

The Sixth Sunday of Easter -- May 14, 2023
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church, Beaver Dam, Wisconsin

John 14:15-21 -- ¹⁵ "If you love me, keep my commands. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. ²¹ Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them."

The title "counselor" is very well known. Maybe the first person you thought of was your guidance counselor in high school. Guidance counselors help secondary students identify their strengths and interests and then advise them on the possibilities for careers and post-secondary educational opportunities. In our post COVID pandemic times, we hear about the need for mental health counselors as people deal with the challenges that exist because of COVID. Today Jesus wants us to listen to a far more important Counselor, the Holy Spirit. He leads us to something far more important than a college or mental health. It's the most important thing in life: our faith in Jesus. Our Savior encourages us to **LISTEN TO THE COUNSELOR! HE GUIDES US TO THE TRUTH AND HE GUIDES TO SHOW LOVE TO GOD.**

Listen to the Counselor! He GUIDES us to the truth. In the upper room on Maundy Thursday, Jesus' disciples were uncertain about the truth. Jesus had been saying strange things about leaving this world, being betrayed to his enemies, being executed, and even preparing a place for them with his Father. In the disciples' minds that meant they would be left alone on this earth. Wouldn't it make you a little upset too, hearing your best friend talking like that? Jesus knew the uncertain thoughts of his disciples and wanted to comfort them. The disciples didn't understand that the events of Good Friday and Easter were for their comfort and the salvation of the world. Jesus' words still bring comfort and reassurance for us today. So Jesus promised: **I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. (vs. 16, 17)**

Notice the word "advocate". The first edition of NIV used the term "counselor" which more closely helps us understand the word John used. And advocate is someone who speaks in our behalf. The Greek word has more the idea of "comforter" or "helper." That is what Jesus is promising to the disciples and to you. Someone by your side to comfort and help you by guiding you to the truth.

The Counselor Jesus would send to his disciples (that includes us!) wouldn't be available for consultation with everyone. Jesus says in verse 17, **"The world (that is, unbelievers) cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you (believers) know him, for he lives with you and will be in you."** At one point in our lives, we were just like the world Jesus speaks about. Usually at this time of year, we are in the midst of horse racing's Triple Crown (the Kentucky Derby, the Preakness and the Belmont Stakes). Some of the horses in those races wear blinders. Blinders are kind of like raised eye patches that limit the horse's field of vision to the track ahead. The horse can't remove them, and it can only run toward what it sees. The devil, the world, and our sinful flesh had blinders on us, too. We could only see the path toward a life of sin and hell away from God and heaven. We couldn't take our blinders off, changing our situation. We were stuck on the path to hell.

Unbelievers want nothing to do with the commands of Jesus. It's all about what feels right to me. Who cares what God says about living together outside of marriage, abortion, or respect for our government leaders? It's my life and I'll live it how I want to live: without God. Let's fill our lives with empty activities and stuff, then we will be content. They like to pretend Jesus is just a fairy tale, an opinion or a state of mind for

the weak. Unbelievers don't have the truth of God's love for us in Jesus. As Jesus says in verse 19, "Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me."

But our counselor shows us the truth about our relationship with God and the truth about how God wants us to live our lives. The Counselor came to most of us with his comfort and guidance when we were baptized. Then and there he told us that we are members of God's family, forgiven of sin, considered as holy through Jesus, and having a secure reservation in the glories of heaven. When the Holy Spirit created faith in our hearts, he changed our lives forever. The Counselor took off our blinders and pointed us to our Savior Jesus. The Spirit put us on the path to heaven, trusting in Jesus' saving work. With the blinders off, we know sin is not the only thing we can do. The Counselor shows us the forgiveness Jesus won for us on the cross and the eternal life he guaranteed for us with the empty tomb on Easter. Jesus gave his disciples and all believers a beautiful gift: the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, to keep us firmly in the truth of free salvation from Jesus. The devil's lies about a one-way ticket to hell have lost their power over us forever.

Thanks to the Counselor, we do see Jesus. Listen to our Counselor! We now have the truth. The devil tells us we can never get away from the guilt of our sins. The only way to feel better is to commit that pet sin again. The Counselor keeps us in the truth: with his death on the cross, Jesus paid for our sins once and for all. Sin's curse has lost its grip on us. The devil whispers in our ear that he has the power to rip us away from God forever. He wants us to think he can give us everything God does and more. The Counselor guides us with the truth. The devil is nothing more than a sham. He has been defeated by Jesus. Sure, the devil can roar and growl at us, but the victory has been won by our Savior Jesus. The devil's power over us is gone! The devil and the world want us to be scared of death. They want us to think of death as the end of our life without the counselor we would be like Pontius Pilate, crying out with the rest of the world, "What is truth?" The Counselor guides us with the truth. Death has been swallowed up in the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Redeemer lives! Now death is the beginning of eternal life with Jesus in heaven. Rejoice in these truths and the one who brings them to you. Listen to our Counselor! He keeps us in the truth.

The shelves of bookstores are full of self-help books. One of the most popular topics is relationships, specifically marriage. But these books can only get a couple so far. Many end up seeking out marriage counseling. But why? They want to learn how to show love for one another again. Our relationship with God isn't so good all the time either. But we have the best Counselor to help us improve our relationship with God. Listen to our Counselor! He helps us show love to God.

Without faith, people can only show hatred toward God. No matter how good a deed might seem, like giving millions of dollars to charity, it means nothing to God if it's done by someone with no faith in Jesus in their heart. Unbelieving hearts can do nothing to please God. That was once us. We were like disobedient children. Anything God wanted, we wanted nothing to do with it. We see it all around us in the world today. People want no part of God's will for their lives: the in-your-face advocates of sexual immorality in popular entertainment, the use of "OMG" "oh, my god" as an expression for any number of emotions, or the glorification of violence in movies. The sinful world makes its position very clear. It loves to hate the true God.

Jesus saw us stuck in the sinful mess of the world and had mercy on us. He asked the Father to give us the Holy Spirit to help us understand how we can show our love for the God who saved us. Jesus says, **"If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever." (vs. 15, 16)** Before the Holy Spirit gave us faith in our hearts, we were just like Cain. We had no desire to please God with our lives and actions. We only wanted our actions to look good on the outside. We did not have the proper motivation for our actions. But now we listen to our Counselor. He gives us sound advice in our hearts about how we can offer our lives to our Savior every day. The Holy Spirit gives us the true motivation for our pleasing offerings of good works: thankfulness for our Savior's redeeming work.

God gave us the blueprint for showing our love to him in the Bible. We find it in God's law. One of the uses for his law is to be a guide for showing love to our Savior. The Holy Spirit, our Counselor, works faith in

our hearts. In that faith, we now know the message of God's love for us in the Bible is the truth. Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead to guarantee the forgiveness of our sins and our eternal life with him in heaven. The Holy Spirit helps us understand how we can show our love and thanksgiving for that saving work. Jesus says, **"Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."** (V.21) Obeying the commands God gives us in the Bible is the way God gives us to show our love to him for all that he has done for us in Christ. The Holy Spirit, our Counselor, helps us understand those commands and how we can keep them to the glory of God.

Some people think keeping God's commands is something they have to do. These people believe that if they don't keep God's commands, they have not been good enough to enter heaven. That is nothing but the sinful nature's false advertising. Listen to our Counselor! He guides us to show love to God through our actions. We don't do good things because we have to, to earn our way to heaven. Jesus did all of the work of earning our way to heaven for us! We do good things because we want to, because we are saved and we are going to heaven. Our thanksgiving for God's plan of salvation becomes thanks-living every day. **"Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God."**

There's one more amazing thing about this Counselor that brings us great comfort! Who remembers the name of their high school guidance counselor? He or she isn't there for you anymore after you leave high school. Oh, you might see them, but advice does he/she have for you after graduation? The Counselor promised by Jesus is different! He is there all the time, ready to comfort and guide us, always reminding us of the truth the Word and Sacraments. Jesus promised about this Counselor that he will **"be with you forever"** (v. 15)

When you have a problem at work, who do you ask? You probably talk with your co-workers or your supervisor. If there's a problem with your child at school, you talk to their teacher or the principal. If it's a family problem, you talk with your family about it. But who do you take your advice from when it comes to God? Listen to our Counselor! The Holy Spirit speaks to us, strengthening our faith each time we are connected to Word and Sacrament. Come to worship often. Read your Meditations. It's amazing how often those short little devotions can seem like they were written just for you. Dig into the Scriptures daily, even if it's only a few verses at a time. Tell the Counselor what's bothering you in your prayers. Talk with your pastor. He is God's representative for your spiritual good. Remember your baptism and the faith the Counselor brought you through it. Enjoy the strengthening of faith the Counselor gives us in Holy Communion. The Counselor works on our hearts through the Word and sacraments. Listen to our Counselor as he guides us on the road to eternal life with Jesus. Amen.