

Pastor T.C. Arnold  
7<sup>th</sup> Sunday Easter  
John 15:26-27  
May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017

When my boys were younger, they were both daddy's little helpers. When I had a job to do, they were always right there with me, helping the best they could. Sometimes, I remember, they were very good helpers. Other times, I had to slow down and wait... or help them to help me. That kind of help is not really helpful, if you know what I mean. But it is so cute, and meaningful, and memorable, and a blessed joy as time spent with our children is invaluable.

Today, I need a helper... sometimes I need those same boys to help me. But Jacob is down in Springfield. Ben is busy with a job of his own. Today, I can't get my boys to help me like they used to. It's sort of funny, at one stage of my life, I was trying to do something without their help, and now today, I need their help and I can't get it. Such is life.

Back in the year 1952 my mother gained and lost her helper. This helper was not her child. No, it was her husband and it was to the military draft for the Korean War. Her helper in life, my father, received a notice through the United States Postal Service that he had been selected to serve his country at time of war... and this happened two weeks after my mother and father were married. My mother would spend the next two years without her helper. My mother said it was hard... and it was sad. But her helper returned... her spouse came back to her... unlike so many who would go off to war. And on a day like today, when we remember, we give thanks that men like my father, men who would go off to war and would fight and die for you. We keep in mind that helpers at home are sent off and, today, volunteer to help in foreign places protecting this great nation of ours.

We all need a helper... at home... abroad... protecting us, serving us and loving us. The text for today from John chapters 15 and 16 is about a helper who comes. This is the helper from God. It says in the text, "*But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.*" The helper will come and do His work. The helper will help... because that's what helpers do.

That sounds helpful. I like to have help. Who doesn't, especially when the job is difficult? But what we hear in the Gospel text for today is much more than just "help." As a matter of fact, this word in the Greek which is *paraklatos*, from which you might recognize the word "paraclete." This word can mean helper or counselor... like someone who helps and guides us in the way we should go... or away from danger and toward a better way. But I think all of these meanings fall short of what the "paraclete" actually does. The better word is comforter. And, if you didn't know, the "paraclete" is the Holy Spirit.

All we have to do is look at the beginning of John 16 to see why we need a comforter. Jesus goes on to say that..."*the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me.*" So, when this type of persecution comes our way, we need a comforter. When bombs are brought to concerts and many people are murdered and hurt, we see how what Jesus says really does come to reality. Those who claim responsibility for such attacks believe they are doing God's will. They believe they are killing for righteous reasons. It is not true, of course. They are killing for a false god... one that does not exist. For this reason we need a helper, a counselor... even more... a comforter in these moments of great need.

What are your moments of need? When is it that you need “the comforter” in your life the most? Is it today when you remember our veterans and their ultimate sacrifice? Is it when you have to face your boss at work? Is it with a spouse because of a difficult marriage? Is it with parents who are unpleasant or sick? Do you need the comforter in moments of sadness and despair? Do you need him because you are sick and you aren’t sure what to do? Do you need comfort from the comforter because you’re hurt or angry... or maybe depressed or anxious all the time? What are your moments of need?

And what is more, we all suffer from moments where we need the comforter the most when our sins come to bear before our eyes. When we see ourselves for who we are... the chief of sinners... knowing that we are lost in this world without a Savior. When our sins have hurt our neighbor... when others have caused us pain... when living in a fallen world is too much to take because nothing seems to go right as bad news continues to mount. Our call goes out to our God in these moments, “Oh Lord, how long?” we pray with the Psalmist. We are ashamed of our trespasses... and we should be. We are angry at what others have done to us. And we feel sometimes that God has dealt us a rotten hand because life continues to hand us lemons. And what do we need... a helper? A counselor? A comforter!

This past Thursday was Ascension Day. As we gathered here for the Divine Service that evening we were reminded that Jesus fulfilled all things by ascending into heaven, just like He said He would. But He did not leave us alone. We are not without Him. For this reason we continue to hear words regarding how Jesus would ascend. But, He would also send. The Holy Spirit is with us... and so is Jesus. That is comfort, beloved in the Lord. We have the Spirit guiding us through the Word. The Word testifies that our Savior is ascended but not gone. We have Him. He is with us. This is comfort. And this is what we need.

So when attackers come attacking... thinking they are doing this for God, take comfort, beloved in the Lord, Our Lord is our comfort. When sins press on our hearts and guilt and shame are our common refrain, take comfort, the Lord has come to wash your sins away, help lead you to understand how He would have you to live, and show you His ever-present love. When we can’t stand the heartache anymore, when feelings of despair press relentlessly upon us, fear not... and take comfort... the Lord is with you. We have a Lord who knows all our struggles and pain. Our Lord knows it and knows us. Our Lord lived to be the comforter in our most uncomfortable times.

The Lord is our comfort. He is our comforter. Thanks be to God. So when the need for help arises... and our neighbor, our family, steps in, that is God at work for you. He is working through your neighbor. And the same goes for when you help your neighbor. And when your beloved family member or friend, goes off to serve their country, they, too, are helping their neighbor. What great and noble help that is.

And even more than help, here comes our Lord... ready to experience every bit of terrible discomfort to bring you comfort. By giving you life through death on a cross Jesus shows that He would do anything to comfort you. You are not without Him, even in the day of great distress.

We head now into the season of Pentecost. We will see how the Holy Spirit does His work. He works for the sake of His church. He will strengthen you and comfort you. He will bless you and give you peace. That’s what He does. They will know His love. Amen

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.