

Jim Gill

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"Another Comforter"

Psalm 66:8-20 Acts 17:22-31 John 14:15-31 I Peter 3:13-22

INTRODUCTION

One of the first things I did on Tuesday was to watch last Sunday's worship service. I was so blessed by Lanie Garret's sermon, especially the way she included all of us as having a responsibility to be Mother Church to those who are hurting. In the later verses of the chapter she read from, Jesus promises that when he goes away that he will send them another comforter--the Holy Spirit who come alongside them and comfort them and help them to be a comfort to one another. Hear the word of the Lord from the gospel of John chapter 14:15-31

Let's Pray Lord, thank you for this your word. Send your Spirit now to illuminate your word. Help us to see your provision for our waking moments and our night's rest. Open your Word to us this morning and as I speak, may words of my mouth and the mediations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord our Rock and our Redeemer In your name we pray. Amen

A woman had quit work to stay home and take care of her new baby daughter. Countless hours of peekaboo and other games slowly took their toll. One evening she smacked her bare toes on the corner of a dresser and, grabbing her foot, sank to the floor. Her husband rushed to her side and asked where it hurt. She looked at her husband through her tear-filled eyes and managed to moan, "It's the piggy that ate the roast beef."

That mother needed some more adult interaction.

There is no greater gift that we can give those we love than the gift of our presence. There is nothing that says "I love you" more than simply being there. Children need parents who are "there for them. More and more, aging parents need children who will be "there for them." We want to abide with them as much as possible for now, but through the grace Jesus offers freely, it is possible to abide with them forever in the life to come. We may not have someone who could come running to comfort us in our times of need, but all of us have a comforter in the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised to send.

This is the time of year for graduation and commencement speeches. These verses are part of Jesus commencement speech. The time is coming when Jesus will not be there with his disciples but he explained that it is to their advantage that he goes away, because in his physical body he was limited to being one place at one time. If he goes away he will send his Spirit which isn't limited by time and space. He will send them what the New Revised Standard calls the Advocate, but in the King James Version, calls "Another comforter."

The Greek word that John uses there that is translated comforter is "paracletos." The Para- means one who comes along side, the Cletos means one who gives comfort, counsel, help. It means one who intercedes pleading your case, who advocates for you, who strengthens you who stands by you. The Spirit that Jesus will send will "be there for you" wherever and whenever that there is.

What were the conditions that Jesus put on his sending of the Holy Spirit? "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another comforter, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth."

There are 613 commandments in the Old Testament. Since the time of their writing the Pharisees elaborated on those 613 to place even more restrictions and limitations on the behavior of the children of Israel.

What are Jesus' commandments? In John 15:12 Jesus is recorded as saying, "This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you." We show Jesus that we love him by obeying his commandment to love one another.

That's at least a lot easier to remember more than 613. It's easier to remember, but maybe not as easy to keep. I would hazard to guess though that if we are able to keep Jesus' one commandment we wind up keeping all the others.

The primary task of the Holy Spirit is reminding the faithful of the truth, jogging the memories of the followers of Jesus about his commandments so they can show that they truly love him by following them. It may surprise us to think of the Holy Spirit in this way, as a quiet, line coach reminding followers of Jesus of their lines, reminding them about everything that Jesus taught and commanded--reminding and giving them the power to keep those commandments. That's why in addition to sending Another Comforter, Jesus calls us to be comforters to one another.

The assurance of loving, caring presence in our lives is so important throughout our lives. Children who grow up in unstable homes often struggle with feelings of rejection and low self-worth all their lives. We need the emotional support of other people throughout our life. We especially need it during life threatening situations. We have the Holy Spirit, but sometimes, like the mother who stubbed her piggy that ate roast beef we need someone to come alongside us. We need someone like a nurse that came alongside Tom.

Tom had surgery was scheduled for the next day. He could feel the anxiety rising. He knew his very life would be in the hands of the doctors. The day before surgery a nurse came into the room to talk with him about the operation. She took hold of his hand and asked him to hold it tight and feel its warmth

"Now," she said, during the surgery tomorrow you will be disconnected from your heart and you will be kept alive only by virtue of certain machines. And when your heart is finally restored and the operation is over and you are reconnected,

you will eventually awaken in a special recovery room. But you will be immobile for as long as six hours. You may be unable to move, or speak, or to even open your eyes, but you will be perfectly conscious and you will hear and you will know everything that is going on around you. During those six hours, I will be at your side and I will hold your hand exactly as I am doing now. I will stay with you until you are fully recovered. Although you may feel absolutely helpless, when you feel my hand, you will know that I will not leave you."

The next day the surgery went exactly as the nurse had told him. When Tom woke, he could do nothing. Before he panicked, Tom felt the touch of the nurse's hand and he was at peace.

Jesus told his disciples that he would send another comforter that would be alongside them so that they would know that they would never be alone. 2) Sometimes that comforter comes in the form of a nurse.

There is another way in which Christ comforts his disciples. He comforts them with his understanding and love. His presence through his Spirit is wonderful, of course, but there's more. We need more than someone who is "there for us." We need someone who understands us and yes, who even forgives us. Here is where Jesus shines. No one was more understanding than Jesus.

Barbara Lundblad wrote, "I once read something rather odd: "The reason mountain climbers are tied together is to keep the sane ones from going home." Whoever said that was playing with us a bit, for we know mountain climbers are tied together to keep from getting lost or going over a cliff. But there's another piece of truth here. When things get tough up on the mountain, when fear sets in, many a climber is tempted to say, "This is crazy! I'm going home."

The life of faith can be like that-doubts set in, despair overwhelms us, and the whole notion of believing in God seems crazy. Jesus knew his disciples would have days like that. So he told them we're tied together like climbers tied to the rope-tied together by the Spirit, to trust in one who is always more than we can understand, to keep us moving ahead on the journey of faith, to encourage us when believing seems absurd. 1)

If you want to know what God is like, look at Jesus. If you want to know what Jesus is like, open your life up to his Spirit. The comfort that the Spirit provides is the comfort Christ would provide if he were still here physically. It is the comfort of empathy and understanding. It is the comfort that comes in knowing that even though we have sinned and will sin again through God's grace shed abroad in Jesus' we can be forgiven.

Jesus not only sends his Spirit to be with us..... Jesus not only sends his Spirit to empathize with us and comfort us.... Jesus sends his Spirit to give us the power to conquer face and resist our temptations and to conquer our challenges.

One who is "there for us" is wonderful. One who "understands and forgives" is even better. But best of all is the One who prepares us to cope with life and gives us the tools to succeed.

In 1942, hysteria over Japanese involvement in World War II led to the relocation of some 110,000 Japanese Americans to internment camps. In one of these camps, Carole Doi, a third-generation Japanese American, was born. Years later, Carole married a man who had also spent time in the camps. When she delivered their baby daughter, they noticed that the child's feet turned inward, the toes facing each other. Carole was determined to do whatever it would take to help her daughter walk normally.

For four years Carole provided the child with corrective shoes. Her daughter was walking normally by age six, but Carole wasn't satisfied. "I wanted her to do anything in which she would use her legs," she says. The girl chose ice skating.

The girl was a natural on the ice. Before long, the youngster was bugging her mother for more rink time. She'd refuse to leave the ice until she got a particular move right. Soon Carole was rising at 4 a.m. to get her daughter to the rink. Finally, after 15 years of lessons, the young girl whose toes used to face in reached the goal for which she had worked so hard and so long. The U.S. flag was hoisted during the 1992 medals ceremony, and Carole and Jim Yamaguchi watched their daughter Kristi receive the gold medal. Kristi Yamaguchi stood on that victory platform because of a mother who stood behind her and helped her conquer. 3)

The Spirit that Jesus sent works as Another comforter, and sometimes works through "a mother comforter like Carole Yamaguchi, who slowly helped her daughter walk with straight feet and find not only that she could walk straight, but could skate circles around the competition and win the gold.

We have the Holy Spirit of God to help us in our times of need, in our times of trouble. When fires come and rain doesn't...when a diagnosis comes...when a job doesn't...when a friend leaves....and a crisis comes we have...another comforter. Thanks be to God who is like a loving parent who is ever present, ever empathizing ever forgiving and ever giving us the strength to overcome because we have been comforted by one another and by ... Another Comforter. .

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you that we have all been adopted into your family by your grace. We thank you that we are not orphans, and that we have an amazing assortment of brothers and sisters in Christ all over this world. We thank you for sending your Spirit to see us through the trials and tribulations, the joys and celebrations of our lives. We thank you for the comfort and the courage and the care that your Holy Spirit provides us. Thank you for your concern for these that you loved and your command to them to love as they have been loved. Help us to find the strength and courage to love one another and others

that we do not know yet, and love those we do know but find hard to love. Send your Holy Spirit to do what we cannot...

Dear Jesus, thank you for loving us. Thank you for loving us enough to distill all the commandments into one. Thank you for spending time with your disciples after your resurrection and appearing to them and reassuring them that you would not leave them without sending your Spirit to remind them and empower them to follow you. Thank you for ascending to be with your Father and for interceding on our behalf and watching over us from your heavenly vantage point. Thank you for sending your Spirit to remind us of all that you taught and to give us the power to obey your commandments.

Holy Spirit we thank you for your presence that abides with us now and will abide with us forever. We thank you that your Spirit works through others like our mothers, who are there for us, who understand us, and who stand beside us as we face the challenges of life. Thank you for their faithfulness and for their love and their comfort.

I opened with a story of a young mother who stubbed her toe. When we were newly married living in Beaumont one day Anne pulled on a drawer and the whole drawer came out and landed on her foot. Just then, our pastor Phineas Washer called and I told him what happened. Then next thing I knew he was at our door. I wrote this song about him and shared it at this installation as pastor of John Knox Presbyterian in 1980, a church I would later serve from 1994 to 2003.

"Another Comforter" by Jim Gill

When you're down so low you don't know which way to turn.

Seems like you've forgotten every lesson you ever learned.

No matter what you do it's not enough even though it's your best

Jesus says, "Come unto me my child and I will give you rest"

And I will send you another comforter. Who will abide with you forever

And no matter what you run into we know we are not alone

We have another comforter.

Comfort comes through many ways through shoulders soaked with tears

Through those who listen to the thing no one else wants to hear

Through those who take the time to say, "You know, I've been there too."

Through those who take the time to spend a little time with you.

Cause he will send you even further comforters.

Who'll stand beside you whenever.

And no matter what you run into,

you can always run to them and be comforted.

Cause they'll be sent by Another Comforter

Who will abide with us forever

And no matter what we run into we'll know we are not alone

Because of another comforter. Another comforter. Another comforter.

1. **The One Who Comes Alongside, by John H. Pavelko**
2. **I Will Not Leave You Orphaned, by Barbara Lundblad**
3. **Keith A. White**