

**“The Promised Counselor”**

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John 14:15-21

*Have you ever remembered a spring when the storms have been more severe? Tornados have been leaving their path of destruction and death everywhere and, this Sunday, we particularly think of Joplin, Missouri, where, according to yesterday’s DDN, 132 are confirmed dead and another 156 are missing. We have all seen the devastation on TV and then on Wednesday evening those of us living a little further south and east were wondering if we were going to become the next tornado headlines. Connie and I were hosting a small group gathering and some spent a little bit of time in our bathtub. Where is the good news when storms come crashing in on us?*

It wasn’t horrendous weather but it probably felt the same to the disciples that night Jesus met with his disciples in the upper room. Jesus gives his disciples his final words of teaching which in John’s gospel is called *Jesus’ Farewell Discourse*. It’s a bit like the last lecture series when a college professor is asked to lecture on the subject she or he would choose if they knew it was their last opportunity to teach. Jesus chose the upper room to give his farewell discourse...his last teaching before being betrayed by one of his own.

We pick it up in John 13....

**13** Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. <sup>2</sup>The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper <sup>3</sup>Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, <sup>4</sup>got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. <sup>5</sup>Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him.

<sup>14</sup>So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup>For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. <sup>16</sup>Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. <sup>17</sup>If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

<sup>33</sup>Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' <sup>34</sup>I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

**14** "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also."

<sup>12</sup>Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup>I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup>If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

### **John 14.15-31**

**me; because I** <sup>15</sup>*"If you love me, you will keep my commandments.* <sup>16</sup>*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever.* <sup>17</sup>*This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.*

<sup>18</sup>*"I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you.* <sup>19</sup>*In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see live, you also will live.* <sup>20</sup>*On that day you will know that I am in my Father,*

*and you in me, and I in you.* <sup>21</sup> *They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them."*

Jesus' Farewell Discourse....his last teaching....focuses on *love* and the ongoing, life-giving presence of Jesus through God's *Spirit!* <sup>16</sup> ***And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever.***

The word *Advocate* is key in Jesus' last teaching but it is difficult to translate into English. The Greek word is ***Paraclete***

Quoting my sermon "*Who Needs an Advocate?*" (April 29, 2007)

Jesus helps us better understand the Holy Spirit by calling the Spirit *the Advocate*. The Greek word for *Advocate* is ***Paraclete***. The last time I preached on this passage....I'm sure you will remember, was June of 2001.... someone thought I said parakeet and another thought I said a pair of cleats. So let me say again, I said ***paraclete*** not parakeet or a pair of cleats. However, it may be helpful to think of *parakeet*....for the *Advocate* speaks for God the Father and God the Son and interprets God's Word to us. And it may be helpful to think of a *pair of cleats*....for the *Advocate* helps us stay grounded, stay on course, and dodge temptation and destructive behavior. We have no single word in English that can express the rich meaning of ***Paraclete***. As we begin to grasp the richness of this word we begin to comprehend the richness of the work of the Holy Spirit!

As you look at the footnotes in the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, you will note that ***Advocate (Paraclete)*** is sometimes translated ***Helper***. In Eugene Peterson's translation The Message, Paraclete is translated....***Friend***. The New International Version translates Paraclete...***Counselor***. The King James Version translates Paraclete...***Comforter***. *The work of the Paraclete, God's Holy Spirit, can not be captured with one or even two English words?*

Here's another way to understand the *Holy Spirit*....*the Advocate*....*the Paraclete*: ***Para***, in the Greek, means "***alongside***" and the root *kletos* means "***to call***." In other words....*called to the side of* or *to come alongside*. Think of the Holy Spirit as God who comes alongside.

<sup>18</sup> ***"I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you.***

*But how does Christ come alongside us today? How is that Jesus could teach his disciples in the upper room that they would do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.*

This doesn't seem to make sense.....Jesus is leaving his disciples and they are going to be better off and accomplish more? *How can this be?* Through the gift of the ***Paraclete....the Advocate, Helper, Friend, Counselor, Comforter....God's Holy Spirit who lives in God's people.***

Sometimes we need the *Advocate, Helper, Friend, Counselor and Comforter* and we all have our own stories of how people have come alongside at just the right time to advocate, help, befriend, counsel, comfort. But at other times we become the *paraclete* to others.

### Joplin, Missouri

My Dad grew up just north of Joplin in the town of Nevada. So I decided to find out how Nevada is serving as a ***paraclete*** to their neighboring city of Joplin. Quoting, Lynn A. Wade, news reporter for the Nevada Daily Mail newspaper:

*"Vernon Countians—many of them with friends and relatives in Joplin—grew sadder on Monday as news reports contained to push the death toll higher. By Monday afternoon, 116 were known dead in the wake of Sunday's devastating tornado. They mourned. They wondered about those they hadn't heard from. And they sought out ways to help.....Bags of clothing, shoes, toiletries and more filled the lobby at First Presbyterian Church in Nevada."*

Right here at Fairmont, you received an email this week from *Mel Hohler* is being a ***paraclete*** by inviting you to bring gently-used shoes, new underwear and socks, toiletries, bottled water and letters of encouragement to Joplin's residents to Mel's home by today. These will be distributed by Shoes4theshoeless.

*Dave Keenan* is being a **paraclete** as he joins other Habitat for Humanity volunteers to build a home for someone who has never been able to own a home before. Dave said they were able to get the house framed in during the first day of “blitz week” and he is most encouraged with the progress.

Our church is being a **paraclete** by taking an offering today to support the Oak Tree Corner center for grieving children. Here is a local mission that serves children who have experienced the death of parents or siblings and through the **paracleting** presence of the Oak Tree Corner counselors they are reminded of Jesus’ teaching, “*I will not leave you orphaned.*”

Each of us have been in need of **the Paraclete** (God’s Spirit) and we have received God’s compassion and support in many wonderful ways. *How have you been blessed by God through a living, breathing paraclete? How have you been a paraclete to others? To whom might God be calling you today?*

***<sup>21</sup>They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”***

Praise be to God for the Promised Paraclete who brings life!

Amen