

These weeks that follow Easter, especially last week, this week, and next two weeks, bring us a bit of déjà vu. The context for each of these three Gospel readings is the upper room with Jesus and his disciples. This conversation is all taking place on the night that Jesus was betrayed. Did we not just visit the events of Holy Week enough during Holy Week? Why do we return to this scene so much?

Of course, one could make the point that we are always preaching about Jesus. Namely, we are always preaching about the crucified and resurrected Jesus. Therefore, the events of Holy Week are absolutely fair game, and, in fact, should always be the subject of our preaching no matter what the calendar says. More so than that, though, the specific topic of Jesus' monologue during these weeks is that of the Holy Spirit. This prepares our hearts nicely for Pentecost, which is just round the corner.

As our Gospel reading begins today, the disciples know what is about to happen. They know that Jesus is about to die. Jesus is doing all the talking here, but he tells us what the disciples are thinking and saying, or, rather, not saying. They are not asking Jesus where he is going. They are not asking because they know. They are not asking Jesus any questions because they are sad. They do not want to talk about it. You have all been

in a similar position before. You have been in that room where everybody is sorrowful because they know that something bad has happened or is about to happen. You do not want to talk about it because, well, it makes you sad to talk about it.

Jesus, makes it clear, however, what is best for the disciples. They think, of course, that it would be better that Jesus not die. It would be better if he would stay right there with them. This is not what is best, however. It is best that Jesus go away. It is best that Jesus die. Why? Because then the Helper, the Holy Spirit, will come to them.

When we think about the Holy Spirit coming, we typically think of Pentecost, and rightfully so. That is, after all, when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles and enabled them to speak in many different languages so that they could proclaim the message of the Gospel to all gathered in Jerusalem for the feast. That was the beginning of the Christian Church as 3,000 were made the children of God through Holy Baptism.

This is not, however, the only time that the Holy Spirit comes. Jesus himself breathes on the disciples Easter evening and says to them “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” Jesus must go the way of the cross and die, but this is not a cause for sorrow as the disciples think

right now, but a cause for rejoicing. Jesus declared peace to the disciples when he appeared among them because that was what was accomplished by him on the cross. Forgiveness of sins was won there by Jesus, so forgiveness of sins is now what the disciples are given to do as they receive the Holy Spirit on Easter evening.

John is the only Gospel writer to use the term Paraclete for the Holy Spirit. You have it in many of your English translations as “Helper.” Paraclete can be used to describe one who is called to aid someone else. This is certainly true of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit delivers to you the gifts won by Christ on the cross. There is nothing that is of greater help to us than that.

Paraclete can also be used to describe a legal defender—kind of like a defense lawyer. Certainly, when accused by Satan, we are defended by the Holy Spirit who reminds Satan, your accuser, that Jesus has already paid the price for your sins and that you are declared “not guilty” on account of him.

Perhaps the best way to look at the term Paraclete, though, is as one who gives you comfort. The Holy Spirit is sent to you by the Father. He is given to you from the Father through the Son. The Spirit of truth, as Jesus calls him, will be with you forever. And how is it that the Paraclete, the

Helper, the Holy Spirit, brings you comfort? He points you back to Jesus. He gives you peace and faith in what Christ has done for you. That's comfort. That's what the Holy Spirit is all about.

The Holy Spirit will come, as Jesus says, to convict. Jesus says that the Holy Spirit will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. The Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin because they do not believe in Jesus. When you think about sin, you typically think about things like stealing, adultery, and murder. These are, indeed, sins, but the ultimate sin is that of idolatry. Luther highlights this in the Small Catechism as each of the meanings for the commandments begin with the phrase "we should fear and love God." All sin, at its root, is idolatry, that is, belief in a false God. Now certainly you do not just go around building gods made out of stone or wood these days. I suppose that might happen in an isolated undeveloped country or two in the world, but the average American is not thinking about how to fashion a false God using his two hands and a lathe and chisel. This idea of all sin being idolatry may seem a bit provocative to you, but if you think about, this is how it has been from the beginning. As I stated earlier, Jesus is telling the disciples that it is best for him to go away. He is telling them what it is that is best for them. This is what God's Law does. It shows you what is best for you. God told Adam and Eve what was

best for them. It was best for them not to eat from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

It is best for you to keep the commandments. Things will go better in life for you if you do. The thing is, though, that you fear the world more than you fear God. You know very well that God can see all that you do. He is omniscient, that is, he knows all things, and he is omnipresent, that is, he is everywhere. Yet you still openly sin against the commandments. The thing is that you fear what the world thinks of you more than you fear God. This means that you will not make decisions based upon what God says is best for you, but on what your friends and family think is best. This is how your fear love and trust is not in God. This is how all of your sin amounts to idolatry.

The Holy Spirit will convict the world concerning righteousness. The Holy Spirit declares the world righteous on account of Jesus. The world, not just believers, mind you, the whole world is declared just and righteous on account of Jesus—even those who do not trust in him. It is best for the world that Jesus go the way of the cross and die because in this action God is reconciled to the world. His wrath is appeased. Sadly, this does not mean that all are saved. Faith receives the gift of salvation. By faith you

are reconciled to God. Faith receives the gift of salvation won by Christ on the cross.

The Holy Spirit will convict the world of judgment because the ruler of this world is judged. The ruler of this world is Satan. Satan is judged in the death of Jesus. He thought he had won. He thought he had beaten the Son of God. But it turns out all his accusations are now false. Satan stands as your accuser. He stands there trying to show the Father in heaven that you are a sinner who deserves to live in hell for eternity. But remember, you have been reconciled to God. You have received the gifts of Christ by faith. Your sins are forgiven. You are no longer guilty, for you have been cleared of all charges. The ruler of this world, Satan, is judged.

So today, on this Cantate Sunday, sing a new song to the Lord. Sing with joy that Jesus has gone the way of the cross to the Father and that in his death he brings your lasting comfort and peace. Rejoice that the grave could not hold him and that it will not hold you as you have been declared righteous on account of Jesus. Rejoice that the Holy Spirit who brought you into faith through the waters of Holy Baptism continues to deliver the forgiveness of sins to you through the Word of God and through bread and wine. Sing to the Lord a new song, for he always gives you what is best for you.

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.