

I GIVE YOU ANOTHER HELPER – JESUS  
29 May Anno Domini 2011  
The Sixth Sunday of Easter

*If you love me, you will keep my commandments. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. (John 14:15-21)*

The natural man, that old Adam in each of us, upon hearing these words gravitates immediately towards the Law. What are these commands that Jesus wants us to keep? You see, our fallen nature loves to turn the Law into a checklist. On one side of the list we have all the good that we have done and on the other side the evil. If the list has more good on it we then erroneously assume we somehow deserve to enter heaven, or at least God should shower some type of blessing upon us. We turn the Law into a theology of works righteousness or prosperity. That's our fallen nature to think the Law will validate us somehow. Romans 2:12 says: ***"All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law."*** And that passage is followed by Romans 3:23 ***"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*** ***"There is none righteous, no, not one!"*** (Romans 3:10). So let's put away this silly notion that we can live God's perfect righteous and Holy Law.

Our first order of business then this morning is to wash the Law out of our minds. We need a shower of the Gospel to freshen us up, to brighten our dispositions, and improve our understanding of this morning's Gospel text. ***"If you love me, you will keep my commandments."*** Now for the rinse, if you must rinse twice. If you love me, you will treasure, cling to, hold fast to, keep close to you, my commandments, my mandates, my instructions, those things which I have entrusted to you, my words. ***"If you love me you will retain to my instructions."*** ***"Whoever has my instructions and retains them, it is he who loves me."***

There. That feels a lot better, doesn't it? If we're not careful, we're going to make Jesus sound just like Moses with his commandments. The last thing we need is more commandments to keep; we can't even obey the original ten.

If you love Jesus, you will cling to every word He gives you. And when you cling to every word He gives you, you will love Him in the way He wishes to be loved. That makes sense. When you love someone, you cling to their every word, right? You love Jesus, don't you? Of course you do, otherwise why would you be here? And if you love Him, you will cling to His mandates, mandates such as ***"He who believes in me has eternal life, and I will raise Him up on the last day."*** Or ***"whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has life and I will raise him up on the last day."*** This is what love of Jesus means. To love Him is to receive His gifts. And the one who receives His gifts is the one who loves Him.

Jesus spoke these words at the table in the upper room where He had washed His disciples' feet and given them His own Body and Blood in preparation of His sacrifice. It is the night before the day He would be lifted up to draw all men to Himself on the cross of His death. This is the sermon that went with the Supper on the night He was betrayed. This is the Word of "Word and Sacrament." Jesus prepares His disciples for His coming death and resurrection and ascension, in which He would be seen no more and yet be seen; in which He would depart and yet come to His disciples. And if it seems a bit like a riddle, it would only be that way for forty days, and then the disciples would understand.

With Jesus there is always more from Him to give and more for us to receive from Him. He was about to give all that He had, His own life, for the life of the world, for the sin of the world. He was about to rise from the dead, conquering death and the grave once and for all. He was about to ascend to

the right hand of Majesty from whence He came, disappearing in a cloud not to be seen again until His appearing in glory to judge the living and the dead. And here, on the eve of His death, He speaks of something more, SOMEONE more. ***“I will pray to the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, another Helper, to be with you forever”*** (John 14:16).

Not only do you get Jesus and the Father, you also get another Helper, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth. And what is the Spirit good for? Jesus will share that a bit later. The Spirit will convict and convince the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment. He will lead and guide all into truth. He will take what is of Jesus and make it known, delivering all that Jesus has to give. The Spirit is the One by whom we are born again from above in the waters of Baptism, which, as Peter reminds us, ***“now saves you”*** by granting you a clear conscience before God.

The world cannot receive the Holy Spirit, for it neither sees Him nor knows Him. The world, that is, the unbelieving world, deals only with what is seen and known by human reason and senses. The world is a place of science and reason and dimension. But the Spirit is like a breeze or a breath of wind. You can't see Him but you can see His effects, like the leaves rustling, or feel the coolness of a breeze blowing across your face.

Spirit, breath, and wind are all the same word. The Spirit is the breath of God, the wind that blew over the waters of the Deep in the beginning. He is the wind that blew over the Red Sea and parted it in the Exodus. He is the breath that came from the Jesus' mouth with Jesus words on Resurrection Day. ***“Receive the Holy Spirit.”*** The wind rushed through the church at Pentecost, He is the same breath that breathed new life into you at your Baptism. That is where the Spirit came upon you, in the waters of your resurrection. ***“You know Him,” Jesus says. “For He dwells with you and among you”*** (John 14:17).

There's a tendency to make something more of the Holy Spirit than He is. There is that baseball analogy of the “late game” approach, in which the Father started it all, the Son clinched the game, and the Spirit comes on in the final innings as the closer. But did Jesus leave us in His ascension? As He said, ***“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you”*** (John 14:18). So He's gone nowhere. He's disappeared from our sight, that's true. That's a good thing, because the sight of Jesus shining in His majestic glory as the Lord of heaven and earth would fry us poor, miserable sinner to a crisp. You don't want that, neither does He! So He hides Himself in the cloud; and in, with and under the Word, the water, the Bread and Wine. And He sends the Spirit from the Father to be your Helper and Comforter in this in-between time of not-seeing yet believing.

There are those who make the Holy Spirit the main thing. The Father did His thing in the OT, Jesus did His thing in the NT, now it's the Spirit's turn. But just as the Son and the Father are one, so Father, Son, and Spirit are one even as they are distinctly three. So when you receive the Spirit, you also get Jesus and the Father, never one without the other two, each distinct yet inseparable. We're getting in a little warm-up for Holy Trinity Sunday just three weeks from now aren't we!

There are also those who make too little of the Spirit, or who “spiritualize the Spirit” by making Him some sort of power to do good like eating a spiritual energy bar that charges up the believer and turns him into the Everyready bunny. But the Spirit described by Jesus is a “person,” He has an identity all His own, He is sent as another Helper, someone other than Jesus who dwells with and among us.

He is called the Spirit of Truth. He is in the truth-telling, truth-delivering business. He reveals the truth of our sin, how we are conceived and born into a condition of sinfulness from which we

cannot save ourselves. He makes us look into the mirror of the Law and see the symptoms for ourselves - our idolatries and adulteries and murders and lies. He shows our hearts for what they really are - stony, hard, broken tablets of God's Law that refuse to let God have its way with us. He shows us our sin that He might show us our Savior (SOS). He takes what Jesus has and delivers it to us - the absolving Word, the water of Baptism, the forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation in the Body and the Blood of Jesus.

We must never doubt that the Spirit is at work. Where the Word is there the Spirit is. You may hear people say sometimes, "I could just feel the Spirit of God at work in this place." They probably weren't in a Lutheran church, especially one of a traditional bent. No feeling the spirit around here. Oh, maybe once and a while a tickle when the preacher says something that hits you a certain way, or a favorite hymn gets dialed in and the organist nails it. But that's not the point. Where the Word is preached and heard, where the Supper is being given out, that's where the Spirit is at work.

Our Confessions say that through the preaching of the Word and through the sacraments, the Holy Spirit works saving faith "*when and where He pleases*" in those who hear the Gospel. I'm acutely aware of the "when and where He pleases" part. The Spirit is like the wind that blows wherever it pleases. I have watched the effects of the Spirit as the Word brings repentance, sorrow and contrition over sin; and as the Word of the Gospel brings faith in Christ and the joy of freedom in the fact of sins being forgiven. I've seen it over and over that it is not by might, nor by power, nor by cleverness or gimmicks or methods but by the Spirit working through the Word that people come to faith and are kept in the faith.

The explanation of the third article to the Creed is a fine summary of what the Holy Spirit is up to:

*I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to Him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and keeps me in the one, true faith;*

*In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.*

*In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers.*

*On the Last Day, He shall raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.*

In short, the Holy Spirit is busy making us holy - calling us, gathering us, opening the eyes and ears of faith, delivering forgiveness of sins into our ears, the Body and Blood of Christ to our mouths, preparing us for the world's Last Day and ours. And also preparing us for eternity's endless Day when the Spirit of life breath will carry us unto life eternal a life that is our already in Christ Jesus. This is most certainly true.

In Jesus name and for Jesus sake, Amen and Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, AMEN.