

“The Pentecost Promise”

John 14:15-27

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Stone Mountain, Georgia
June 8, 2003

Pentecost Sunday

On Pentecost Sunday, our attention is naturally drawn to the third person of the Trinity and the gift of the Holy Spirit given to the disciples as recorded in Acts 2. This morning, I want to focus upon Jesus’ promise to his followers that God would send the Spirit so that they would never be alone. This promise is recorded in John 14:15-27. Let’s examine it.

Jesus was talking to his disciples about leaving them, which caused them great confusion and pain. Three years prior to this, they accepted his invitation to follow him and spent this time developing a very close relationship with him. From their perspective, their work was just beginning and there was so much more that needed to be done. Their sense of grief and loss must have been devastating.

What were they to do after he was gone? Where were they to go? Who would teach them as he had done? Who would inspire and lead them? Would they even stay together? These questions and many more had to be swirling in their heads.

I’ve heard college athletes ask the same questions when the coach that recruited them leaves their school to go to another. Coaches leave a lot of questions in their wake. Jesus did, too.

Jesus knew this and quickly reassured his disciples that another was coming to lead them. Jesus never intended to leave them floundering like orphans. Instead, he would ask the Father to send another Counselor to be with them forever. God granted his request as Pentecost reminds us.

What is the purpose of the Holy Spirit? What did the Father send the Spirit to do? There are many things, but two of the most important functions of the Spirit are to **teach and empower**. Let me explain.

*“The Counselor, 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” John 14:26.*

Who was your favorite teacher? It would be hard for me to select just one because I have had many throughout my educational pilgrimage and am grateful for all of them.

I have no doubt, though, that the disciples’ favorite teacher was Jesus and finding a replacement for him was going to be impossible. They knew no one they had ever met could take his place and yet they knew there was much more they needed to learn. So, who was going to teach them after he was gone? Who would remind them of his words so they would not forget what he had taught them?

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What would the Spirit help them recall? He would remind them of what Jesus taught about arranging priorities, relating to God, dealing with their enemies, finding peace and handling problems, challenges and temptations.

What would the Spirit teach them? He would teach them what they needed to learn about God, life and themselves from the experiences that were yet to come.

Could the disciples place as much confidence in the Spirit as they did in Jesus? Would the Spirit be reliable and trustworthy? Let Jesus answer this question. *“And I will ask the Father and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever, **the Spirit of Truth**” John 14:16-17.*

There is another function of the Spirit I would like to mention and that is to **empower** us. Putting Jesus’ teaching into action would not be easy for these disciples and Jesus knew it. They would have to carry their own crosses, too. They would encounter resistance and temptation just as he did. Who would strengthen them along their journey and enable them to be faithful? Who would help other disciples to follow? The Spirit of the living God would fulfill that need in every believer’s life.

The title that Jesus used for the Spirit in this passage was **Counselor**, a very difficult word to translate. Perhaps it is best translated, “One who is called in” or “One who walks beside.” The message is powerful and reassuring. The Holy Spirit will walk with believers each step of their journey providing the guidance, strength, courage and encouragement needed.

Peter J. Gomes, the minister in the Memorial Chapel at Harvard University writes, “God is with us at the most terrible moment of our time. He is not in front to lead, not behind to push, not above to protect, but ‘Beside us to guide us/ Our God with us joining.’ ”

I also appreciate what Arthur John Gossip wrote, “The truest help which one can render to a man who has any of the inevitable burdens of life to carry is not to take his burden away but to call out his best strength that he may be able to bear it.” This is precisely what the Spirit was sent to do for every believer.

How long will the Spirit teach and empower us? *“And I will ask the Father and He will give you another Counselor to be with you **forever**, the Spirit of Truth” John 14:16-17.* He will never leave us or forsake us. We will never be orphans. We will never face decisions or difficulties on our own.

After an infant has been baptized in the Greek Orthodox Church, the priest will take a very large cross and strike the child so hard on his or her chest that the infant screams in pain. The blow indicates that this baptized child must bear his or her own cross and experience sorrow, suffering, pain and death. The cross indicates, however, that this child is not the first to encounter adversity and that hope and help are found in the one that was faithful all the way to the cross.

Do you think this discussion on the Spirit and Jesus’ promise to ask the Father to send Him calmed the disciples’ fears and answered many of their questions? I think so and I also believe it can do the same for us. On this day that we celebrate God’s gracious gift of the Spirit to all believers, won’t you open your heart and invite Him to walk beside you? I hope so, for then you will understand Jesus’ parting words that evening to his disciples, *“Peace 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 be afraid” John 14:27.*