

SUNDAY AFTER THE ASCENSION - Exaudi / Sixth Sunday after Easter

Hymns: 207, 217, 223, 216

The INTROIT

(Ps.27:1,8-9)

P: Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice:

C: Hallelujah!

P: When Thou saidst, seek ye My face, my heart said unto Thee,

C: Thy face, Lord, will I seek; Hide not Thy face from me. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

P: The Lord is my Light and my Salvation;

C: whom shall I fear?

The COLLECT

Almighty, everlasting God, make us to have always a devout will toward Thee and to serve Thy majesty with a pure heart; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

The FIRST LESSON

Ezekiel 36:25-27 (NKJV)

Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

THE GRADUAL

(Ps. 47:5; 68:18a)

P: Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

P: God reigneth over the heathen:

C: God sitteth upon the throne of His holiness. Hallelujah!

P: Let God arise; let His enemies be scattered:

C: let them also that hate Him flee before Him.

The EPISTLE

1 Peter 4:7-11 (NKJV)

But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

The SENTENCE for the Season

(1 Cor. 5:7)

P: Hallelujah! Christ, our Passover:

C: is sacrificed for us. Hallelujah!

The HOLY GOSPEL

St. John 15:26-16:4 (NKJV)

“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

“These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me. But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them. And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.”

parakletos

John 15:26-16:4 — “But When the Helper Comes”

INTRODUCTION

- I. BUT WHEN THE HELPER COMES**
- II. HE WILL TESTIFY OF ME**
- III. AND YOU ALSO WILL BEAR WITNESS**

CONCLUSION

SUNDAY AFTER THE ASCENSION - Exaudi / Sixth Sunday after Easter

Hymns: 207, 217, 223, 216

John 15:26-16:4 — “But When the Helper Comes”

Grace, mercy, and peace to you all from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.

On this Sunday after the Ascension of our Lord the appointed Gospel reading is John 15:26– 16:4:

“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

“These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me. But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them. And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.”

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

INTRODUCTION

On this Sunday after the Ascension of our Lord the Introit begins, **“Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice.”** In the appointed Gospel reading we hear our Lord’s declaration that He has already answered our cry for help with the promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete or Helper or Advocate. As the Lord Jesus was preparing His disciples to be His witnesses to the world, He promised them that they would not have to give witness according to their own reason and strength, but rather, that He would send them the Paraclete to testify concerning Jesus so that they would be empowered to continue as witnesses of their Lord with absolute confidence and power from above. Today we hear again that blessed promise of the One who is our heavenly Helper.

I. BUT WHEN THE HELPER COMES

“But when the Helper comes, . . .” Why is the Holy Spirit called the Helper? The word that Jesus uses is *parakletos*. It literally means *from-called*. Jesus says, **“But when should come the *parakletos*, whom I shall send to you—all from the Father, . . .”** Jesus promises that He will send or dispatch from the Father the called forth one. *Parakletos* refers to one who is called upon to intercede for another. A paraclete is one who pleads the cause of another, one who acts as legal counsel for another.

But isn’t Jesus our Intercessor before the throne of judgment? Indeed. That is the reason that Jesus had to ascend to the Father before the Holy Spirit could come. Jesus had to complete the work of redemption and justification before the Holy Spirit could come.

So if the Holy Spirit is also our intercessor, against what judgment does the Holy Spirit speak? The Holy Spirit speaks against the judgment of our own conscience. For our hearts condemn us continually on account of what we see and experience of our sinful nature in our lives. Our sin is continually bearing witness against us. Our lack of true fear, love, and trust in God bears witness against us and condemns us. The holy Law of God and even the laws of men bear witness against us and condemn us. Even our own self-loathing bears witness against us and condemns us. According to our own reason and strength all that we can see and hear concerning ourselves is that we are unworthy of anything good from God. We cannot hear that God is our loving Father according to His goodness. Like Adam and Woman, according to our own reason and strength we must always seek to cover up our nakedness, that is, the exposure of our sinfulness and impurity. According to our own reason and strength we cannot trust in God's mercy, but must always pretend that our impure efforts are not so bad that they cannot count for anything. But in our hearts we know the truth and we cannot escape the judgment of our own consciences.

That is why we need the *Paraclete*, the Comforter and Helper. In Baptism He is poured over us and into us to take up residence in us. As He enters us He drives out the devil and overpowers the Old Adam. He brings with Him the holiness of the Triune God, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. He fills us so completely that we begin to know again the goodness of the LORD. He works in us to convict us of the righteousness of God in Christ so that faith is born in us and we trust in God's mercy. Then, rather than seeking ways to make up for our sin, we trust rather in the grace of God in Christ Jesus the Lord.

This is what the Holy Spirit does for us. He searches our hearts and finds every evil thought, every lustful desire, every lack of love and purity. Having found these damned destroyers of righteousness, these wicked thieves of peace and joy, He speaks to our hearts and convicts us concerning the righteousness of God in Christ. He comforts our consciences with God's mercy and love. He speaks to our souls the great desire of our heavenly Father that we should know Him as our God who forgives all our sins and declares us to be His perfect and holy sons of faith.

This great work is a miracle beyond comprehension. There is no way in the world that we could ever accomplish this for ourselves. Our sinful condition simply will not allow it. But the Holy Spirit of Truth cannot lie. He declares to us what He has heard and He makes this Truth our very own possession so that we believe it and rely upon it. Thus we receive the promised Paraclete, the one whom the Father and the Son have called upon to go forth from the throne of God to speak to our spirits the peace of God that surpasses all understanding and guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

II. HE WILL TESTIFY OF ME

Therefore, the Lord Jesus promises, **“He will testify of Me.”**

Jesus is the Truth. He is the very good news that we need to hear. Jesus is the one who came from God to be the Savior of Mankind. He is the Way, the Truth, and Life. He is the very door or gate by which we enter heaven. He is the one who took our identity and died as the world's Sinner of sinners. He is the perfect Lamb of God who takes the sin of the world.

Jesus is the God-Man, Immanuel, and also the Son of Man, who is our true and pure chief priest who gives Himself as our eternal sacrifice. By His blood we are cleansed. We are incorporated into His body to be one with God. We feast upon the oneness of His body and we drink the forgiveness of His blood. The Holy Spirit testifies that what we have heard in the words of consecration are truly the words of life and salvation that accomplish the entirety of

what they proclaim.

It is amazing to consider the way in which the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit work to accomplish our reconciliation to God. The Father sent the Son and testified to Him on several occasions as the one to whom we should listen. The Holy Spirit testified to Jesus by descending upon Him in the form of a dove. The Holy Spirit is the one whom Gabriel said would cause the Savior to be conceived in the virgin. The Holy Spirit made the Christ known to the saints of old, to the gestational baby John, to Simeon and Anna, even as He does for all who believe. The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to face our temptations and to prevail over them for us. Throughout His ministry, Jesus was empowered by the Spirit to perform mighty signs and wonders by which He was manifested as the Son of God. Throughout His ministry Jesus made know the will and love of God, testifying unto the Father and the Spirit. The Father testifies of the Son and of the Spirit. The Spirit testifies of Son and of the Father. And the Son testifies of the Father and of the Spirit.

Once the work of salvation was accomplished, Jesus ascended to the Father and the Spirit was then dispatched to confirm our reconciliation to God. And so the Spirit testifies concerning Jesus, for in Jesus we are made one with God. It is through Jesus that we come to the Father. Therefore, the Spirit testifies concerning Jesus and what is ours in Christ.

III. AND YOU ALSO WILL BEAR WITNESS

But when should come the *parakletos*, whom I shall send to you-all from the Father, the Spirit of Truth who from the Father proceeds, that one will be a witness concerning Me. But also you-all are witnesses because from the beginning with Me you-all are.

Notice that Jesus speaks to the disciples of the Holy Spirit in the future tense, for the Holy Spirit cannot come in the fullness of His work until Jesus has ascended. But of the disciples Jesus speaks in the present tense, declaring that they are witnesses who are with Him from the beginning.

The Lord Jesus called His disciples by the full authority of God. The authority of the Son is equal to the authority of the Father and of the Spirit. When the Lord Jesus spoke and acted, His words and actions did not need to be confirmed by anyone. Those whom the Lord Jesus declares to be His disciples are commissioned by the full authority of God.

Thus the Holy Spirit comes and testifies concerning Jesus and what He has accomplished for us. The confirmation is for our sake. Jesus does not need to be confirmed. His works are complete. They are absolute. His words and His works are from eternity and stand forever. When the Father gave witness to Jesus, Jesus said that this was not for His sake but for the sake of those who heard it. Likewise the Holy Spirit comes and confirms us in the Word so that we have all doubts removed from our hearts.

And like the apostles, we are true witnesses of Jesus by virtue of being called and predestined by God from eternity. Our names are written in the book of life. God knows us from eternity and He has made certain that we should not be lost. He has established His Church on earth so that the Gospel is proclaimed for us and the Sacraments are administered for us to receive. We are baptized into Christ Jesus and we are communicants of the body and blood. As we commune with God in His body, we proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. Yes, like the apostles, we are His witnesses as we continue in His words.

Being witnesses of Jesus is not something that we must seek to be. By God's decree we are witnesses. He has placed His seal upon us in Baptism. He continues to show Himself to the world through us as we gather into His name in His Holy Communion. We are witnesses not by what we do, but by what He has done and continues to do for us and among us. Our very lives are His workmanship which He has prepared for us that we may walk and live in His works.

CONCLUSION

“But when the Helper comes, . . .” was fulfilled at Pentecost. Next Sunday we celebrate this blessed event again. How glorious an event this is, for the promised Helper has come and is given to each of us as we are baptized into the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit is given to us as our everlasting Helper, to keep us with Jesus Christ in the one true faith unto life everlasting. As we journey through this vale of tears, we endure many trials and struggles, but always with the joy of God's salvation and never-ending mercy and goodness to us. As we live in Christ we stand as His witnesses of His grace, mercy, and peace to all the world. As we live, many opportunities arise in which we may also speak that which the Holy Spirit speaks to us. And what is His testimony? The works of Jesus. It is just that easy for us, too. Our testimony is Jesus Christ and Him crucified. If this is what we live and declare, we truly are witnesses of Jesus, witnesses not of what we do, but of what we have freely received. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus forever. Amen.