

Pastor Jon's May 14, 2023 Sermon "God sends someone to come alongside us!"

On this Mother's day weekend, yes, we should give thanks for all the mom's and mother figures in our lives. But I also want to give thanks for all those advocates who have walked alongside us, helped us, comforted us, and prayed for us on our journeys.

So today, I want to talk about the shy person of the trinity. The Holy Spirit. Jesus promised to send an advocate to his disciples before he died, rose, and ascended to send another advocate. Advocate is the word John uses in his gospel for the Holy Spirit.

Just a reminder, the word for Spirit in both original languages of the Bible, Hebrew and Greek, is the English word for Wind, Breath, or Spirit. In Greek, for example, the word is Pneuma. So if you have Pneumonia, you have a lack of breath or wind. So the Spirit can be referred to as the wind, breath, or spirit of God.

So let's take wind for example. You can't see the wind, but you can sure feel its effects when you are pulling a camper on the highway on a windy day. Or you can see the effects of wind on grasses and trees. Recall how the wind of God moved over the waters of chaos in Genesis 1 to bring about creation. The Spirit can bring about new life.

The Holy Spirit can also awaken and create faith in us.

As Lutherans, when we say in the Apostle's Creed... I believe in Holy Spirit, the holy catholic(Christian) church, the communion of saints, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.

*What does this mean?*

Luther wrote I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy and kept me in the true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith. Daily in this Christian church the Holy Spirit abundantly forgives all sins—mine and those of all believers. On the last day the Holy Spirit

will raise me and all the dead and will give to me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true.

Here the Holy Spirit calls us through the gospel... the good news of Jesus, gives us spiritual gifts, sets us apart, and keeps us in the one true faith.

I heard a professor once say, a Bible sitting on a shelf does you no good. It needs to be opened and read. Otherwise it is like a piece of frozen meat in your freezer. If you don't take it out, thaw it, cook it and consume it, there is no nutritional value.

Craig Koester professor at Luther Seminary "Coming to faith is analogous to falling in love." How many of you have fallen in love in your life? How do you fall in love? You spend time with someone. You build trust. For Jeranna and me, we fell in love over the phone. We had a long distance relationship for a year... talking on the phone almost every night when I was in Wisconsin and she was in New York. Koester continues, "One cannot fall in love in the abstract. Love comes through an encounter with another person. The same is true of faith. If faith is a relationship with the living Christ and the living God who sent him, then faith can only come through an encounter with them. And the Holy Spirit is the one who makes this presence known."

So if you are struggling with your faith, you need to spend time with Jesus. In his word and sacrament. Surround yourself with people who know and love Jesus.

In our Gospel for today from John 14, Jesus says the disciples are told to love one another as a demonstration of their love for Jesus. But they will need help after Jesus is gone from their sight. So Jesus promises to send another advocate to walk with them forever.

Another advocate means that Jesus was the first advocate in human flesh. Now the Spirit will follow to be our advocate.

The word for Advocate in the original Greek is Parakletos. It can be translated as advocate, comforter, helper, intercessor." Para means with or alongside and... Kaleo means call. A Paraclete is someone who is called to be alongside us. In modern contexts someone may serve as an advocate in the court system, in the health care network, or

in an educational institution, while other advocates may press the legislature to act on behalf of a certain cause.

In this text, Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will come alongside them and help them, teach them, comfort them... and that they won't be left orphaned or abandoned without a parent figure to guide them.

The Spirit will teach them the truth about Jesus. And this truth will lead to life that really is life... abundant life for all.

We too have been given the advocate, the Holy Spirit in our baptism, but also in every breath we take God sustains us. You all have been given gifts to share for the common good. The Holy Spirit continues to walk alongside us and work faith in us. And the promise is, even though we can't see Jesus in the flesh, we have the Holy Spirit to teach us and move us to be his advocates in the world for justice and peace.

May the wind of God lead us and guide as a church and as individuals on our journeys of faith. Amen