

**Weekend of Sunday, May 26, 2019**  
**6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter/Lectionary X/Proper X/Year C**  
**Primary Text: John 14:23-29**  
**Sermon Title: “Continuing Ed”**

**Theme**

*As Jesus talks of returning to the Father, he promises to send the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who will teach Jesus’ followers and remind them of all that Jesus taught. Even more, those in whom God makes a home will experience a peace that overcomes fear.*

**Text**

<sup>23</sup>Jesus answered Judas (not Iscariot), “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.

<sup>24</sup>Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

<sup>25</sup>“I have said these things to you while I am still with you. <sup>26</sup>But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. <sup>27</sup>Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. <sup>28</sup>You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I am coming to you.’ If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. <sup>29</sup>And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe.”

## Sermon

Some context is needed for you to more fully understand the Gospel Reading.

There are times when I think the lectionary editors set us preachers up. I think it is obvious that where this Gospel Reading should have started is before "Jesus answered Judas (not Iscariot)" don't you think? So allow me to back the passage up. The story really begins at table with Jesus and his disciples on the infamous night of his betrayal, the Last Supper. Judas has already left the table to do his dirty deed, and Jesus has told his remaining disciples in the clearest of terms yet that he will be leaving them. Starting a few verses earlier, this is how the conversation went:

*John 14:18* I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. <sup>19</sup>In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. <sup>20</sup>On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. <sup>21</sup>They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them."

And then the Gospel Reading for today continues here.

<sup>22</sup>Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?" <sup>23</sup>Jesus answered him, "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. <sup>24</sup>Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

And so on.

So the issue that Judas (not Iscariot) asked about was both 'where are you going, and if you are going away, how will you reveal yourself to us, and yet, not to the world?'

Good questions, especially if one had no knowledge or experience of the Holy Spirit in one's life. Fortunately for us, we have that knowledge and experience, but

it is that knowledge and experience that I would like to talk to you about in a sermon I have entitled, "Continuing Ed."

Many of us are familiar with the requirements of *continuing education*. Many vocations require that to stay current and in good standing with the profession, that continuing education classes be taken. For example, for ZCELC to maintain its five-star rating, our teaching and assisting staff are required to take continuing education classes. I too am required to take continuing ed classes. As I said, many professions require it, and it's a good thing. We want our medical doctors to be aware of the latest research; our pilots to be aware of the latest mechanical innovations, etc.

Two-thousand years ago, Jesus told his disciples that he was not going to be with them as a physical manifestation very much longer. But, he reminded them, he had taught them well. They need to do what he taught them. In fact, what he really told them was,

**<sup>21</sup>They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me**

**<sup>23</sup>Those who love me will keep my word**

Their love of Jesus will be demonstrated by their keeping his word and his commandments.

But Jesus did not and could not possibly have taught on every possible issue that they would face. And so, where his education ended, new continuing education will come to them through this gift of the Father, whom Jesus called the Advocate, the Holy Spirit.

For example, in last week's First Reading, Peter was shown in a vision that nothing God creates is unclean, and he was going to be sent to Gentiles to whom God wanted the Gospel preached. Hard for us to get our minds around, since we are essentially Gentiles, but to Peter, and observant Jew, associating with Gentiles would render him ritually unclean. So this new teaching, take the Gospel to the Gentiles, was for Peter, his continuing education.

So what does this mean for us? I am so glad you asked. And is important in this graduation season. So many of our young folks think that with graduation, they are

completed adults. The rest of us know that the only type we stop learning is when we die. We never stop learning as long as we are breathing.

Allow me to give you a couple of contemporary examples. I am going to pull the pin on a current events grenade and show you how this works.

In the last several weeks, the issue of abortion has once again raised its ugly head. Seven states allow abortion at any point in term, and will even terminate a child that survives an abortion. And on the other end of the spectrum, eight states, including Ohio, have passed bills that outlaw abortion after a heart beat can be detected. Great legal and sociological minds will debate this until the Supreme Court takes it up again, but do you think that will satisfy anyone? Of course not. But as Christians, we need to seek the will of God on this matter.

The same can be said for the immigration issue, or the death penalty, or any other issue we face. Jesus said,

<sup>18</sup>I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. <sup>19</sup>In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. <sup>20</sup>On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

And when he said that, he wasn't limiting his presence through the Holy Spirit to his eleven remaining disciples but all who love him, and keep his word. I hope that includes you and me. He went on to say,

<sup>26</sup>the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. <sup>27</sup>Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.

So in that last passage Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit will remind us of what we already know from worship, Sunday School, Bible study, personal devotions, etc. I am sure this has happened to you, it happens to me all the time. I find myself in a situation where I have to decide how to act or react. A piece of scripture enters my conscience and it is at that moment when I have to decide, do I do what Jesus would do, or do I do what I want to do (which is often not the same thing). And

here let me say, sometimes I do what I think is right even when it is in direct conflict with what I know from scripture.

Let me give you an example. Jesus said very clearly,

**Luke 6:30 Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again.**

Nope, sorry, there are some who are chronic abusers of the church's generosity and I will not enable their bad behavior. I'm probably going to have to answer for that. On the other hand, you, through me, helped someone get started in a new job last week. I gave a woman a tank of gas and a new pair of steel toed shoes so she could provide for herself. I told her to drop back in some day and tell me how it is going.

The Holy Spirit will guide us through any situation in which we find ourselves. Sometimes it does it gently by reminding us of a passage of scripture or Bible story. Other times, it is more persistent and in our faces.

And just like any continuing ed class we are offered, we have free-will to turn it down – to our own peril. When we act ignoring the Holy Spirit we should not be surprised then that we may have to face consequences. This is not God punishing us, this is the result of our own poor choices.

But when we take advantage of the continuing ed offered by the Holy Spirit likely, but not always, things will go well for us and that situation. And more than that, we will have the peace that Jesus promised.

All the rancor that is continuously in the news could be gone if people would just listen to and heed Jesus' words this week. But I only get to preach to you. You will have to preach to those whose lives you touch. God revealed in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, wants to guide and direct our lives – so that we might have peace. If only we would take advantage of the continuing ed God offers.

### **Raisin' the Bar Challenge**

That is my Raisin' the Bar Challenge this week. I don't mean any disrespect, but I don't care what *you think* about any subject. But I am deeply interested in what you sense the Holy Spirit is telling you about anything.

I want to exhort you to go deeper with your relationship with God revealed in Jesus Christ. You can know him deeply through reading scripture, doing devotions, meditation and other spiritual disciplines. And then wait and listen for the Holy Spirit to give you continuing ed and you will find peace.

### **Prayer**

Loving God, we know you love us because you only want what is best for us and who knows what is best for us better than you, our creator. Continue to bless us with your presence, even when and especially when, we seem to want it the least. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen