

**Cantate (The Fifth Sunday of Easter)**  
**28 April 2024**  
**John 16:5-15 (Isaiah 12:1-6, James 1:16-21)**

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—  
Amen

The text for this morning's sermon is the Holy Gospel appointed for today from the Holy Gospel According to St. John, the sixteenth chapter.

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit—Amen

Jesus isn't leaving because He's had enough. Yes, His disciples, His students, hadn't exactly made the Dean's List. No Honor Cords for them! One betrayed Him. Another denied Him. They all left Him high and dry and dying on the cross—for you. And on Easter morning, not one of them woke up believing. No, none were stellar students. And this world? Crucifying the Promised Messiah—toward which all time and space had been heading—the fulfillment of God's Promise to restore creation and bring us home again. Most will never be cut to the quick for that as we should be—daily and much. Yet, the Lord was not bugging out in frustration. He wasn't leaving because He needed to take a break from us, get a little perspective, have a vacation.

Instead, Jesus says: "I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will...take what is mine and declare it to you."

To YOUR advantage means that He's got your best interest in mind. It won't be easy. They will not see Him anymore. They wouldn't be able to lean against His bosom as St. John had on the night of His betrayal. Still, He tells them: It is all to your advantage that He go away, for if He doesn't, the Helper will not come.

But He did come. Jesus sent Him, just as He promised, and that is what we'll celebrate at Pentecost, though we live from it each and every day—the work of God's Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, the Helper, the Comforter, sometimes called the Paraclete.

Helper doesn't mean giving you a leg up, a little push to get you over the top, a little guidance on your way to getting the right answer: "OK, so, 3 goes into 7 two times. That gives you 6. That leaves one left over. Bring down the 5. And 3 goes into 15 how many times? Right! The answer's 25! Very good!" And the Comforter doesn't comfort you by saying, "Don't worry about learning this stuff. You'll have calculators later on. Who needs math anymore anyway?" The Paraclete is not a liar.

Maybe Paraclete (from the Greek) is an odd enough term to keep us from pigeonholing the Spirit into whatever soft categories we might consider by calling Him Helper and Comforter, though He IS that, and certainly DOES that. Only, in a more robust way, He's the Paraclete.

What does that mean? Well, another way to translate that word is Advocate. There's a legal dimension to that word, isn't there? The Holy Spirit is your Advocate, who Comforts you by pointing you to the One Who took your place. He bears witness to JESUS, as Jesus said: "He will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you."

The Spirit Helps you by calling you by the Gospel, enlightening you with His gifts, sanctifying and keeping you with Jesus in the one true faith. He repeats what He hears from Christ as Christ came to speak the Words of His Father and to do the works the Father sent Him to do.

As Jesus points and brings you to the Father, the Spirit speaks and brings you to the Son, and in them, you are wrapped up in what comforts you the most: the salvation of the Lamb in His Kingdom.

Jesus goes away so that the Spirit brings you into all that is Christ's, and He does that through the Word and the Sacraments. Jesus said He would lead the Apostles into all the truth, and so, by the Spirit's inspiration, they wrote the Gospels and Epistles, as the Spirit had spoken by the prophets long before. In many and various ways, God had spoken through the likes of Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and David, but now in these Last Days, He has spoken to us by His Son, and that Son goes on speaking as His Spirit both inspired the preaching, teaching, and writing of what we call the New Testament, and now, through that Spirit's ongoing work as the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and as the Sacraments are administered according to Christ's institution.

As we confess in our Lutheran Confessions, "We should and must constantly maintain that God will not deal with us except through his external Word and sacrament. Whatever is attributed to the Spirit apart from such Word and sacrament is of the devil."

The devil will comfort you by saying, "It's OK. Go ahead and do it. It isn't really sin." Many are led astray by such false comfort. The devil will help you in every which way but Jesus, pointing you to your own feelings and efforts, or other helpers which aren't any help at all—more money, more possessions, more activities, more this or that—anything but more Jesus working in His Word, and His Sacraments.

But the Paraclete, the Advocate, the One Who wants you comforted properly and helped as you really need, will convict the world of sin because people don't believe in Jesus and of righteousness because Jesus has returned to His Father and we won't see Him till He comes in glory and the Advocate will convict the world of judgment because the prince of this world is judged already.

Judgment has been suffered already! Christ has finished His work to save already, and at His Father's right hand, He continues to work faith by His Spirit in all Who hear the Gospel, the Good News that Jesus seated high above means Jesus hung up for you on the cross has done the job of your salvation. So, the Comforter doesn't have to comfort you by soft-pedaling your sins. Your sin and mine is that we don't believe in Jesus as we should. All other sins stem from that. And the Spirit delivers that truth loud and clear. He can, because He's not comforting you falsely, but teaching you where your true comfort lies, or rather, where it hung, then rose, and now is seated for you in the heavens, and still is working for your life, forgiveness, and salvation in the Gifts He's put in place within His Church for you. The Comforter doesn't have to comfort you by soft-pedaling your sins, because instead, by the Word and the Sacraments, He convinces you that in Christ, you are forgiven for all your sins.

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit—Amen

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus—Amen

Sermon based on one by the Rev. Rick Sawyer