

Sermon June 9th 2019 Pentecost Sunday

God Gives Us an Advocate

In our gospel this morning, Jesus is preparing his disciples to take over the ministry. The disciples have followed Jesus around for three years now. They have seen Jesus do some unimaginable things. They have seen Jesus turn water into wine. They have seen Jesus feed thousands of people on a few loaves of bread and some fish. They have seen Jesus heal lame, blind, and deaf people. They have seen Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead. They have seen Jesus challenge the status quo by engaging in a theological discussion with a Samaritan woman in a period where Samaritan's are deemed unclean and women are seen as having nothing good to contribute to a theological discussion. They have seen Jesus show unbelievable mercy when standing in front of a woman who had committed adultery and offering her forgiveness. They have seen so many miraculous things done by Jesus, and yet Philip still doubts. Thomas still doubts. Peter still doubts. All the disciples still doubt.

They doubt as they continue to try and make sense of all these unbelievable scenes they have witnessed over the past three years. "Are you really one with the Father Jesus?" They doubt themselves to be able to do the same things Jesus has been doing. Even as Jesus is ready to hand over the keys to them. "Can we really do these things Jesus?"

Remember when your parents taught you how to drive? At first, they were stomping on their imaginary break every other minute while white knuckling the dash board. Then after a while they became more confident in your abilities as their dramatics turned into the odd annoying utterance. Finally, you pass your drivers test and receive the keys for the first time. You feel ready, excited, but also nervous. You doubt yourself a little. "Can I really do this?" People are zipping passed you as you timidly reach the posted speed limit. Or honking their horns as you start breaking long before you need to break when approaching a red light.

When I hear our gospel this morning, I think of the moment I found out I was going to be a parent. I was excited, but also, I had a lot of doubts. I read as many articles as I could on parenting. I looked hard for examples in my life where I witnessed healthy parenting. I did the best I could to prepare myself mentally for the journey. Then Kenzie was born and all

those doubts continued to linger. Will I be able to handle her when she cries? Will I be able to change her diaper? Erin didn't let me doubt this one for too long. Will I have the patience to feed her? Will I be able to let go and see if she can walk on her own? Will I be able to support her financially? Will I be able to help her establish a healthy emotional well being, or will I hinder her emotions with the baggage I carry with me?

Many of you can probably attest to having similar feelings as you parented your children. How often do you look back on those early days and think, "how did I do it?"

Like driving a car for the first time. Like parenting. As followers of Jesus, as Christians, we often like Philip, find ourselves doubting as we try to live out our faith. For example, we doubt something we read in scripture or a doctrine we learn about, because we have trouble understanding that passage or doctrine. Or it doesn't make sense in our current context. Or it challenges us too much. Sometimes we doubt if a prayer of ours will be answered. Sometimes we doubt something extraordinary that happens to us. We chalk it up to coincidence or there must be some rational or scientific explanation to explain what just happened.

Sometimes we doubt our own ability to imitate Jesus. To love like Jesus does. Can I really overcome all the negative experiences, stigmas, and stereotypes I have learned, and genuinely love people who live on the margins of our society? Can I overcome my fears and anxieties, my feelings of scarcity, and help those in need? Can I overcome all the distractions and scheduling conflicts I face, and commit to worshipping God regularly?

Well, in response to Philip's doubt, to the disciple's doubt, to our doubt Jesus gets a little frustrated with us. We hear Jesus say, "Look at everything I have done in your life. Look at all I have taught you. And you still struggle to see me as a reflection of the one who sent me. You still struggle to believe that you can do what I do."

Thank God, Jesus doesn't leave it at that. Jesus points us to scripture and shows us that Jesus has given us a lot of examples to look back on to reassure us that Jesus is a reflection of God's love for us. To reassure us that Jesus has indeed taught us everything we need to know to continue to love as Jesus does.

Jesus then lifts us from our self-doubt. Jesus believes so much in us that Jesus tells us that we will do greater things than he. Why? Because, Jesus has taught us what we need to know and offers to help us continue his work through the Holy Spirit. We are not alone. The resurrected Jesus continues to breathe new life in us.

Jesus goes on to invite us to pray, and says that when we do we will receive God's will. We will receive the resources to be able to reflect God's healing love to others. To reflect God's hospitality to the marginalized. To feed the hungry. To feel more confident in living out our faith daily.

On the day of Pentecost when the disciples are sitting there in fear and doubt God breathes on them the Holy Spirit. Suddenly Peter is out proclaiming the good news of Jesus with confidence. Suddenly the disciples are empowered to heal like Jesus. Empowered to love like Jesus. Empowered to care for the poor like Jesus. Empowered to practice their faith daily like Jesus.

In our gospel, Jesus promises us that God will send us an advocate, the Spirit of truth, who will abide with and in us. Whom will open our hearts to believe. To believe that Jesus is indeed a reflection of the one who created us. To believe that we too are a reflection of the one who created us. That we have the potential to love as Jesus loves. To get behind the wheel and drive. To be a loving parent. To be a loving neighbor. To be in service for others. To worship God in our daily lives. To continue what Jesus has been doing the past three years. To continue what the church has been doing the past couple thousand years. In fact, to do greater acts of love than these.

Let us pray, loving God thank you for reassuring us of your love and grace when we doubt. Encourage us to believe in you and in ourselves to continue to reflect your love in the world. In Jesus name we pray. **Amen.**