

Who Will Take Care of Us? 2022  
John 14:1, 12, 15-18, 26-27

John 14:1, 12, 15-18, 25-27 (New Revised Standard Version)

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. Very 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. ”If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This 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. ”I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. ”I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But 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. 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 let them be afraid.

15 years ago my sermon on Pentecost was titled, “It’s Going to Be OK”,  
and I based that sermon on Joshua 1:9,

I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

I didn’t realize it at the time, but that sermon  
would be a much needed word of assurance and hope for me,  
because my father took his last breath in Virginia  
at the same hour I was preaching that sermon here.  
It was a very hard loss, the death of my last parent,  
that forced me to consider, did I really believe & trust?

**And yes, the Spirit did sustain me through that time of sorrow & loss,  
just as Jesus promised the disciples that night in the Upper Room.**

Can you imagine the tension and anxiety in the room that night?  
During that meal Jesus told them that he was leaving them,  
that he would be betrayed into the hands of sinners to die,  
which left them **confused and deeply distressed**.

Jesus, speaking into that uncertain and scary situation,  
comforts & reassures them by teaching about the Holy Spirit.

He explains that later they will understand and be able to respond,  
and know that Jesus was not going to be abandoning them, vs. 18, 26, 27.

I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. But 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.

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 let them be afraid**.

For three years his disciples had shared the journey with him.  
They got to hear his wonderful wisdom, parables and teaching,  
They had seen his miracles happen right in front of them,

healing the blind, walking on water, even raising the dead...  
... but mostly, they felt his love and sense of hope in God's mission.

Can you imagine, what an amazing experience,  
what an adventure being a disciple of Jesus must have been,  
to have spent those three years instructed and blessed  
in the very presence and inspiration of Jesus Christ?  
But Jesus was not just a miracle-worker or wise teacher sent by God.

After Jesus was crucified, resurrected and now ascended,  
the disciples were staring up, and confused, "what do we do now?"

Pentecost was **their assurance and hope** after his ascension. vs. 12, 16  
... because I am going to the Father ...and he will give you **another Advocate**...

Jesus had been the first Advocate, Pentecost is about another, vs. 17.

This 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. "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you."

As John explains it, the Father is present in and through Jesus,  
Jesus is present in and through the Holy Spirit,  
and the Spirit in and through us reaching out to the world.  
God's plan of salvation is like **a river of grace flowing downstream**.

The message and assurance that Jesus gave the disciples that night,  
was that though he was leaving them, he was not abandoning them,  
for through the Advocate – through the Holy Spirit,  
he would still be with them, wherever they went,  
to see them through all of life's trials and storms.

God the Father, sent Jesus Christ the Son of God,  
i.e. God in human flesh to teach and reveal the truth of God,  
in order to fulfill God's will and gracious purpose,  
which is the healing-salvation of humankind  
from the dire consequences of sin and death.

The Holy Spirit came to continue and fulfill that mission  
by enabling and empowering us to receive & respond to God's grace.

While Jesus walked the roads of Palestine as a human being,  
he was limited to a particular finite space and time,  
meaning that **at any time he could only be in one place**.

The Spirit is **the infinite presence** of God always everywhere  
continuing the ministry and work of Jesus  
through the mission and ministry of the Church.

As Jesus explained, the Holy Spirit bears witness to Christ,  
teaching and reminding the disciples  
of all that Jesus did and taught them.

And for us, the Holy Spirit is the bridge across the gap of history  
between the disciples way back then, and us here today  
by being present in us and with us inspiring us,  
and as we gather as the body of Christ ---  
fulfilling the promise of Jesus: **Matt 18:20**  
For where two or three are gathered in my name, **I am there among them.**

The Holy Spirit is the presence of Jesus Christ in the present,  
who guides and helps and supports us to live as Christians  
even amid all the changing complexities of our modern world.

It is by the Holy Spirit that we are led and directed  
in the continuing process of transforming us inside and out  
to become and live more and more Christ-like lives  
as the Spirit guides our response to God's grace.

The Spirit guides us to live beyond ourselves and our understanding.

Though the Bible is already written and its contents complete,  
God is not finished, and God continues to speak and transform,  
through the person and presence of the Holy Spirit.  
It is God's Spirit who opens & reveals the truth of Scripture to us.

I've found that as faith matures and is more attune to the Spirit,  
we learn to listen, to trust, be more willing to step out in faith,  
and live faithful lives more spiritually sensitive and hopeful.

Pre-Civil War, when the Supreme Court ruled in the Dred Scott case,  
it was a major set back against the hopes of those held in slavery,  
making the law, that if a slave escaped to a state in the North,  
they could still be caught and returned South like property.

After that decision, speaking at crowded meeting, Fredrick Douglas  
was describing how that decision would destroy the black race  
by keeping them always under the horrible conditions of slavery...  
... a bleak cloud of hopeless disappointment settled over the audience,  
as they felt a sense of overwhelming devastation, loss and grief.

Then, an old black woman in the front row and slowly stood,  
and every eye shifted to her, to Sojourner Truth's presence,  
and even Fredrick Douglas paused in his speech.  
Pointing her withered, long, bony finger at him,  
in a confident voice, she cried out, "**Fredrick, is God dead?**"

A historian present in the audience described it this way:  
**her words were like a flash of lightning, the cloud began to break,  
as faith and hope were restored that justice would surely prevail.**

In this life we can rarely see or know our way very far ahead,  
our future is uncertain and often beyond our control,  
but we are called to trust in the Holy Spirit of God,  
that surely God is present & gracious, wise and at work,  
as we're called & equipped to listen, follow and obey.

**But being called and equipped to listen and follow, to trust and obey,  
doesn't mean that by our own ideas, our efforts and good works,  
that somehow on our own we're supposed to build the Kingdom of God,  
or that we're expected to handle our trials & troubles on our own.**

God's Holy Spirit doesn't reject our good and faithful efforts,  
but guides us to serve so to make the best use of our resources.

**Pentecost is both what God is doing and has accomplished for us,  
and what God calls & equips us to accomplish wherever God has put us.**

A friend pointed out in a sermon one time,  
that the Church is like a sailboat, and shouldn't be like a rowboat.  
It's meant to be God-powered, not human effort-powered.

Our task is not to row harder, it's not to accomplish **our agenda**,  
but to position our sails, our lives so to catch the Spirit-Wind...  
... by presenting our sails for the wind to drive the boat...  
and thereby getting in on whatever God has going on.

It is as we are promised in Jeremiah 29:11

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, **to give you a future with hope.**

**... and that is the promise and power of Pentecost.**

So today, in the quiet of Communion let us meditate and self-examine,  
1<sup>st</sup>, What does it mean that God chose to love and bless each of us?

2<sup>nd</sup>, What does it mean to respond as God intends and desires for us,  
by loving our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength,  
and to love **all** our neighbors as fervently as we love ourselves?

Today, perhaps we need the Spirit of Pentecost more than ever,  
to guide and empower us to serve in this wounded & broken world  
with courage & strength to step beyond **mere maintenance mode.**

As a church, a faith-community, this is where God has called us to be  
where we are all equipped to serve, sacrifice and make a difference  
by being useful and authentic, effective and faithful,  
by becoming **who God created & intended for us to be.**

As Paul reminds us in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 3:16-17,

"Do you not know that you are God's temple and that **God's Spirit dwells in you?** ... For God's temple is holy, and **you are that temple.**"