

John 14:23-29

Sometimes, it's hard to say **good-bye**. There are many movies and TV shows that make the **most** of this kind of **dramatic** moment. You've all seen it. The **taxi** is waiting, or the **airplane** is just about to take off, and there are two characters standing there, not wanting to **separate**, not wanting to say "**good-bye**." Maybe you've even experienced a similar situation in your **own** life. Perhaps a **spouse** was leaving for a vacation, or a **child** was heading off to college, or a close **friend** was moving to a different part of the country. You don't **want** them to **go**. You don't know just what to **say**. It can be **difficult**. But, sometimes, a parting **gift** can make the separation a little bit **easier**. It doesn't have to be **much** - just a little something for you to **hold on** to while they are away - something by which you can **think** about them, and **remember** them.

This is a kind of scene we have in today's sermon text. The disciples didn't realize how **soon** it is going to happen, but they knew that Jesus was going to **leave** them. So, before He went, Jesus gave them **two** parting gifts. These gifts were **more** than a thoughtful **memento** for them to remember Him by. They were gifts that would **sustain** these disciples' souls until they would see Jesus again in **heaven**. And as we might expect, they are the **same** gifts that He has promised to give to **you** and **me**, as we live our lives on this earth unable to see our Savior face-to-face.

One **fear** the disciples might have had when they heard Jesus would be leaving them, was that over the course of time they would **forget** His **teachings**. Jesus had spent nearly **every day** with them for the past three years. During that time, He had instructed them about the meaning of the kingdom of **heaven**, and about His **purpose** for coming to the earth. What if they didn't **remember** everything? What if they had **misunderstood** Him? After all, we know that had already **happened** on more than one occasion. But now things would be **different**. If it happened again in the **future**, Jesus wouldn't **be** there to **correct** them, and to patiently **re-instruct** them. Knowing that **Jesus**, whom they had relied on for so long, would no longer be **with** them to help them **through** their difficult times must have been very **upsetting** for the disciples.

So, Jesus **spoke** to them about the **cares** and **concerns** which were in their minds and on their hearts. He **assured** them that He would not be leaving them **completely** alone. Jesus said, "*The **Counselor**, the **Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will **send** in my name, will **teach** you all things and will **remind** you of everything **I** have said to you.*" This is the **first** of the two parting gifts which Jesus promised

His disciples - a very **special** gift - the gift of the **Holy Spirit**, the **Counselor**. This **Counselor** would be with them **throughout** the rest of their lives. He would give them the **additional** understanding which they still needed, and He would continually **remind** them of the words **Jesus** had spoken to them while He was still with them.

Just a few days later, we see this promise being fulfilled in a very **unique** way on the day of **Pentecost**. On that day, the disciples were filled with a **special** outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This was **evidenced** in the way they were able to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus in many different **languages**. But Pentecost wasn't the **only** day they were filled with the Spirit's power. That Spirit which lived in their hearts **remained** with them throughout the rest of their **lives**. What a **blessing** it was for those disciples to have this heavenly **Counselor** as a constant **companion** - as they worked **long** and **hard** for their Savior - as they faced **danger** and **persecution** for His name.

You and I have the promise of the **same** gift from our Savior. For **most** of us, this gift was given to us at a very early age, at the time of our **baptism**. As the **waters** of baptism washed over our **heads**, the **Holy Spirit** entered our **hearts**. This was the beginning of a **lifelong** relationship between each one of us and the Holy Spirit. We have God's own Counselor by our side to **support** us in all circumstances. But the **question** is how well do we **appreciate** this gift which the LORD has given to us?

One way to **better** appreciate the role the Spirit plays in our lives is to take a closer look at the word which is translated as **Counselor**. This word literally means to be called to someone's **side**. There are a **couple** of reasons why a person might be called to someone's **side** - like when a **coach** calls his team to his side in order to give them some **advice** and **direction** at a crucial time during the game. That explains the idea of a **counselor**. But **another** time a person might be called to someone's side is when they need some **consolation** after something **bad** has happened. That's why the word is also sometimes translated as **Comforter**. And the Holy Spirit serves **perfectly** in **both** capacities. Sometimes we need a **kick** in the **pants**, to spark our intensity. But at **other** times we need to hear **comforting** and **encouraging** words. That's how the Holy Spirit works in our lives. He **knows** what we need to hear. When we need to be **roused** out of our spiritual slumber and **convicted** of our sin, He **calls us** to His side to hear God's **Law**. And at **other** times, when we need the **comfort** and **encouragement** of the **Gospel**, He **calls us** to His side, and provides that too. He always brings us just the **right** words at just the **right** time.

It's also important for us to realize just **how** He speaks these words to us. The Holy Spirit doesn't **mysteriously** bring us messages out of **thin air**, or whisper in our **ear** as we are **sleeping** at night. He works in a very **tangible** way when we are **wide awake** through **God's Word** and the **Sacraments**. As we come to the altar for **Holy Communion**, as we hear God's **Word** proclaimed from the pulpit, and as we search the Scriptures **on our own**, the Holy Spirit speaks to our **hearts**, and sustains our **souls**, preparing us to face the struggles of living every day in a **sinful** world.

The **second** parting gift which Jesus promised His disciples is closely connected with the **first** one. In fact, it's actually a **result** of having the **Holy Spirit** in our lives. It's the gift of **peace**. Jesus told His disciples, "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*" Jesus wanted His disciples to know that the peace **He** gives is a **special** kind of peace. He said, "*My peace I give you.*" The peace which Jesus provides is peace that **only** Jesus has, because **only Jesus** has a perfect, sinless relationship with His Father in heaven. After providing that peace to His disciples, **never again** would they would they need to be **afraid**.

Peace with **God** is a kind of peace which the sinful world doesn't **have**. The only peace this **world** can offer is a **temporary** feeling of **happiness** and **security** - a feeling that can quickly and easily **disappear**. It's **no substitute** for the peace **Jesus** has to offer. And yet so often we find ourselves striving to receive the peace of this **world** - **financial** security, lower **stress** levels, good **health**. The **problem** with **that** is the harder we **look** for that kind of peace, the harder it is to **find**. And in the end, even if we **do** find it, it doesn't really **matter**, because the peace which the **world** can offer just **doesn't last**.

The fact of the matter is that the peace we really **need** isn't far away. It's already in our **heart**. Just one day after Jesus spoke the words of our text, He died on the cross, in order to **obtain** for us that **peace** which He had **promised**. He took the **punishment** that our sins **deserve**, and in doing so, **Jesus Gave Us Lasting Peace** - peace with **God**. We never need to feel **guilty**, or **afraid**, or **troubled** by our sins, because through **Jesus**, all of those sins have been **forgiven**, and we are at **peace** with **God**. These are the **gifts** that our Savior has given to us - the **Holy Spirit** as our **Counselor**, and **peace** with **God** because our sins have been **forgiven** - and these are gifts which **last**.

Jesus' **disciples** didn't realize how **soon** it would be before Jesus would **leave** them to return to **heaven**, and we don't know how soon He will **return** to usher in the Last Day. But however long it takes, **between** now and then, there will be many times when we are tempted to be **afraid** or to lose **heart**. The devil will **constantly** be trying to lead us **away** from our Savior. That's why it is so **important** for us to **remember**, and to make **use** of, the wonderful **parting gifts** that our Savior has given to us. The Holy Spirit **lives** in us, so may we continually listen to His **counsel** and **encouragement** in God's **Word** and **Sacrament**. And may the **peace with God**, which Jesus has provided, **rule** in our hearts and minds - always looking forward to the day when Jesus' **good-bye** turns into a glorious **welcome** at the gates of heaven. Amen.