



The Promise
May 10, 2026
6th Sunday of Easter
Rev. Dr. Glenda Hollingshead
Psalm 66:8-20; John 14:15-21

The gospel reading for this 6th Sunday of Easter is set in the Upper Room on Thursday of Holy Week—the evening before the crucifixion. After sharing a meal with his disciples, Jesus offers words of encouragement because he knows he is about to leave and he knows his disciples are afraid. So, Jesus, who holds the key to abundant life, promises that he will not leave them abandoned, orphaned, alone.

But make no mistake, the disciples feel very much alone because they are unable to imagine how they will relate to the living Jesus when he is no longer with them. The answer is that once Jesus leaves, his presence will be made known in a different way—through the person of the Holy Spirit. Jesus calls this person “Paraklētos.” The word “Paraclete” means “someone called alongside” to

help or assist. “Paraclete” is also translated as Advocate, Counselor, and Comforter. Thus, we can safely say that the Holy Spirit serves as counselor, advocate, intercessor, comforter, strengthener, and helper.

It is noteworthy that Jesus does not say that the Father will provide “*an Advocate*,” but “*another Advocate*.” In other words, Jesus is *also* an Advocate. The implication is that Jesus has been God’s counselor for believers up to this point. It is true that Jesus and the Spirit have some similar functions. They both come from the Father and are sent into the world. Both teach, bear witness to the truth, and expose the sin of the world. Yet calling the Spirit “another Advocate” does not mean the Spirit is “another Jesus.” Rather, the Spirit continues Jesus’ work of love in the world. The Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit continues the work of Jesus—with the same challenges—the same blessings—the same provision for a full life, a whole life—*shalom*—in this life and in the life to come.

A full life—a whole life—in *this* life! For many of us, life feels anything but full and whole these days. For many of us, there is a sense of foreboding and loss around the way things are going for our neighbors and, perhaps, for ourselves. No doubt, we have all known loss in some form or fashion—such is life. We have named it. We have carried it. But no matter the source—loss is difficult and it is worthy of acknowledgement. In the words of preaching professor, David Lose:

As a culture, we are not terribly good about talking about loss. I don’t know if it’s because it challenges the eternally optimistic stance we are encouraged to take, counters our celebration of youth and opportunity, or reminds us of our own mortality. But for whatever reason, we seem as a culture to lack the resources and emotional wherewithal to acknowledge the losses we, and those around us, suffer. Not sure what to say when confronted by a friend who has recently suffered the loss of a loved one or gone through a divorce, we turn away, leaving the person feeling all the more isolated.¹

When Jesus was crucified, there is no doubt that the disciples felt tremendous loss. While we know the rest of the story—that death could not hold Christ in the grave—the disciples did not. Surely, they gathered in each other’s homes to mourn their loss, to share stories, to encourage one another. Their world was no more perfect than ours. Yet into a world like this, imperfect as it may be, God still says yes to life. God still calls us beloved. God still sends the Spirit to come alongside us. And God’s Spirit is something we so desperately need. As one author notes,

The world has in fact begun to crack. The moment of truth for humanity seems to have arrived. We seem destined for destruction at our own hands. But behold, miracle of miracles, out of the cracks a light shines. The venomous snake has not crushed the light. The light burns. It gives warmth. It gives hope. And as the dreamer timidly advances towards the light, he discovers that there are many, many others who are also moving

toward it from different directions...from across human barriers, from behind the walls of our own frightened souls. Yes, we all need that light, for that light is the only hope...ⁱⁱ

We all need that light for that light is our only hope. With hope-filled hearts, I invite you to hear our gospel reading again, but this time from Eugene Peterson's *The Message*:

“If you love me, show it by doing what I’ve told you. I will talk to the Father, and he’ll provide you another Friend so that you will always have someone with you. This Friend is the Spirit of Truth. The godless world can’t take him in because it doesn’t have eyes to see him, doesn’t know what to look for. But you know him already because he has been staying with you, and will even be *in* you! I will not leave you orphaned. I’m coming back. In just a little while the world will no longer see me, but you’re going to see me because I am alive and you’re about to come alive. At that moment you will know absolutely that I’m in my Father, and you’re in me, and I’m in you. The person who knows my commandments and keeps them, that’s who loves me. And the person who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and make myself plain to him.”

“I will not leave you orphaned,” Jesus says, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, that promise is still being kept.

My sisters and brothers in Christ, we are Easter people, who have, during this season of the church year, rejoiced at Christ’s resurrection. We have traveled with him as he revealed himself to the disciples as the Risen Lord. Soon, we will turn our faces toward his Ascension and to Pentecost. It is good that we have taken this journey together. It is good to meditate on Christ’s promise of another Advocate, who leads us into truth and equips us for the work of sharing God’s love in the world.

And today, we see that promise embodied before our very eyes. In just a moment, we will bring a child to the baptismal waters, and we will hear again the ancient words of hope and belonging—words that name this child as God’s own forever. It is into that promise that we step, not only as listeners, but as witnesses. So let us go from this place as people accompanied—people who come alongside others in love—trusting that the same Spirit who claims us in the water and in the Word will be with us, now and always. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

ⁱ David Lose <http://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?post=3226>

ⁱⁱ Choan-Seng Song, *The Compassionate God*, 260.

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