

May 17, 2020
Sixth Sunday of Easter

ST. JOHN UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Fairview Heights, IL 62208
618-397-6323

Service Prayers for the Sixth Sunday of Easter

Texts: Acts 17:22-31; Psalm 66:8-20; 1 Peter 3:13-22; John 14:15-21



CALL TO WORSHIP

Come to worship, people of God, with praises on your lips.

We glorify the One who holds our hands when we slip.

Come into the presence of the One who calls us into this sacred space.

Where the doors to grace are thrown open so all may enter.

Come and hear the stories of the One who loves you.

**We will tell of the joy and of the love,
of the peace and of the hope which is ours.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

When it doesn't seem to do any good, Creator God,
we dare to be your people,
to love those the world would have us reject;
to be just in the face of every reason to mistreat;
to be unafraid of whatever awaits us.

When all the odds seem stacked against, Jesus our Savior,
we dare to live as your sisters and brothers,
serving others with our hands and hearts;
sharing in the burdens of our world;
refusing to leave justice orphaned with no hope.

When the wind seems to be knocked out of us
by the blows of life, Eternal Companion, we dare to breathe
joy upon those caught in the net of hopelessness;
peace into all the broken places around us;
wonder for all those who have lost sight of you.

In you, we dare to live and breathe and be, God in
Community, Holy in One, even as we pray as we are taught,
(*The Lord's Prayer*)

SCRIPTURE TEXT: John 14:15-23

I won't leave you as orphans

¹⁵ “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ I will ask the Father, and he will send another Companion, (or Advocate) who will be with you forever. ¹⁷ This Companion is the Spirit of Truth, whom the world can't receive because it neither sees him nor recognizes him. You know him, because he lives with you and will be with you.

¹⁸ “I won't leave you as orphans. I will come to you. ¹⁹ Soon the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Because I live, you will live too. ²⁰ On that day you will know that I am in my Father, you are in me, and I am in you. ²¹ Whoever has my commandments and keeps them loves me. Whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

MESSAGE: If you've ever had questions about the Holy Spirit, I found today's teaching to be very helpful. When I was a kid, I heard the preacher talking about the Holy Ghost and in my little brain, I couldn't figure out why we had ghosts in church. So that's another reason I appreciate this scripture passage.

The scene is Jesus' farewell discourse to his Disciples before they go to the garden and Jesus is arrested. These lessons continue from last week's John 14:15-21, when we discussed how the Disciples must have felt knowing Jesus would be leaving them soon. The Disciples were wondering what would happen. What would this “new normal” be for

them; just as WE are wondering what our “new normal” will be when we step out of our “Upper Room” experience.

(With thoughts from Gail O'Day).

Jesus began these final words (verse 13) to the Disciples by commanding them to love one another. In verse 15 Jesus tells them “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” We are called to love as Jesus loved. This important theme will return in verse 21.

In verse 16, Jesus tells the Disciples that he will not leave them orphans. What does mean? If Jesus is leaving them, who will take care of them? Who will be their foster parents? Jesus introduces them to the one with many names; Companion, Paraclete, Advocate, Spirit of Truth, Holy Spirit.

Jesus tells them that the “world” will not receive this Companion because the people who reject Jesus, also will be rejected by this Companion. Because the Disciples know who Jesus is and believe in him, the Companion will dwell or abide with them.

The coming of the Companion plays a role in the believer's ability to remember and to keep the commandments of Jesus after his departure. In verse 26 Jesus tells them that the Companion will “remind you of all that I have said to you.” (How do you imagine this? How can we be reminded and never forget all the things Jesus has said to us? Let me know what you think.)

In the Gospel of John, the Companion is key to Jesus' preparation of his Disciples for their life after his return to God. **(Can we also use this Companion of the Holy Spirit to prepare us for life after the Corona virus?)**

This prominence of the Companion in the Gospel of John addresses a key set of theological questions. If Jesus as the incarnate Word brings a distinctive revelation of God to the community, what happens when the incarnation ends? Was the revelation of God in Jesus available only for those who had firsthand experience of the historical Jesus and his ministry? Is Jesus' revelation of God limited to one moment in history, or does it have a future beyond its particular historical moment?

This Advocate/Holy Spirit that God will send is **the link between the historical ministry of Jesus and the future life of the church after Jesus' death**. That is why I believe we must pay attention to the Holy Spirit. This link is very important. **The Holy Spirit is the ongoing presence of Jesus in the post-resurrection community (including us) and serves as teacher and witness**. As the ongoing presence of Jesus, the Holy Spirit abides with the Disciples (and us) and is not seen or known by the world. As teacher and witness, the Holy Spirit continues to speak as Jesus has spoken and aids the Disciples (and us) in the interpretation of the events of Jesus' life.

One more thing. The Holy Spirit in the Gospel of John is NOT a private possession of an individual believer. It is a **GIFT to all disciples**, witnessing to the life of Jesus and continuing to speak his word. The Holy Spirit testifies to Jesus in the midst of a world that is filled with hatred (verse 15). The Holy Spirit provides encouragement to the community (including us) in the face of persecution and chaos and pandemics. The love of God made known in the incarnation continues into the life of post-resurrection communities through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

When our world is in chaos because of this pandemic, we are not alone. **God's gift of the Holy Spirit is with us, abides with us, teaches us, and reminds us of the one, Jesus Christ, who died on the cross because he loved us. Never forget you are loved and God cares what happens to us in the next months and years to come.**

I hope this message helps us all understand and appreciate this gift, this foster parent, this Holy Spirit, this Advocate; by whatever name you call it; even if you call it a ghost. Amen.

OFFERING: Thank you for continuing your gifts to the church. The doors may be closed, but the work of the church continues.

BLESSING

Go from this worship, speaking of what God has done.

We will remind everyone that, despite everything, God loves us.

Go from this worship, singing of what God is doing.

We will rejoice that God has not left us orphaned, but makes us one with everyone around us.

Go from this place, imagining what God will do.

We will witness to that hope which seems too distant, yet is as close to us as our hearts.

Liturgy by (c) 2017 Thom M. Shuman



THE HOLY SPIRIT ABIDES IN YOU.

WE REMEMBER IN PRAYER THE FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF
Les Sattery

ST. JOHN PRAYER LIST: Dave Seneczyn, Eric White, Lori Riess, Charles Chamberlin, Donna Isselhard, Mitch Nallie, Candy Pearce, Greg Talley, Carol Meyer, Leah Williams, Pat Holtgrave, Jane Riess, Rich Schmitt, Cherie Klostermann, Shari Hamilton, Charlotte Watson, Becky Ballard, Hanna Mosco, Bill Underwood.

**We isolate now so when we gather again,
no one is missing.**

Peace and Blessings, Pastor Rosemary
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