THE PROMISED HELPER
Jesse Blaine
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Christ the King Anglican Church, Denver

Today, if you haven't picked up from the readings and the changing colors and our collects and sort of all the language of the service, today is Pentecost. Today is when we celebrate 50 days after the resurrection when Jesus sent his promised Holy Spirit to be poured out upon all flesh so that all people from all nations could one day know God and to dwell together with him.

Today is a great and joyful day. It's also a day when we have kids in the service. This is a family service. It's also a day when we have baptisms here in a few moments. And so it's a really exciting day and an encouraging day for us. And since we have such a full house with kids in the room, Today's message is going to be a shorter message. We got it right this time on the calendar. It's a shorter message this evening. And I want to focus on one specific point about the Holy Spirit. And that is this. The Holy Spirit, the one that God has sent to us.

The Holy Spirit is the great comforter of our souls. Now, the Holy Spirit is much more than this. But the Holy Spirit that Jesus sends as he speaks to the disciples is first the comforter of our souls.

Now, kids in the room, and I know lots of adults, one of the skills that you develop over time, and in my case, am still developing in my own life, is the ability to hear and to see the question or the statement that lies underneath the question or the statement that somebody else says. So, we do this all the time. Someone might come up to you at your work and say they might ask you a question like, "Did you get my email?" Now, there's a statement and a question underneath that first question, "Did you get my email?" What they really mean is, "Why haven't you responded to my email, you inconsiderate person." Am I right? Or, someone comes up to you and has a piece of pizza or has a pizza box or a piece of cake and says, "Hey, do you want the last piece?" That's the question. But, of course, underneath the question is, I really want the last piece of cake. Do you mind if I have it myself?

Now, of course, it goes much deeper. If a kid comes up to you and asks you, if your child comes up to you and asks you, "Will you be at my game, Dad?" or "Will you be at my recital, Dad?" What they're asking is, "Am I worth showing up for?" Do I have value in your eyes? Someone comes up to you and says, "Do you think things are going to be okay?" What they're really saying is, "I'm really scared right now, or I'm filled with anxiety, and I need somebody to just tell me that I can relax and things are going to be okay, and have peace. In so much of our common life, there is the question, there's a statement, and then there's a question that sits underneath the question.

For the last few weeks, if you've been with us, we've been in John chapter 14, and it's one of probably the most pastoral conversations in the entire scriptures . Jesus is in the upper room with his disciples. He's just announced to them that he is going to leave them. And so, their

hearts and their minds are filled with all sorts of anxiety and questions. And they hit Jesus with a barrage of questions. And just like all humans, these questions are operating on two levels. There's the first level where they're seeking information, but then as we just mentioned, there's often the question that's underneath the question. So they come to Jesus and they say, "Jesus, you say you're going to be leaving. Jesus, show us the way. We need to find out the way." Or, "Jesus, you say that you're sort of God or connected to God. Just show us the father and that's enough. Are you the father or should we wait for someone else? Can you just Show us the father." These are the questions that they ask Jesus. But on a deeper level, what the disciples are asking Jesus in the upper room is, can you comfort us, Jesus? We're filled with anxiety and fear .

Can you just lift us up and give us something to have comfort? We're lost here. Jesus, can you guide us? We are weak here. Can you give us a push? Can you lift us up? Jesus, can you comfort us? And the answer that Jesus gives is yes. Yes, I can comfort you. And the way I'm going to do that and the way I'm going to comfort all people throughout all of history that call upon my name is that I am going to send you the promised Holy Spirit. So that's just one of the reasons we celebrate Pentecost. Come back every year. By the way, we're going to talk about a different part of the Holy Spirit. But one of the reasons we celebrate Pentecost is because the Holy Spirit is our great comfort. And this was the answer that Jesus gave to the disciples. And it's the answer that he gives to us.

Let me pray for us and then we'll open our Bibles here to John chapter 14. Lord, bless us. Send your Holy Spirit to be here among us. Open our hearts and our minds so that we can know you in a deeper and fuller way. And when we talk about things like your holy comfort, Lord, we know that this is not just knowledge or information, but that it requires your real presence to act in our hearts and in our lives. So, we ask that you would come and comfort us now and comfort us as we walk together with you in our lives. We pray all of this in your great and holy name. Amen.

You can follow along with me, we're in John chapter 14 and we are going to be in verse 15 here starting out again. This is a pastoral conversation between Jesus and his disciples. And we come here to verse 15 where Jesus says this.

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the father and he will give you another helper to be with you forever. Even the spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive. But because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him for he dwells in you. He dwells with you and will be in you.”

This is Jesus promising the Holy Spirit. He says a helper will come to be with you. Other words for that word is an advocate. will be with you. A comforter will be together with you. And immediately from the context here and from the specific word that Jesus uses, we see that the first big purpose of the Holy Spirit is to bring the comforting presence of God to be here together with us. In fact, in the next verse in verse 18, if you look at that, his next clause that he says right after the Holy Spirit, he says, "I will not leave you as orphans." Again, this is all centered around him comforting the disciples. I will send you this helper.

The word in Greek is “paraklētos”. It means to come alongside and comfort to come alongside and summon together with you. This is where the presence of God meets us in times of pain and anxiety. It's the Holy Spirit that lifts us up in times of joy. This comes with a sense of peace that even our questions if they're unanswered or our problems if they're unsolved, we have this powerful spiritual presence together with us that brings us his holy comfort.

One of my favorite memories from my younger life, this is when I was about 21 years old, is that I got to work with a ministry called Young Life Capernaum. Now, Young Life is an outreach ministry for young people. And Capernaum is a ministry that reaches out to young people that might have developmental disabilities or other challenges. And so, I got paired up with a guy named Kevin who ended up becoming one of my really good friends. Kevin had Down syndrome.

He had a lot of struggles and anxiety, but he was also hilarious and he loved to make up raps. And so we would make up raps together. And I remember one time we went to camp and he to a Young Life camp and he stole my toothbrush. And then he walked around the cabin saying, "It's all me. It's all me. Jesse don't know where his toothbrush be." That was his rap. I said, "Kevin, where'd you put my toothbrush?" And he goes, "Well, I don't know." Kevin was great. I really enjoyed spending time with Kevin and living and just living life together with him. And so we got to do this camp together.

And at one point during the camp, they invited all people who wanted to try out to do this ropes course. And let's just say Kevin didn't love heights. And let's just say Kevin didn't really like climbing. But for whatever reason, he really wanted to do the ropes course. Now, for most people, this ropes course would take about 20 minutes. For Kevin, it did not take 20 minutes!

It took a long time. We were up in the trees for hours. We were up there for hours. And all this time, all this time as we were up together with a tree, my main role was to be his alongside comforter, was to be his alongside summoner. I didn't carry him through the ropes course. I couldn't have done that physically. I didn't just do the obstacles for him, but I was right beside him saying, "You can do this. You got this. Hey, look at me. Trust in me. Look, I'm still here. You're still here. We haven't fallen to that ground. Wait, don't look at that. By the way, I said we're okay."

So, my role is to walk alongside him and to comfort him. This is what the spirit does for us. The spirit doesn't necessarily come into our lives and solve all of our problems tomorrow or shine a clear light 40 years ahead to give us the clearest path we would ever want. But the spirit is alongside us, comforting us, saying, "Hey, look at me.

In fact, look at me." And as I'm looking to Jesus, let us look at Jesus together. The author and perfector of our faith. That he who began a work in you will continue it. We will walk every day together. I'm alongside you to comfort you. Jesus said, "I will not leave you as orphans, but I will come to you. I will comfort you." This is the Holy Spirit, the alongside comforter.

Notice in verse 17, Jesus gives another detail about the Holy Spirit.
He says, "Even the spirit of truth." Now, a few weeks ago, talked about how Jesus claims he says I am the way and the truth that he doesn't just say I am giving you the truth or I'm giving you right information which he is but he says I am the truth and so in a world where our truth is destabilized where truth is whatever you make up or whatever you can convince others to believe or whatever you can force other people to believe Jesus comes into that world and he says I am the truth I am the source of all truth I am the reason the whole world fits together I am the coherence of all things. I am the truth. And what Jesus says is that this spirit is the spirit of truth. And he reminds us of that in verse 26. He says, "The advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the father will send in my name, will teach you everything and will cause you to remember everything that I have said to you." This is how the spirit comforts us. Because the spirit re-anchors us in the truth of who Jesus is.

The one who died for us, the one who loves us, the one who gives us new life. Now, when I was on that ropes course with Kevin, 30 feet up in the air, maybe sometimes 50 feet up in the air, it was also my job to be the one who reminded him of the truth. I would knock on the tree as we were standing out. And I'd say, "Look how hard this tree is. Watch me try to shake it. Look, it's not shaking." And he'd be like, "Okay, okay." And I say, "Those cables, you know how hard it is to break some floss? It's really hard on your fingers, right?" He said, "Yeah, these are metal cables, and look how thick they are. They're way thicker than some floss, right? In fact, they have a tensile strength of 25,000 lbs per square inch. You don't weigh that much, do you, Kevin?" He's like, "No, no, I don't." That was my job was to ground him in the truth to remind him of who he was and where he was and how protected he was. This is what the spirit does for us.

The spirit comes to us and grounds us and reminds us of the truth of Jesus Christ. That while all the world will pass away, God's word will not pass away. While all things will fade, the word of God and Christ will endure. We can rest together with him. For all of us as we walk through life, we are surrounded by spiritual trees and spiritual steel cables. We have the scripture and the church and all of these things supporting us. And the spirit reminds us of the truth that God will never forsake us and he is always together with us. He grounds us in the truth of who Christ is. Now, the last thing I want to notice with you here is if you look at the end of verse 15 and the beginning of verse 16, Jesus says these words right before speaking about the Holy Spirit. This is getting to how we can know the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Jesus says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments and I will ask the Father and he will give you another helper." Now, what's interesting about the book of John all the way from the beginning here through to the end, Jesus did it at the beginning, is that there's this cycle. There's this interplay between the work that Jesus does that only Jesus can do, but how much he invites and even invokes other people to participate together with his work. Now, Jesus didn't need their help, but he wanted their help and he wanted their participation. So, if you remember back to the wedding at Cana, as Jesus turned the water into wine, he asked the people to go grab the jars and to fill them with water. He didn't need them to do that, but he asked them to participate.

At the raising of Lazarus, he asked them, he asked the people around him to roll away the stone and to walk into the tomb and to see that the tomb was empty. He didn't need them to do that, but he wanted them to participate. So, what we have in the scriptures, especially in the Gospel of John, is this circle of grace where God doesn't need our participation and our participation doesn't earn his grace in any way to us. He already gives it to us freely. But he wants us to participate with him in life. He wants us to walk with him. He wants us to obey him, to hear the words of Jesus and to take them seriously, not just on a Sunday, but to walk it out in the rest of our lives. So in his joy, he invites us, he summons us, he draws us into the life that he wants for us. Now, The Holy Spirit is also translated as the alongside summoner. So this alongside summoner, summons us into the work that God has us to do.

So when Jesus says, "Obey my commands and if you walk in this way, I will give you the Holy Spirit." We believe that he gives us his Holy Spirit so we can obey his commands. We've participated and he gives us more and more of himself. The Holy Spirit enables our obedience, but it invites us to participate.

Now, with Kevin as we were going through this ropes course, there were a lot of times where my words were enough for him and he would go forward into the course as he knew what he was supposed to do. But there were a few points where he was just stuck with fear. And so as his friend and as his counselor, I would sometimes give him a gentle little push off the platform. Now, why did I do this? So I could scare the living daylights out of him? Obviously not. I noticed after I pushed him he knew about the harness. He knew about the cable.

But once I pushed him and he rested in that cable and he rested in that strength, he was then more comforted than he had ever been standing on the platform. Once he had been pushed out into trusting God by his alongside comforter and alongside summoner and alongside pusher sometimes he knew what it meant to trust that he could be held.

God does the same thing for all of us. God sends his Holy Spirit to push us. And if I can pastorally push all of us to summon all of us, the scripture makes a lot of claims. The scripture says if you obey the commands of Jesus Christ, it will go well with you. You don't do it to earn his love. He already loves you. But if you obey his commands, it will go well with you. If you obey his commands, he will send his Holy Spirit to be with you, to empower you. Do you trust that? Do you know this? Do you know this call that God has for us.

Can we be a church that trusts Jesus to step further with him, to know him, and in that we will know that the Holy Spirit is our comforter?

And so we pray, come Holy Spirit, comfort us, ground us in what is true, and move us where you will. Let all of this glorify you. Let us be people that trust you, that take your word seriously, and walk in you so that our lives are more open to the movement of your comfort and your push in our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit. Be with us, Lord, we pray. May you be glorified and honored in this space. We lift this time up to your great and holy name. Amen.