

Weekend of Sunday, June 9, 2019
The Day of Pentecost/Lectionary X/Proper X/Year C
Primary Text: John 21:1-19
Sermon Title: “Commandment Keeping and Peace”

Theme

Though the disciples struggle with Jesus’ nature and identity, they receive the promise that they too will be identified with God and God’s mission. Though he must leave them now, Jesus promises the coming of the Advocate whom God will send to comfort and enlighten them.

Text

⁸Philip said to [Jesus,] “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” ⁹Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?” ¹⁰Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. ¹²Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

¹⁵“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. ¹⁷This 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. [

²⁵“I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. ²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”]

Sermon

The First Reading is, of course, the Pentecost story. We have heard about it, the coming of the Holy Spirit, since Easter, more or less, and while we 21st Century Christians know about as much as anyone can about it, Jesus' followers just had to bide their time and wait to see what this thing, that Jesus had at times called "the Spirit of truth," "the Advocate," and "the Holy Spirit" would mean for them.

As we learned in that reading, the Holy Spirit has the ability to give Christ's followers the power, strength, knowledge, and ability to do that which we cannot do on our own. In the case of Peter and the other apostles, the Holy Spirit gave them the ability to communicate the Gospel effectively in all the languages of the Jews gathered in Jerusalem for the festival of Pentecost. This, as we know, ⁷"amazed and astonished" the crowd and many were ³⁷"cut to the heart" by their testimony and were led to repent and be baptized. Luke, the author of Acts, recorded that about three-thousand were baptized that day. Even if all twelve performed the baptisms that day, that is like 250 each!

In the Prayer of the Day, we asked, "kindle in us the fire of your love, empowering our lives for service and our tongues for praise." Well, be careful what you prayer for, because this changes everything!

The Gospel Reading from John once again takes us back to Jesus' Farewell Discourse with his disciples on the night of his betrayal. Understanding that he has been with his disciples about three years at this point, we might be able to imagine and understand his frustration with his disciples.

Just prior to this passage Jesus said these words:

⁶"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

And that proclamation elicited the following request from Philip:

⁸"Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."

Can't you just imagine the look on Jesus' face? He was about to be betrayed and abandoned and denied by these his closest friends. He had just told them in the clearest terms yet that he and his Father are one. And Philip asked for proof!
⁸"Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."

I might have thrown up my hands and said, "I'm done with you!" But that was not an option for Jesus. There is *Kingdom work* that must be initiated and he is counting on his followers to do it.

And so responding as briefly as he could have – because time is running out for him – he redirected the conversation to his agenda. And what was his agenda? I thought you would never ask!

Jesus told them several things which I have titled, "*Commandment Keeping and Peace.*"

Once back on point Jesus told his apostles that *his work* will be *their work*. And in fact, their work will be greater than his work. How can that be you ask? Well, during his earthly ministry and in his fully human nature, Jesus self-limited to one place and time, same as we are. So he fed several thousand people in the feeding miracles. And he healed several, I don't really know how many exactly. But now Zion Lutheran Church, empowered and guided by the Holy Spirit, along with countless other free food pantries and meal serving kitchens like Red Door, over the last several years have undoubtedly fed more people than Jesus did. And Christian hospitals and Christian doctors, empowered and guided by the Holy Spirit over the last several years have undoubtedly healed more people than Jesus did. So you see, Jesus was right about that, we will do greater works than his.

He also said,

¹⁵"If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Now, in John's account he did not give them a "new commandment," but in asking them to keep his commandments, he was referring to all the commandments and teachings that he had given them over the course of their discipleship. And while that might seem like a difficult thing for them to remember then, again he promised them the Holy Spirit who would not only remind them of all that he had taught and

commanded them over the last years, but would also guide them and continue to teach them going forward. Maybe you will remember that I preached on this myself on the weekend of May 26 in a sermon entitled, "Continuing Ed."

And finally he said,

27Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."

Jesus knew things were about to go badly for himself. He probably also knew that they, his disciples and followers would be shaken to their cores. He even told them he was telling them all this because he wanted them to hear it from him first. And so about all that was about to happen, he gave them peace and told them not to be afraid when it goes down, it was all part of the Father's plan to save the world from itself.

Raisin' the Bar Challenge

Whew! Well what does all this mean for us? I am so glad you asked. Its this week's Raisin' the Bar Challenge.

I don't want to repeat myself but essentially, this passage is not limited to his eleven, then twelve apostles and his other followers at that time, but it is also about us.

The Holy Spirit did come and it continues to empower followers of Jesus Christ with all we need to continue his ministry, now using our gifts and abilities.

How can we discern what it is we are to do? Well, take a look around, at Zion we do a lot of ministry. Someone, somewhere was led by the same Holy Spirit to do that thing, and just a few highlights from "Eye On Zion Weekly Edition" will indicate that:

- Next Sunday, June 16th several people will prepare and provide a meal for Youngstown's poor as we participate in Red Door Café.
- The following Wednesday, June 19th several people will prepare and provide a meal as a fund raiser to pay down Zion's enormous debt.

- The following Thursday, Zion will be hosting its next Red Cross blood drawing.
- At that same time and for the next couple of days, Zion will host Sister Pat's "Stepping Stones to a Better Tomorrow."

So maybe you don't have the spiritual gift of discernment like those who initiated those programs, others have. Undoubtedly, you have been given gifts of the Spirit to be used by the larger Christian body, and it is your responsibility to exploit it and use it for Kingdom good. The apostle Paul wrote in the Second Reading that ¹⁴"all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God." You will never receive a greater honor

And when we do that, and take a moment to reflect on what we have done through the Holy Spirit our faith is encouraged and strengthened, just as Jesus said it would when he said, believe in him because of the works themselves – those are the works we do, in his name, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

When we do that, that being commandment keeping and being willing to be used by the Holy Spirit for Kingdom good, we will have peace. Not as the world gives, because the world has an insatiably selfish appetite, but peace that that comes from being obedient and faithful to Jesus Christ.

This weekend four of our congregation's young folks will claim for themselves, the faith that their parent's promised to pass on to them at their baptisms. To John and Jennifer Leskovac, the parents of Luke; to Michelle Hartman, mother of Isabella; to Sherry Schuller, mother of Mariah, and to Scott and Sara Bundy, parents of Sam, I say, well done. You have given them the treasure of faith that will last them their whole lives.

To Luke, Isabella, Mariah, and Sam I say, your role and responsibility as full members of the church, both Zion Lutheran Church and the one holy catholic and apostolic church is just beginning. Christ's promise to you is that you will be given the power, strength, knowledge, and ability to do that which you cannot do on your own. What will the Holy Spirit have in store for you? You have to figure that out. But remember, you are not alone. You have been given "the Spirit of truth," "the Advocate," "the Holy Spirit" and this body of Christ to work beside you.

Prayer

God our creator, the resurrection of your Son offers life to all the peoples of earth. By your Holy Spirit, kindle in us the fire of your love, empowering our lives for service and our tongues for praise, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen