Easter 6 Devotional 2020

Sixth Sunday of Easter

Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments".
John 14:15

It is now the Sixth Sunday of Easter, May 17, 2020, and we are eight weeks into our *"Sheltering at Home"!* We had hoped, we had hoped, that we would be together again, by this time, but that is not going to be the reality. Too much is a stake and now is not the time to let up on our *"Social Distancing",* and yet, we are getting tired of it all.

That feeling is not lost in the reading for Sixth Sunday of Easter, as it was difficult for the disciples to sustain their excitement and positive outlook, first because Jesus is in the process of preparing them for his departure. Remember last week's Gospel lesson, *"The Last Discourse"* message of Jesus to the disciples. Taking place on that *"Last Supper"* night. We are still there this Sunday, at that meal with Jesus, but this time Jesus is moving us forward, a little, by recognizing the varied feelings of the disciples and at the same time, lifting before them his primary hope, *"that they would love one another, with the same love that Jesus has for his Father".* Jesus promises another gift for them, the gift of the Holy Spirit, in what he calls the "**Advocate".**

The Advocate is the *"Spirit of Truth"* that goes before us, that comforts, that enlightens, that leads us, even propels us forward, even, and most especially even when we do not feel like moving forward. Can you relate with this feeling a bit, perhaps in this COVID 19 time?

The second lesson for this Sunday, picks up on the theme of suffering. A different kind of suffering that we may be experiencing in this time, but a suffer nonetheless, that takes away the energy, and resolve of the earliest Christian believers. These early Christians would experience the dislocation and disassociation of family and friends, who would not, could not understand the power of the Gospel. There was much heartache in this situation, so Peter writes to encourage them. He says, *"Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you."* He added, *"do this with gentleness and reverence."*

Peter knew that when we are stressed and being hard pressed in life, that our natural anxieties can take us over, and kindness and patience are not the hallmarks of this time. Bitterness, even depression can settle in, so he calls for a patient waiting, much as in the days of Noah.

Paul comes to us in our reading from the Acts of the Apostles. He is in the middle of his second mission journey. He did not plan to stop in Athens, nor did he plan on preaching in Athens. The people were filled with all kinds of ideas, philosophies, and thoughts as to how the world existed. And they had many "gods" who gave them solace in their understanding. But there was still something "unknown", another god, who they were less then certain about. Paul speaks to them in the language and thought that they could understand, as he poses before them questions of creation, and ancestors, and hope for the future. Paul's preaching is a perfect example of working with the situation at hand and taking it to the next level as he proclaimed the resurrection victory of Jesus Christ.

I hope that these lessons, and our worship service will reveal once again the great love that God has for us, and that we might be able to rise above those things that hold us down, and that we would look for ways to share the hope that we hold, in our Savior, our resurrected and victorious Christ.

To God be the Glory,

Pastor Dave Beard