

Another Helper

**St. Mark Lutheran
Three services**

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"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him." John 14:15-21

Have you ever had a really good friend move away? How did you feel? Not too good, I would bet. I have had some good friends move away, and I have not felt the least bit good about it at the time.

I can remember several cases of good friends moving far away and feeling unhappy about it. But in each case they tried to prepare me. They told me that they would keep in touch. They assured me that we would see each other again, and they said other comforting things. I am happy to say that most of the things they have said have come to pass.

We see the Lord doing that this morning with those who had been close to him. He knew that his present time on earth was drawing to an end. Some things were going to happen in the near future that would be difficult for the disciples. He wanted to make sure they understood that he was not abandoning them. In a sense, he was still going to be around. He understood that they had some reservations about how this was all going to work out.

Would you agree with the statement that everyone needs a little help now and then? I don't agree with it. No, I would say that "everybody needs a lot of help" is much closer to the truth. We need a lot of help in life: in making ends meet, in making decisions about school and a career and marriage, in our relationships with others, when things are not going well, even when things are going really well. I suspect most of us need help in our relationship with God. In our text, the disciples needed help. Jesus was about to go away - to die. The disciples certainly were going to need help!

So, Jesus died on the cross to atone for our sins, but he was resurrected, and the disciples were filled with joy. Then they found out he was going to go away again! We should remember that this coming Thursday. It is Ascension Day, forty days after Easter, when we remember that Jesus ascended into heaven. But Jesus cared about the

disciples. He was still going to take care of them. He said a Helper was going to be sent who would be with God's people all of the time. The Holy Spirit was going to be sent when Jesus returned to heaven.

Now the original Greek word Jesus used was "Paraclete". That word we translate as "helper". Some translations have it as "counselor". The Greek word has the idea of one who walks along side of you, encouraging and instructing. It gives the idea of someone who cares. The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives is all part of God's plan to provide us with care.

It reminds me of when I first learned to drive. My father was a kind of "Paraclete" .

He sat beside me and taught me about using the gas pedal, the brake, and things to keep in mind when gripping the steering wheel and driving. He had to be patient because we used a clutch in many of the cars in those days, and I didn't always get the timing right. He encouraged me but he also pointed out my mistakes. Things were going along pretty well, but maybe I got a little over-confident. One day, driving us home from work, I moved the car too quickly and did not allow enough room. I crunched the fender on the driver's side. We were able to drive home, but it was a very quiet ride. I felt sick that I had damaged the car. I was sure that a stern reprimand would be coming soon and went straight to my room. But Dad surprised me. He came and told me that in a sense the accident could be a good thing, because it showed me how easily an accident can happen. He was right. It did affect how carefully I drove in the future, and I always appreciated that he had handled the accident in the way that he did.

I see similarities here with the work of the Holy Spirit. But there is one big difference. As a "Helper", the Holy Spirit is always with a believer. Remember what Jesus said: "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper to be with you forever-the Spirit of truth." The Holy Spirit comforts, guides, and instructs us. He does this by using the Word of God in our lives. It is by hearing or reading this Word that the Holy Spirit convicts us that we are sinners and in need of a Savior. The Holy Spirit's main job is to turn us away from ourselves and towards Jesus so that we might receive forgiveness of our sins and salvation. He then reminds us when we have done something wrong so that we can take the proper steps to receive forgiveness and comfort.

I would hope that all of us know that the Holy Spirit is the third person in the Holy Trinity.

Sometimes well-meaning people come to the door and try to tell us that the word "Trinity" is not in the Bible. But the concept of the Holy Trinity is taught in at least three places in the Bible, and any person who does not understand that does not fully understand the nature of God or how He is working in the world today. Martin Luther clearly explains the work of the Holy Spirit in his explanation of the

Third Article of the Apostle's Creed in the Small Catechism. He writes, "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith." (pg. 147)

Sadly, many people deny this truth, either because they have not been informed or they don't understand it. Remember our Lord's words here, that the world cannot receive the Holy Spirit "because it neither sees Him nor knows Him".

Finally, the Holy Spirit moves us to love others, just as we have been loved by God. In this way we carry out Christ's wishes to "Love each other as I have loved you." The Christian life should seek to reflect the life of Jesus, which was all about humility and sacrifice. The motivation to help each other should not be to get a pat on the back or some other kind of recognition. Christian love gives even when the sinful heart tries to find a reason not to do so. Christian love gives when it is inconvenient and unappealing. Christian love makes it possible for us to love even those who are not that lovable. Christian love is the willing response to what the Holy Spirit works in our hearts. We give thanks this morning for the gift of the Holy Spirit and the work of the Holy Spirit, and we know that when we follow His leading, we will be blessed. Amen.