

Gospel: John 14:15-21

[Jesus said to the disciples:] 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.

¹⁸“I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. ¹⁹In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. ²⁰On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

Some context: For many years, tradition and biblical studies held that the Gospel of John was understood to be the “Spiritual” Gospel. This generally meant two things: it did not much historical value and was simply spiritual in nature rather than being contextually relevant.

And yet -- we can assume that the redactor of the Gospel of John did a more extensive re-reading of the Jesus story so that he could respond to his contextual reality. What does this mean – he wrote for real people – going through real issues!

1. Where are we in John’s Gospel? What is happening? What real issue are the disciples facing? See John 13:33, 36; 14:2, 5.

2. According to John in a nutshell – 14:1-14 – how do we know God?

14:15-27 – how do we get the Spirit?

What are God’s commandments? – 13:34

3. Why would anyone believe that authentic life comes from a Jesus who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, a Jesus whom they cannot see?

4. Why are you a Christian?

5. So what does this text mean for us today? What issues are you/the church going through today in regards to your faith?

6. How do we feel when we lose a loved one? 14:18 – reminder 1:12

7. How do we go on – in our faith when we feel worn out and just plain tired?

8. How might the work of the Holy Spirit – be more effective than Jesus? -- 14:1-14

9. v. 16 - John's gospel calls the Spirit the *paraklētos* or Advocate – what comes to mind when we use that term?

1. At the last supper Jesus has been telling the disciples about his coming departure, which raises the disturbing prospect of separation This is part of Jesus' Farewell Discourse to his disciples -- chapters 13-17

2. Through the Son

Keeping Jesus' commandments 'if you love me'

Notice in John -- human need always seems to come first – 2:1-11, 4:46-51, 5:1-10, 6:1-14, 8:53-11, 9:1-7, 11:38-44

3. No one would believe --apart from the work of the Spirit. For it is the Spirit who makes the presence of the living Jesus and his Father known.

4. Coming to faith is analogous to falling in love. One cannot fall in love in the abstract. Love comes through an encounter with another person. The same is true of faith. If faith is a relationship with the living Christ and the living God who sent him, then faith can only come through an encounter with them. And the Spirit is the one who makes this presence known.

5. Pandemic – separation from loved ones, feeling of being orphaned. We just celebrated Mother’s Day without being able to be in physical proximity of mom.
6. How can we live up to the example of our mothers, fathers and mentors? Who can replace Pope John Paul II, Martin Luther King Jr., Gandhi, Mother Theresa, Susan Day, etc.? I can imagine the disciples probably asked themselves similar questions: “How can we keep The Commandments, our faith, and continue our struggle without the guidance of Jesus?”
7. The Gospel of John is certainly a reminder that we are not alone. Remember Hebrews – we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses!!
8. The limitations of the embodiment of Jesus are no longer an impediment, because as can be seen in the Gospel of John, “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever.” The Holy Spirit has been sent for us, and without any physical constraints! The possibilities now appear endless.

In the history of the church whenever a historical epoch has occurred in which the Spirit has been given primacy, the barriers of sexism, classism, and all sorts of prejudices have been torn down. Now the spirit of truth is ever present not only to bring us to knowledge that we can be reconciled to God through Jesus, but that we will be able to discern values of justice, mercy and peace to which we should adhere with the discernment process that only the spirit of truth can provide us.

The Holy Spirit, unrestrained by ethnicity, gender, class and sexuality, guides us to places beyond the physical and psychic limitations imposed by our bodies, experiences and historical realities.

9. In the court system, in the health care network, or in an educational institution, while other advocates may press the legislature to act on behalf of a certain cause. A quick reading of John may give the impression that the Spirit is the Advocate who brings our case up before God in the hope that God will do something merciful for us.

But here the direction is the opposite. God has already given the gift of love unstintingly through the death and resurrection of Jesus, and such love is what creates genuine life. The Spirit is the Advocate who brings the truth of that love and life to people in this time after Easter, which makes faith possible.