

Sermon Manuscript: John 14:23-27
The Holy Spirit Is Our Promised Companion
FESTIVAL OF PENTECOST – June 5, 2022

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. 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.

"All this I have spoken while still with you. 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. 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." [NIV]

Please look at the picture that is found in the service folder. It looks like a twin track road through the forest. It looks like the wheel tracks of a car. But that's not what it is. If you would go there and measure the distance between the tracks you'd find that they are too narrow for a typical car or truck. This path is actually a hiking trail. It's a trail where many people walk along next to each other. The two tracks are close enough that a couple could walk along holding hands. It's a path where people walk side-by-side as companions. In our lesson, the disciples needed a companion. The truth is that we all need the kind of companion that Jesus promises. **THE HOLY SPIRIT IS OUR PROMISED COMPANION.**

1. A Dreaded Road

Jesus spoke these words in the upper room on the night before he died. He had washed the disciples' feet. He had predicted that one of them would betray him to his enemies. He had confronted Peter with the unwelcomed news that Peter would deny even knowing Jesus. The disciples knew the tensions and hostility that Jesus faced. Jesus was filled with anguish. They could see it in his face. He had even announced: *"Now my heart is troubled."* [John 12:27] He told them that he would be going away from them soon. He said that he would be "lifted up" to indicate how he would be killed on the cross. Jesus would soon be leaving his disciples. Even though they didn't understand completely, they knew he would be taken away. At first it would only be for three days when he lay in the tomb. But soon he would ascend back to his Father in heaven.

As Jesus talked, his heavy heart was contagious. They didn't really understand but they knew it was bad. They would walk alone without Jesus. All of this filled them with fear. We can hear it in their questions. Where are you going? Why can't I come with you? Show us the Father and that will be enough for us. They sensed the weight that was bearing down on Jesus even though they didn't realize the cause. Sin's burden was getting heavier and heavier on their friend. What would they do without him? The road looked dark with threats all around. If Jesus was troubled, how could they not be? It sounded like Jesus would desert them. They feared the DREADED ROAD ahead.

2. Do You Walk Alone?

We can understand the disciples' dread. Like them, we forget who Jesus really is and what he can do. There are many times and ways when it seems we walk the road alone.

Loneliness and isolation come in many forms. COVID has meant isolation for many. We can be separated from each by social media. There is the one whose health has deteriorated so she can't get around like before. There is the one who is a single parent who's stretched so thin and feels so helpless. There is the one who is struck by a financial disaster and doesn't know where to turn. There is the one who has lost a spouse or child – like the parents of the victims of the shooting at Uvalde, Texas – who endure the agony of grief alone. There is the one who finds it hard to connect with others and asks, "What's wrong with me?" There are the ones who fight battles with temptation and sin and think they are alone. They fight the enemies of addiction to alcohol, drugs, porn. They struggle against temptations of adultery or homosexuality thinking they are rejected and alone. There is the fight against those persistent sins of greed or anger or hatred or broken relationships that no one knows about. There are many "ones" who feel like no one cares. Are you such a one? Such loneliness and isolation make us ask, "How can God love me?" or "Where is God?"

At times such as these we are like the disciples. We only think the worst. We see disaster on both sides of the road. We are tempted to think we are all alone. We feel lost like we will never be found.

It is like the story of a lost hunter that a friend of mine told me about. My friend worked with Oregon Search and Rescue. They were searching for a hunter who got lost in the mountains while deer hunting. He had been lost for two days. During the search my friend was going along a trail when the lost hunter suddenly stepped out of the brush. He saw my friend and pointed his rifle at him. He was frantic with fear and hunger, thirst and panic, cold and hopelessness. He was unable to recognize help even when it arrived. He rejected the very one who offered rescue and salvation. Do we do the same with God's help? Do we often choose to walk alone?

3. The Truth of Love – the Love of Truth

Jesus knew what his disciples needed – what his disciples today still need. We need to know the truth of his love for us. It is God's love that determined to save sinful humankind. It is the Father's love that sent his Son to save us. It is the truth that Jesus came into the world and carried the load of sin so we might dwell with him and his Father for all eternity. Jesus was willing to walk the road alone so we can be with him forever in paradise. It is the truth that the Holy Spirit is our Companion who comes to walk beside us and teach us and remind us of the truth of his love for us. The Spirit has led us to believe in Jesus and know forgiveness. And the Spirit continues to walk beside us and continue to teach us the truths of Christ's Word.

Love of the truth has been worked in us by the Spirit through faith. Jesus says here: *“Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching.”* [verse 23] Other translations use different words instead of “obey” that get the meaning better. The idea is to guard something that is very precious – to watch it closely and be careful to follow it. It’s like a mother watching a child at the playground. She keeps a very careful eye on her precious one. She will do all to protect and preserve. She always keeps him in mind. This is how we are to treat Jesus’ teaching.

Isn’t this where the disciples got in trouble? They took their eye off the ball. They didn’t carefully recall the truth of Christ’s love. Isn’t this where we get in trouble too? We fail to recognize the truth of Christ’s love and we think we walk alone. How foolish!

That’s why Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to be our Companion. This is why the Spirit comes to us to “teach” and “remind” us of everything Jesus said. He brings us back to the true things about the love Christ has for us. These are the truths that are clearly revealed to us in God’s Word. Truths such as the truth that we are all sinners who need God’s help. *All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* [Romans 3:23] The truth that we are also all saved by Christ and his sacrifice. *All are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.* [Romans 3:24] The truth that all of this comes to us as a free gift of God’s grace when the Spirit calls us to believe. *By grace you have been saved through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.* [Ephesians 2:8] Because we have been given all this, we are also called to the truth that we are to be witnesses of Christ in the world. *Preach the good news to all creation.* [Mark 16:15] One more truth is that we are to be recognized as Christ’s people because of our love for one another. Jesus had already told his disciples on that night: *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”* [John 13:34-35] These are among the truths the Spirit reveals to us in Christ’s teachings.

The Holy Spirit is our promised Companion as we walk the path. Jesus promised to send the Spirit to his disciples. The Spirit came to the disciples on the first Pentecost to teach them and remind them of the truth. He filled them with boldness to walk with him as their Companion and be witnesses. They would go out to Judea and Samaria and ultimately to the farthest corners of the world.

Jesus has sent the Spirit to us too. We have been baptized. We believe in Christ. The Spirit continues to proclaim God’s love through his Word. He uses the Lord’s Supper to build and bolster our faith in Jesus. With our promised Companion, the Holy Spirit, we never walk alone.

4. We Walk the Path of Peace with the Spirit

Jesus reassures his anxious disciples by saying, *“Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”* [verse 27] Jesus offers them peace to replace their trouble and fear. They were

afraid on that night. They would be afraid after Jesus died. They had to have their doubts after Jesus ascended into heaven. But the promised Spirit would bring them peace by teaching them and reminding them.

Jesus has promised us the same Companion. What are we to do when we are troubled and afraid? Let's reach for the Holy Spirit's hand like a partner on that twin trail. He is by our side and reaches for us. Don't forget that he is there. Don't pull back but remember he walks by our side.

The path we walk with him is a path of peace. We don't need to fear God' anger and judgment. Even though the devil will accuse us and try to make us think God's doesn't forgive, the Spirit assures us of the truth of our forgiveness in Christ. *There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* [**Romans 8:1**]

We don't have to think we are unloved, unwanted and alone. Our sinful nature would make us doubt that God could love us, but the Spirit reminds us of the truth and assures us of God's amazing grace. *(God says,) "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness."* [**Jeremiah 31:3**]

We know the source of real truth. The world offers all kinds of things the pretend to truth. In the end they will turn us to despair. They are only lies and deceptions. The Spirit points us to the truth of his Word. *Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.* [**Psalms 119:105**]

Finally when things might look hopeless, the Spirit points us to the inheritance that awaits us in eternity. When we're tempted to fear and think we are alone and abandoned with no future, the Spirit and Jesus says, *"Lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near!"* [**Luke 21:28**]

The Spirit is the promised Companion who is always at our side. In Ecclesiastes, Solomon talks about the importance of having a companion. *Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor. If either of them falls down, one can help the other up.* [**Ecclesiastes 4:9-10**] What better companion could we have!

The Spirit reaches out his hand to us and gives us peace as we travel our path. He provides that peace through the gospel of Jesus in word and sacrament. He's always there to teach and remind us as Jesus has promised. Don't forget him. Don't grieve him by neglecting or ignoring him. Be glad he's always there. With him we walk the path of peace.

Take his promised hand and walk the path of peace with him as your promised and present perfect Companion – your Comforter, your Counselor, your Advocate, your Paraclete, your promised Companion. Amen.