



May 13-15, 2023 -- 6th Sunday of Easter

Preacher: Pastor Scott Oelhafen

Sermon Theme: **The Holy Spirit - "The Best Farewell Gift Ever!"**

I. This gift comfortably meets our needs. II. This gift carefully manages our needs.

Sermon Text: John 14: 16-21

15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever-- 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. 20 On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. 21 Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."

In the name of our Triune God, dear friends of the risen LORD Jesus,

When's the last time you had to say goodbye? It's hard, isn't it? When friends say good-bye, especially good friends, emotions run high. Friends mean a great deal to us and we don't want to be separated by any amount of distance. Close friends support us in good times and bad. We have great memories of these friends. Maybe it was time spent in school, that road trip we took together or perhaps it was just having them close by that made us feel more secure. And yet, graduations, job changes, or retirements make it necessary to move across the state or even across the country. It's times like this we may exchange "farewell gifts." "Here's something to remember me by." It might be a photo that speaks-a-1000-words, a piece of artwork, or a plaque engraved with names and dates. Gifts like these are gladly received and dearly treasured. Still, saying "good-bye" is never easy. Understatement, right?

In our sermon reading, Jesus was saying good-bye to His followers. And as the Son of man, it wasn't any easier for Him. It was an emotional time. Our reading takes place in the Upper Room on Maundy Thursday of Holy Week. That's the place we usually think of Jesus instituting the sacrament of *Lord's Supper*. Jesus was busy that night. As God's Son, he knew exactly what would soon take place: how He'd be betrayed, condemned, crucified, buried, and then raised from the dead. Yet, He wasn't thinking of Himself. In love, He cared more about His followers. He knew that His disciples needed assurance. He had spent three years with them. Now, they would no longer see Him. So, after the *Lord's Supper*, He gave them words of comfort. About to depart, our Savior gave them the perfect farewell gift. But it was not a mere picture or plaque. This gift was the Holy Spirit, the 3rd person of the Triune God.

In that Upper Room, Jesus wasn't just thinking of His disciples. He was thinking of us – yes, you and me. Even though God's plan to save the world put Jesus on earth over 2000 years ago, like the disciples, we long assurance. We get spooked ... we get scared ... and what we really need is our Savior. God's Word assures us that we share in that one-of-a-kind farewell gift. So in God's Word of John, chapter 14, we'll discover how Jesus gives us: **The Holy Spirit - The Best Farewell Gift Ever!** We'll learn this gift comfortably meets our needs and then, we'll find out how this gift carefully manages our needs.

His farewell gift comfortably met the needs of His first century followers. And their needs were great. They needed someone to do for them what Christ had been doing all along. That was asking a lot! Christ had given them reliable help in all kinds of situations. Think about the 3 years they spent in His company! When the disciples were faced with feeding 5000 men plus women and children, they didn't have a clue what to do. How could they feed so many people with no fast food restaurant in sight? They didn't know how, but they knew who did. They came to Jesus, and He solved their problem on the spot. Or what if they had a burning spiritual question? 11 verses before our text, Thomas had one. He wanted to know where Jesus was going and how he could follow. So, he asked and Jesus answered. ***I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me (John 14:6).*** With these words, Jesus clearly revealed he is the one way to heaven. Salvation is through faith in him alone. But, now, with Jesus leaving, what were they going to do? Jesus' farewell gift comfortably met their needs.

Listen to what Christ promises them. **(v16) And I will ask the Father, and He will give You another Counselor to be with you forever -- the Spirit of Truth.** In other words, Jesus promised the disciples something, I should say someone, who would do for them what He had been doing all along. This someone was the Counselor, the Comforter, all special names for the Holy Spirit. The word, Counselor, means: "one who gives aid or help." The disciples had already experienced this Counselor's help when they were brought to faith in Jesus. The Bible says, **"No one can say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3).** The Holy Spirit gave spiritual life to their stone-cold dead hearts. Now, He would transform them from being scardy-cat disciples to be willing servants of the most high, willing to sacrifice everything to spread the saving Gospel message.

But, how would they recognize the Holy Spirit? Our text reads: **(v17) The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with You and will be in You.** The world doesn't accept anything it doesn't see or understand. Since the Holy Spirit is invisible and beyond human reason, the world cannot accept Him. The disciples would recognize the Holy Spirit because they believed Jesus' life-saving words. The Spirit lives within the hearts of all Christian believers. What a Savior! When things looked bleak, Jesus had everything under control. His gift was the Best gift ever because the Spirit comfortably met their needs.

Does it ever occur to you that believers like us share in Jesus' farewell gift? His gift comfortably meets our needs. Even though styles have changed from togas and tunics

to suits and polos, our needs have not. Despite our best efforts to claim we're fine, we are not. Let me put it this way. Walk down the narrow aisles of Walmart lately, only to find a child crying for her mother? With a loud voice and with many tears she cries: "I want my mommy!" A child is so much more open than an adult. We may not get lost in a Wal-mart and cry like a baby. But deep down in our souls, we do ever express that basic fear: "What if I'm all alone in the universe? What if there's no one to comfort me?" When doubts plague us, we need to remember that we have a Savior who loved us and has saved us from our sins. His death and resurrection still mean salvation for us. The score is still Jesus (and his believer)s: 1 and the devil 0. . Yes, our Redeemer Lives! Romans 8:35 asks the question: **Who shall separate us from the Love of Christ?** The answer, is no one. We live knowing our Savior loves us and has a plan for life here on earth and ahead in eternity.

But, how do we know this for sure? It's because we share in Jesus' farewell gift. Jesus gives us something to remember Him by right in our text! He actually gives us the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit meets our needs today by comforting us. Through regular contact with His Word and Sacrament, He assures us: our guilt is really gone, our sins are really forgiven, our home is really in heaven, and until we get there, the Holy Spirit really changes our hearts from being self-centered to Savior-centered.

Receiving a farewell gift that meets our needs now is great. But, receiving a farewell gift that carefully manages our needs in the future is even better. This describes the work of the Holy Spirit.

Our text continues: (v18-20) **I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day, you will realize that I am in My Father, and you are in me, and I am in You.** Jesus' farewell gift carefully managed the disciples' needs by pointing them back to Jesus on a daily basis. Jesus didn't orphan His disciples. The disciples sure felt orphaned. For, they would no longer see Him face-to-face. But, the Holy Spirit would remind them daily of Jesus' plans and eternal presence. His plans were to physically leave them for a while , but then He'd return. The Holy Spirit carefully managed their needs by enabling them to believe what their minds couldn't comprehend- that Jesus was their Savior in good times and bad.

Our text concludes: (v21) **Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. He who loves me will be loved by My Father, and I too will love him and will show myself to him.** The Holy Spirit carefully managed the disciples' needs in one more way. Practically speaking, He'd help them love God and show that love to one another. Just think how the Holy Spirit transformed those ordinary men to do extraordinary things. To remember souls that most people would just as soon forget. To love those who didn't love them back. To worship faithfully, even though it was dangerous to gather together. All because the Holy Spirit guided them.

Jesus still gives us "The Best Farewell Gift Ever." His gift, the Holy Spirit carefully manages our needs by strengthening our faith. Every time we open the Scriptures here in church or at home, the Holy Spirit strengthens our faith. And the Holy Spirit leads us

to forgive, love, and help people we will meet this week – all the while, pointing them to their Savior Jesus. God bless you as you lead others to Jesus. Remember the Holy Spirit is with you. Our job is to do the inviting. It's His job to do the converting.

Farewells this side of eternity aren't easy. It's especially hard to say goodbye to loved ones in a funeral home or a cemetery – be it an older parent or grandparent, or a younger child or grandchild. We miss them – don't we? But, as Christians, we know we don't have to say goodbye forever. The Holy Spirit helps us look forward to our forever reunion as Christian believers in heaven. Here in New Ulm, that makes me think of the German word Auf-Wiedersehen. You know what this word means right. It doesn't mean "goodbye forever", only "so long for now. "We WILL see you again." It doesn't get any better than the Holy Spirit. Farewell and AMEN.