

Sermon for May 25th, 2014

Sixth Sunday after Easter, John 14:15-23

Christ is Risen!!! He is Risen Indeed!!! Alleluia

This week's sermon was a rather **emotional** one for me to write because I did something in preparation for the sermon which I have not done before. I sent out a question to a random sampling of the congregation via **email**, I posted this same question on **facebook** for anyone to respond to, I posted it on the **Eden Lutheran Youth** webpage, and I posted it on our **Eden website**. I got responses from not only our congregation but from friends all over the country.

The question that I asked was basically, *'how do you sense the Holy Spirit working in your life?'* I wanted to hear **real** stories from anyone who chose to respond as I believe it is important for us to remember that even though we read these texts on Sunday mornings and we **believe** what we read—the truth is that the Holy Spirit is as alive today as it was in generations gone by. The **presence** of the Holy Spirit was not just something that came to only a select few disciples when Jesus died. It is for each and every one of us.

In my email and in my postings I did write that anything that I said would have no names attached to the stories and the information would be general in nature. I have to tell you I got some of the most wonderful responses. It was so **incredible** to hear your stories!! I read the story of the person who actually **died 2**

times during their life, who was **miraculously** brought back to life, and in their words ‘*felt the comfort and peace that the Holy Spirit brings*’, how the Holy Spirit **humbles us** by helping us to learn and to become better people, stories of lives **shattered and broken** by divorce, death and personal tragedy-the **same** lives that were ultimately restored and renewed by the power of the Spirit, stories of a feeling of presence and guidance that could **not be explained**, a story of being saved miraculously from what could have been a **life ending car accident**, stories of how the Holy Spirit is felt when the choir is singing in church, about how God’s gifts and provisions just ‘show up’ in our lives and they are **more than** we could even ask for, pray for, or expect, feeling the **power of prayer** upholding us in our lives when we feel as though we do not have the strength to go on, and how the Holy Spirit is with us when we least expect it in the **gentle nudges** in the right direction which brings us to unrealized possibility and blessing. **Thank you** to all who responded. I feel **enriched and blessed** by your willingness to share.

Here is how I would like to **conclude** this time of sharing—this was written in one of the posts. *“The Holy Spirit to me is not an object that is seen, but is felt. It is a voice of caution, or a consciousness that helps to guide me when my thoughts get all jumbled in my head. It’s a reminder to always try to do the right thing, or it warns me when something isn’t feeling exactly right. It protects me when trouble comes along that I do not see.”* Again, **thank you** all.

This morning in our gospel reading Jesus is talking to his disciples about when he leaves them—which at this point in John’s gospel is going to be soon. Jesus tells them that he is going to **ask the Father** to send them ‘*another Advocate*’ to be with them forever—of course Jesus was the first advocate that God sent on our behalf. An advocate is one who has been **called** to our side to stand up for us, to be a **counselor**, one who **guides** us, a **helper**. Jesus is the Spirit of truth, one the world will not receive, but the one the disciples will know because this coming Advocate will abide with them and will be IN them.

The next verse in our text is particularly important for us to hear because it is a **promise** that Jesus makes to us all even though we were **not** there that day. He says, *“I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.”* We will not be left orphaned, **love** Jesus, **keep** His word, God will **love** us, and they will come to **make their home** within us. What comfort, what a blessing, what a great and loving God we have. How **wonderful** is that!!!! What more promise do we need????

I would like to shift gears and talk for a moment about this *“Holy Spirit”* because for **some** the idea of something being **among us** which is unseen is a bit abstract and hard to imagine. Like Judas said in our reading, *“Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?”* He was not really just quite

sure **how** that was going to happen. There are those of us who, **like** the disciples, might want to have a **concrete** explanation, an **image**, something **tangible** to hold onto when it comes to this concept of the Holy Spirit. Truly, when it comes right down to it if you were asked to draw a picture of the Holy Spirit what would you draw??

For some people, it is like Jesus said, *'This is the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive because they neither see him nor do they know him'*. And honestly, for the most part, the examples I gave earlier in my sermon were not something **any** of the people who wrote me could put their hands on—they were **feelings, nudges** in a certain direction, **events or circumstances** which 'just occurred' without explanation.

Ok, so how about this for something tangible? Has this ever happened to you? You were thinking about a friend that you had not talked to in a long time and **suddenly** seemingly out of nowhere they called you—emailed you—facebooked you? (Something tangible) Or how about if you had misplaced something and could not for the life of you think of what you did with it—and all of a sudden in a dream you remembered where it was or you came across it when you least expected it. (Something tangible) There could be any number of other 'unexplained' events that might occur in your life. For those who do not believe these events may be deemed 'coincidence', 'happenstance', or 'luck'. As a

believer in God and Jesus Christ it is important for me to believe it is the power of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives like we heard in our stories this morning.

Here is one **final example** that I will give. This morning we are going to be baptizing baby **Lorelai**. She was originally going to be baptized near the end of June. Her mom, Heather, called me the other day and said that they needed to see if the baptism could be moved to today because they were going to be moving in a couple of weeks so could we do the baptism early. I said sure. When I read the gospel text I thought, '*what a perfect text for us*'. Today we **not only** get to hear about Jesus sending the Holy Spirit to dwell among us we get to **visually** experience the **power** of the Spirit right here in our presence through this baptism as well as being able to renew our own baptismal promises at the same time.

God is **alive** in us. The Spirit of the Lord Jesus is **alive** in us. The Holy Spirit, our advocate and guide, is **alive and dwelling right here among us**. Through the **blessing** of the Holy Spirit we are never far from **God. AMEN.**