

May 31, 2009

Scripture: John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15

Sermon: "When the Advocate Comes"

As I began to write this sermon this past week...Alright I'll admit I was procrastinating. I just wasn't feeling inspired to write a sermon. My spiritual well was dry. I was tired. And really had no desire to write a sermon. So as any good procrastinator does, I turned to the internet. I started checking email. I started googling different things. I checked a few websites.

And while I was procrastinating, work found me. An email popped up from the Regional Church Multiplication Team on which I serve. "We need to schedule a meeting. We have some business to talk about. As you know, Inglesia Cristiana in Lexington, a new Hispanic congregation, is getting ready to launch with a family festival and needs our help. Also, The Gathering in Lexington, a new church start in the Hamburg area of Lexington, had their launch just a few weeks ago and things are going really well for them. Also, as you know, Luther Luckett Christian Church has been open for about a year, functioning as a church within a prison, being served by a minister and relying on congregations across KY for support. Things continue to go well there.

And great news! Our Team has been approached by a group of Haitian churches who are interested in becoming part of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
The Holy Spirit is moving across KY! Thanks be to God!"

I knew after reading that email that the Advocate had come and continues to walk with us, push us, and encourage us as we as disciples of Jesus Christ go out into the world and share the good news! I knew that our communities of faith who pray for and support these new ministries would be renewed and refreshed as the Holy Spirit moves among us and calls us to transform our congregations. I knew that my spiritual well would be replenished as I remembered the words of Jesus once more, "I am going away but I am not leaving you alone. And the Advocate will prove the world wrong. The Advocate will show all of God's people that true joy, true fulfillment is not about money or power. True joy comes as a gift from God for those who believe in me and live out the way of truth here on earth. The Advocate will come and renew and refresh you. The Advocate will come and encourage you. The Advocate will come and comfort you. The Advocate will come and give you hope."

After reading that email, I knew that is exactly what the Advocate, the Holy Spirit had done. The Advocate had come, restored my sense of hope, and had given me energy for the journey ahead.

The Advocate had come and made me realize that I was a part of a new creation. I was a part of a process that had welcomed the Holy Spirit and had invited the Holy Spirit to show us our mission as the Church, that I was a part of something much bigger than myself.

The Advocate had come and was guiding us into the Truth of our purpose as people of God.

And that is exactly what Jesus promised his disciples in our Scriptures today. Jesus was trying to prepare the disciples for what will happen when he leaves them. They had all gathered in that

upper room for the Passover feast. Jesus had washed their feet and begins to prepare them for the upcoming events. He knew that this is the last time that all the disciples will be together with him. And like any good coach, Jesus was trying to give that one last talk before the players take to the field. He was trying to fill in the gaps.

“Things are going to change for you. I am no longer going to be here. Don’t worry. You will not be left alone. Once I am gone, I will send you an Advocate, The Holy Spirit to guide you and to show you how to be the church. I have told you things and you don’t understand what I am saying now, but in time, the picture will be made clear to you. The Holy Spirit will be there to teach you the Truth of my words. The Holy Spirit will not let you forget all that I have taught you. The Holy Spirit will not let you back away from your calling as my disciples. The Holy Spirit give you the strength for the journey.”

And you know that all the disciples were sitting at that table, looking confused. “Jesus, where are you going? Jesus, what are you talking about? Jesus, you are not making any sense. Jesus, you’ve been acting strange tonight. You washed our feet and you keep saying that you are going send an Advocate to us. Sorry, Jesus, you have lost us. Jesus, we don’t understand. You can tell us about it later.

But later never comes. Jesus is betrayed. And then: Jesus is crucified. And then: Jesus is raised from the dead. And the disciples are left alone, with only their memories of their teacher, with only their recollections of what Jesus said to them.

“I will not leave you alone. The Spirit of Truth will come and he will guide you into all the truth.”

And the Holy Spirit comes, moves amongst the disciples, challenging their ministries, pushing the disciples out of their comfort zone, showing the disciples how to be the Church in their turbulent world.

The Holy Spirit moves among the disciples, and asks them: How are you going to make the church relevant today? What is the meaning of Jesus Christ today?”

The Holy Spirit will not let the disciples rest. The Holy Spirit will not let the disciples give easy answers to these questions. The Holy Spirit will not let the disciples forget all that Jesus had taught them or their mission and purpose as people of faith.

And now the Holy Spirit is moving among us today. And the Holy Spirit is moving among us as disciples now. The Holy Spirit is asking us how are you going to make the church relevant today in our turbulent world? How are you going to take the teachings of a man who lived over two thousand years ago and make them relevant to the people who are sitting in the pews, the people who have never been to church, to the people who have never heard the stories of Jesus Christ?

Disciples, how are you going to make Jesus Christ relevant for the people today in our society?

And soon we realize that we are a part of something much bigger than ourselves. And soon we start to get a little excited about the possibilities of ministry that are presenting themselves to us as people of God. And soon we realize that we are a part of a new creation. And soon we realize that the Advocate has come and has given us hope, has given us strength for the journey ahead, has given us a renewed vision and mission as people of faith.

The Holy Spirit is moving among us, guiding us, teaching us, and showing us how to be the church in our turbulent world.

The Holy Spirit is moving among us, guiding God's people in the Truth and in the way of Jesus Christ. Teaching God's children to discover their passion for ministry. The Holy Spirit is moving and guiding us into the Truth as people of God.

The Holy Spirit is moving among us!

We are called to remember all that we have learned about Jesus Christ and share it with the people we meet. We are called to go out into the world and heal the hurting. We are called to be the living voice of God in our turbulent world today. We are called to welcome all to the Table. We are called to be the Body of Christ, living out God's love for one another, supporting one another, and sharing God's grace with one another.

The Holy Spirit is moving among us, challenging us, pushing us out of our comfort zones, showing us our mission and purpose as people of God.

Are we ready to be open to the possibilities? Are we ready to show the world what it means to live a life of faith? Are we ready to go and be the Church that is relevant in our world today?

At Pentecost, the power of God that is made manifest at the resurrection and the ascension is now bestowed upon the People of God. God has fulfilled God's Easter promise of new life for all through and by the Spirit.

This is a time of covenantal renewal with God and God's people. This is a time to recognize that God called God's creation Good and now is the time to share that goodness with all of God's people.

This story of Pentecost is a guide for our life. This story shows us what the community of God is called to be and how we are called to live as people of faith. This story shows us how the disciples found the courage to be the people of God!

It is a new day. And God has poured out God's spirit upon us! The Holy Spirit, the Advocate has come. And it is moving among us, renewing us, refreshing us, encouraging us, comforting us, strengthening us, and giving us hope as the Church in a turbulent world.

Are we ready?

The Holy Spirit is moving!

Are we ready?

May we open our eyes and our hearts to new beginnings, to the new life that is around us when the Advocate comes. Amen.

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