

May 26, 2019

The Advocate – Teacher, Reminder

Prayer

May the words of my mouth be meditations of our hearts and be always acceptable unto thee. Oh Lord, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

Sermon

As we've walked through the season of Easter, we have heard stories about the resurrection appearances. We also have gone back to hear some of Jesus' last words before he was arrested and crucified. What he said to his disciples as he was trying to prepare them for his leaving them, for his physical presence no longer being with them. The Gospel reading for today is one of those readings, where he's trying to prepare the disciples to be without his physical presence. Not to be led by him physically, by his words, by his very presence.

That you can imagine was a very difficult thing. Trying to get them to understand that even though he wouldn't be with them that they would be okay. That they would have a presence that would not exactly be him, but would be the Holy Spirit, would it be an advocate. He was trying to comfort them, trying to make sure that they didn't enter this time with troubled hearts. Do not let your hearts be troubled. Don't let them be afraid. He was not going to leave them comfortless. He was going to the Father, and that was a good thing. The Father would send in his name, the advocate, so that they would have a presence, so that they would have leadership, so that they would have the power that was necessary for them to fulfill the witness that they had been prepared for.

Now, he says something to the disciples that would be easy to overlook, but I think it is very important. What he says about the coming of the Holy Spirit, is that it would teach them. That suggests to me that they hadn't learned everything yet. They didn't have everything that God wanted them to have. That this was the beginning of a journey, not the journey's end. That the giving of the Holy Spirit, that the resurrection was not the end of all things. That from there, something new was to be learned, and that humanity who would listen to the guiding of the Holy Spirit, would continue to learn and know and understand about creation, and even about themselves, about humanity. I am a believer that the progress that we have seen in humanity, from the first century to today, is by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It's about God as we have grown, as we have been able to understand, have learned some of the things about humanity, and about creation, that we simply could not know before, that we were not ready for, that we were not prepared for.

As you see the progress from the first century to today, that has been immense. What the holy Spirit has taught us about humanity, about the world, is so great. He also said that the Holy Spirit would not only be a teacher but would remind them of all that he had given them. What was it that Jesus was always trying to show to his disciples? He was introducing them to the Kingdom of God. He was introducing them to a new way of seeing the world and seeing one

another, seeing all the people. To see beyond the surface, to see beyond the differences, to see beyond all those things that separate us and go to the heart of an individual, to be able to love and care for them.

His one commandment that he gave to his disciples, "Love one another as I have loved you." Not because the other is perfect, but because they are a child of God. Love one another because that is the vision that God has for creation, that God has had from the very beginning of creation, that we find a way to lay aside our pride, that we find a way to lay aside that urge for resources and riches, our greed, our pride, our lust for power and authority over others.

Jesus and all He said and did, showed that he cared for the great and for those who are not, the poor, the prisoner. That is what I think the Holy Spirit tries to remind us of when we allow ourselves to be in the presence of the Holy Spirit intentionally. To begin to try to see one another and lay aside those things that are within us, that separate us from the other. I truly believe that we have been taught, humanity has been taught by the Holy Spirit, so well that we now can feed every human being. There is no reason why any human being should go to bed hungry. We know how to grow the crops in the worst of situations, and yet, because we have not always been reminded of the love that we are to show for our fellow human beings, to often the food is too expensive, because of the greed of those who are in control.

Sometimes food goes to waste, it is simply thrown out, because people aren't willing to share it with those. They can't make a profit, they'd rather see it go to waste, they'd rather see people starve, then to share this abundance that they have. We see it throughout the world. I believe that we have been so taught and led by the Holy Spirit, that we are able to cure, or at least help those who are sick throughout the world. And yet, because of the greed and the pride, and the want of power, we don't make it available to the people who need it. We're willing, people are willing to see others suffer and die from diseases that could be cured. To suffer, when they could take a drug that would help them alleviate the pain, because they can't afford it, because the desire to be rich and powerful and important, governs them instead of a Christian understanding of seeing our brothers and sisters as just that. As worth our love, as worth our care, as worth us being able to give to them the things that they need, when we can help, choose not to because other things get in the way.

Jesus tried to start to and build a community that could see beyond these things and give up these things. Holy Spirit, for those who believe, for those who accept, are reminded of that in the living of our lives. When we have an abundance to share with those who have not enough. When we are in a position of power to help those, who have no power on their own. Power, wealth, are not bad things. It's being reminded of the love, the connection to one another that we have as humanity, as we have as creation, as we have as children of God, that should lead us to offer ourselves, to offer what we have, to help those who need help. Yet, too often, we put something else in the place of God. Too often, we put our own desires, our own pride, and our own perceived need for more resources, more wealth in front of the need of the poor, and the lost, and the lonely.

Jesus said to his disciples that he would not leave them comfortless, that he would send the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would teach us, and the Holy Spirit has taught us. Let us recognize that in the living of our lives, that who we are, that who we have become, who we are becoming, is being led by that Holy Spirit, by our creator, by the one who gives us life, by the one who gives us blessing after blessing. Let us speak out as we are reminded of who we are, the forgiven children of God, the citizens of God's kingdom, let us speak out against those who would withhold food, withhold the pharmaceuticals, withhold the water, withhold the things that are necessary for life and living. Let us call for justice, let us call for peace. Let us be reminded and remind others of what Jesus said about loving God and loving one another.

Perhaps if we can share that message with enough love and care, perhaps we won't have to add anymore names to those that we remember who gave their lives trying to defend, or trying to kill others, that this memorial day would be one where we finally strive for peace, because we are reminded of the love that God has for each individual, and how important it is to honor that in life. Jesus said to his disciples, "I will send the advocate, the Holy Spirit of God. He will teach you everything and remind you of my words." Let us learn, let us be reminded.

Gregory Hein – Rector