

## SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

### Cross of Glory Evangelical Lutheran Church

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## If's He's Told Us Once, He's Told Us a Thousand Times

### John 14:23-29

Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.<sup>24</sup> He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me."<sup>25</sup> "All this I have spoken while still with you."<sup>26</sup> But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.<sup>27</sup> Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.<sup>28</sup> "You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I."<sup>29</sup> I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.

Today is a special day. For one of our members, it is his confirmation day. It's a day we pray he will always remember as the day he promised to remain faithful to his Lord until death. This day is also special as it is the day our nation has set aside to honor mothers. One of the things that makes mom special is the unique gift they have for imparting their wisdom to us. It seems there are some things they say that are nearly universal to moms across the ages. You've probably heard them: "If you're friends jumped off a cliff, would you jump, too?" "You'd forget your head if it wasn't attached to your body." "Don't make me come down there!" "If I've said it once, I've said it a thousand times!" Why do moms say these things over and over again? It's because it usually takes two or three or a hundred times before it sinks in. Jesus must have felt the same way with his disciples, at times. He told them the same things time and time again, but yet they always seemed to forget. In our gospel reading today, Jesus has some important words for his disciples and for each of us. He also lets his followers know that he is going to remind them of these words time and time again.

Jesus spoke these words to his disciples on the evening before his crucifixion. The disciples' world was about to change dramatically. For the past three years, they could rely on having Jesus with them day in and day out to teach them, correct them and guide them with his Word. Soon, he would no longer be there by their side. In his parting words to his disciples, Jesus spoke much important truth. He begins our reading by telling his disciples his expectations for them after he leaves. He wants them to obey his teaching. He says, "*If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.*" These words place a pretty heavy burden on the disciples. They must obey Jesus' teaching. First of all this means they must remember what Jesus has told them. If they do remember it, they must fight against their sinful flesh which will tell them to ignore it and follow a different path.

This certainly wasn't easy to do. We only have to fast forward a few hours and we see Peter doing exactly the opposite. Peter is asked to confess his allegiance to Jesus in the courtyard of

the high priest. It would have been a good time for Peter to remember Jesus' words: "*If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.*" Either Peter forgot or he just didn't listen. Instead, he did exactly the opposite. He denied Jesus and followed himself. This isn't the only example of one of Jesus' disciples not obeying his teaching. It would happen again and again. Jesus' followers would let him down more than once.

And it still happens today, doesn't it? We know the teachings of Jesus. We have learned them throughout our lives. On a confirmation day like today, many of us can think of our own confirmation instruction and the way we were taught the many doctrines of the Scriptures. Martin Luther did us a service by summarizing the teaching of Jesus in his small catechism. We know Jesus' teaching. But do we always obey his teaching? Or are there times we act as though we have completely forgotten? Sad to say, we find ourselves in Peter's sandals more than once—speaking or acting contrary to the Word which has been taught us. And what is the conclusion that Jesus' words to us today lead us to when we think about the times we have sinned—this must mean that we don't love Jesus. That's what he said, right? "*He who does not love me will not obey my teaching.*" That's a pretty scary thought. It's especially scary when we realize the ultimate punishment for those who do not love or believe in Jesus. Yet, in just a few short verses, Jesus talks about his peace filling the disciples' hearts and lives. How is this possible? How can they have peace if they knowingly disobey his teaching?

We need to look at the words that come between those verses. We need to look at the promise that Jesus gives to his disciples. He tells them, "*But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*" Jesus told the disciples that he was going to give them a gift. And this was no ordinary gift. He was going to send them the gift of the Holy Spirit. If the disciples would otherwise forget Jesus' teaching, the Holy Spirit would be there to remind them of what Jesus said. Next week, we will celebrate the festival of Pentecost. That is the day, on which we see the disciples receive this gift of the Holy Spirit in a very special way. Not only does the Spirit remind them of Jesus' teaching, he gives them the desire to proclaim that teaching to others.

Jesus has given us this same gift. The Bible tells us that in Holy Baptism we are born again of water and the Spirit. The Spirit breathes life into our spiritual corpses and opens our eyes to the truths of God's Word. The word that Jesus uses for the Spirit, which is translated "Counselor," is the Greek word *paraclete*. The word literally means "called to one's side." A good way to picture this word is to envision a coach calling his team to his side and giving them a pep talk. A good coach knows what to say. He knows what the team needs to hear. Sometimes, the team needs a kick in the pants. Sometimes the team needs some gentle encouragement. In the same way, the Spirit counsels us by giving us the right words at the right time. There are times when we need to be shown our sin and its consequences, calling us to repentance. There are times when we need the gentle encouragement of the gospel, which tells us our sins are forgiven through our Savior Jesus. Whatever the case, the Counselor performs his task perfectly.

And how does the Spirit speak to us? He uses the means of grace—the gospel in Word and Sacraments. He doesn't just whisper in our ear. He speaks to us through the Word as it is preached on a Sunday morning or read in our homes by ourselves. He speaks a word of faith into our hearts through the Sacrament of Baptism. He speaks words of comfort and forgiveness to us through the Sacrament of Communion. Sometimes, he uses the people around us as a way of communicating his message to us. On this Mother's Day, we think of the special role that the

Lord has given to Christian mothers and the way he can use a mom to counsel a child with his Word. Moms can give great advice. But there is no better words they can speak to a child than the words of Jesus as they instruct and encourage their sons and daughters in the faith. We thank God for the way he has used special people, like our mothers, to bring his gospel message to our hearts.

And what is the result of the Counselor's work in our lives? Jesus says it perfectly: "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*" The Counselor speaks to us and we have peace. When we disobey the Lord's teaching and we act as though we don't love him, the Spirit reminds us that this is exactly why Jesus came to this earth—to live and die in our place and earn our forgiveness. What could bring greater peace than the forgiveness of our sins? It's a peace the world could never give us. The best the world could offer us is a shallow feeling of security or well-being that can easily be snatched away. But the peace the Spirit gives us lasts eternally.

For our confirmand, today is a milestone in his life's walk of faith. But there are many miles left to walk. There is no better encouragement for him to receive than to know the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, will go with him along his way. We can all receive that comfort and encouragement today. Let's look to the Spirit that Jesus has given to us for our counsel and guidance every day of lives. And God's peace will be with us wherever we go. **Amen.**

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Sermon No. 266

May 9, 2010

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