and now, that he is sending someone who will be a true friend to us! In promising to send us his Holy Spirit, Jesus is promising us someone who will "be there" for us.

Last Friday, during our school devotion outside, I asked the kids if they remembered all the words that their teacher had taught them this year. A few of the little hands went up. Even though it might be a complement for someone to say that they remembered everything one of their teachers taught them this, I think it was more that they didn't understand the question I was asking. As good of a teacher someone might be, no one can ever remember everything that that teacher has taught. If the disciples were left on their own, I don't think they would be able to remember everything that Jesus had been teaching them for 3 years. That's why he promised them a gift – **"The Holy Spirit will remind you of everything I have said to you."** Jesus continues to pour out on his church that same gift. The Holy Spirit is creating faith and strengthening faith through imperfect beings like us. We are imperfect beings that carry a message of God's perfect message of peace.

The peace that Jesus gives us is different than any peace that this world can offer. It's the peace of the cross. For it is on the cross, that Jesus won that peace for us. Even though we know and trust that peace, we still will have fears and uncertainties in our lives. But when they come, let's remember these words of Jesus: **"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."** May God grant it. Amen.