

Sermon- Our Savior's Lutheran Church- 5/26/2019- Memorial Weekend
Text- John 14:23-29

Who Has Our Back?

Grace and Peace to you and from our Lord Jesus Christ. If you were at one of our Midweek Lenten Services, you might recall that we focused on the Advocate/the Holy Spirit. I posed a question to you that night, which I will pose again.

Who can recall a great teacher in their Lives? (Congregation answers)

Someone who made a great impression on you? (Congregation responds)

Yes, teachers are very important people in our lives.

I remember when I went to my 50th High School reunion. About 200 of us were present, not bad since our class numbered 1500. This was a school of 6,000. Occupied a full city block, 12 stories tall. Most of our conversations centered on teachers. Who we admired. Or when I recently went to San Antonio to visit a seminary classmate who I hadn't seen for 49 years. Peter and I talked about our professors. Who made an impact on our lives and ministry.

Another concept is Who Has Our Back? (Congregation responds)

Sure, we know instantly. Always our best friend, our mother or father, perhaps sister or brother. Easy for us.

But what if I asked you who in your life does both, teaches and has your back? Little harder.

In my case it was Dr Wharton - chair of the Sociology Department at Upsala College. I was at the tennis courts, and as I remember it, I was in what could be described as a dark place. Something about a broken affair of the heart. He asked how I was. Concerned about me because apparently I had bombed a Criminology exam. Spent much time with me and wanted me to know that he cared about me. Even gave me an opportunity to retake the exam. When he left I felt at peace with myself and the world. Great teacher and he had my back.

Well, let's look at the text. You knew I would get to it sooner or later. In the text, Jesus talks of returning to the Father, and he promises to send the Advocate, The

Holy Spirit, who will teach Jesus' followers and remind them of all that Jesus taught. In other versions Jesus calls the Holy Spirit the Mighty Counselor.

What does it mean that God is our counselor? Counseling has become a normative part of our lives. I am told that one out of 10 people are involved in a formal counseling situation. In addition, all of us receive counseling from family, friends, even work associates. Many of us watch Dr Phil or Dr Oz. So what does a counselor do? Basically, a good counselor removes blocks to our growth. Some of these blocks to growth might be painful events, childhood traumas, personality problems, addictions, or bad habits. A good counselor helps remove these blocks to growth. But, a counselor does not solve problems, or make hard decisions for people. Rather, he or she helps us grow stronger so that we can solve our own problems.

That's what this text is all about. Jesus has sent the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, the Counselor, who will walk alongside each of us. We will not be alone but will have somebody to teach us all things, have our back and remove the blocks to our growth. Those blocks are stuff like thinking we are not good enough - I must be bad, I keep sinning - how can God love me? You know what I mean.

Some of us have the illusion that God, the Spirit, the Counselor will solve all of our problems. Life usually does not happen in this way. Like any good counselor, the Spirit enables us to become stronger. Nor does the Spirit make decisions for us. Rather God, the Counselor, comes by our side and gives us the strength and new resources and insights so that we can make those difficult and painful decisions sometimes filled with sorrow, sometimes filled with joy, but always filled with the Spirit's presence.

So what do we need to do?

First, listen for the Holy Spirit in your life.

Second, invite the Counselor into your lives.

That Spirit is ever present and close beside you as is your very breath. Have the Spirit guide you, strengthen you, empower you. The good news is that we don't need to understand the concept of the Holy Spirit to receive the benefits we simply need to acknowledge that we need it.

The Holy Spirit is there for each one of us.

That Spirit/ that Advocate/ that Counselor teaches us all things that Jesus taught
and Has Our Back!

It doesn't get any better than that.

Amen. Let it be so.