

Pastor Jon's Sermon from Sunday, May 22, 2022

Baccalaureate Sunday for our HS grads.

Text: John 14:23-29, where Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to his disciples

To our graduates, congratulations on completing one part of your life called High School. This is a huge accomplishment and something to be very proud of... especially with all that you have had to deal with as students during a pandemic. Hats off to you and your parents for hanging in there as you navigated on-line classes, masking, covid testing, and physical distancing to name a few. Life has been crazy these last few years and it has taken a toll on our world and on our mental health.

As you head off into the next part of your life... work or school... you will no doubt need some **help**. Do you agree? Think of all the help you have received so far from your parents and families. Make sure you thank them. They need help too. Sometimes it is harder on the parents to say goodbye than on you. No doubt, you will continue to need them, at least to fill out the FAFSA Form if you are going to school. And as a person of faith, you will get to rely on one more person... someone who can advocate for you always... almost like an academic advisor... but for your faith.

In church talk we call this advocate or helper... the Holy Spirit. You received the promised Holy Spirit in your baptism. When you hear the Word of God, in particular about Jesus life, death, and resurrection, it awakens and creates faith in you. Romans 10:17 says, faith comes through what is heard, and what is heard comes from the word of Christ. You need to keep the Word in your life wherever you go. That might mean bringing your Bible with you, wandering into church sometime or campus ministry, or joining a Christian community. In addition to working faith in you, the Holy Spirit will produce fruit in your lives. Galatians 5 names the fruit of the Holy Spirit: Love, Joy Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness,

Gentleness, and Self-Control. All good things as you head off... especially self-control.

As compared to the works of the flesh. Paul lists those too in Galatians 5: Fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. These are things you will battle in life.

But the difference is you have the Holy Spirit. And as you step away from home, perhaps, and don't have anyone making you go to church, or praying with you, you will have to make a choice. Allow the Holy Spirit, your faith and Christian ethics to guide your steps or let the world dictate how to live your life. The world in John's Gospel is really anything that tries to draw you away from your faith in God. This could be the lure of wealth, or power, or status, or thoughts that "I'm not enough compared to others".

Jesus says to his disciples as he is about to leave them, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives." I do not give to you as the world gives. Jesus gives peace. The world gives things like anxiety, worry, strife, or things like FOMO. Fear of missing out. But if you are grounded in Jesus and love him... which I believe you do as you are sitting here... you will have peace... even when things get tough.

In our Gospel, from John 14, Jesus promises to send the Advocate the Holy Spirit to his disciples... his students. The Advocate... it sounds like TV Series. John 13-17, I like to call Jesus' graduation speech to his disciples... about how they should go about life after his is gone. One command Jesus gives is to love one another as he has loved us. That is an awesome unconditional love. The hardest command to live out. But we have help. Jesus will not leave you orphaned. Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will teach you everything, and remind you of all that Jesus said.

Thanks be to God. We don't have to remember it all. The Spirit will continue to teach us and guide us in our faith. Our Failures will continue to teach us as well. Fail means First Attempt in Learning. You will have many failures.

But know that Jesus came to the earth as a human being, who fully knows our humanness, to bring grace upon grace to the world. Even as we bumble life up at times, there is grace for us. Even as you make many mistakes in the next phase of your life remember the phrase... "There is grace for that."

In Holy Communion, Jesus says to each of us, no matter how you have sinned... "there is grace for that."

I want you to know that your church will be here for you. Come and worship when you are home. Bring your passions for justice and peace to church. Bring your ideas. Bring your gifts and talents to church.

After all, in your baptism the church promised to support you in your Christian walk. Let this day that we honor you on your graduation be a day that rekindles our relationship and church becomes a place where you can find peace.

Blessings on your journey.

Amen