

This morning, we heard from the Gospel of John. In the story, we hear Jesus speaking to his disciples. The words that he is speaking has become known as the “Farewell Discourse.” These are the last words that he spoke to them, on the night, before his death.

It may or may not interest you to know that the form of speech that Jesus was using in the **Farewell Discourse** paralleled many farewell speeches that were recorded from Jewish writers. His speech shared the same elements of those famous people who gave their own farewell discourse speeches. They all include the following three elements:

- 1) Appointing a successor
- 2) Comforting those left behind
- 3) Announcing their impending departure

In the Old Testament, the two most famous ones that we might have heard of would be from Elijah and Moses. In appointing a successor, **Moses appointed Joshua** and Elijah appointed Elisha. The successor that Jesus appoints in this passage is the Holy Spirit. We will speak to the Holy Spirit and their role later in the sermon.

Now, before I get too deep into the sermon, I want to share some insight with you in the regards to the lectionary. We have assigned readings for each day. Once in a while, we have options. This morning, was one of those option days. We had two options for the Gospel reading. The other option that we could have chosen also comes from the Gospel of John. That reading was from John chapter 5 and centered on Jesus healing a man who had been battling his crippling state for 38-years. The story has a powerful tie in with water and community. However, earlier this week, I made the shift and decided that I needed to share the words of Jesus and his final discourse with the disciples. This threw a small curve ball to the Tuesday morning bible study and Cheryl in the office.

The lectionary passage that we heard this morning has been chosen to always be read during the Eastertide. As a church, we are in Easter 6 and the Easter season is about to come to an end. During the Eastertide season, our scripture readings call our attention to the ways that we are to live our lives in light of Christ’s resurrection.

Two of the ways that we can live into the light of Christ’s resurrection is **having peace and sharing hospitality**. Hospitality may not be the word that jumps off the page for you in the John reading but it is there. We need to have hospitality because God is dwelling in us. Hopefully, we are being hospitable to Christ dwelling within us. Then that hospitality was echoed in our First Reading which was from the book of Acts. We briefly heard the story of Lydia. The cross, this morning, is decorated with Lydia in mind. She was a dealer in purple cloth. Maybe, you noticed the purple cloth. The water that is visible today by the cross is represented in the Revelation passage and the baptismal promises which are extremely strong in all of the texts today.

The story of Lydia and the individuals that she was gathered with and the instructions of the disciples can show us the way of the importance of **hearing the word of God and sharing in the Lord’s Supper**.

We talked about hospitality in our Tuesday morning bible study. The conversation began about welcoming guests into our home unexpectedly, like when a disaster or an emergency occurs. We conversed about when we had the opportunity to welcome individuals into our home and how it played how; even when it did not play out like we hoped it would. Then we shifted the conversation into the text that we are engaged with today. We examined what does it really mean

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when Jesus teaches that those who love him will keep his word. When keeping the word, it provides an opening for God to make a home in our lives. When you really think about it, that is quite fascinating. For just a brief moment, I want you to think and ponder on the following thought:

the God of the universe, who created everything, wants to come and move into your life on a permanent basis.

Now, that we took a brief look at hospitality, let me shift my focus to peace and the Holy Spirit which I believe is the true theme for the words that Jesus gave in his discourse. I think these are the words that the early disciples needed to hear and they are the words that we need to hear today. Even though it could be argued that the disciples did not know this is the message that they needed to hear.

If you are astute, you would have noticed that this passage starts off with Jesus answering a question. However, in the passage, we were not told what the question was that he is answering. The question is in the previous verse. So, we will take one step backwards and hear the question:

Judas (not Iscariot) said, *“Master, why is it that you are about to make yourself plain to us but not to the world?”*

At times, it seems like Jesus responds to his disciples' questions in a way, as to say, even your questions miss the mark. This really should not surprise us though, because the disciples continue to misunderstand Jesus at every turn. Just like us. We still have not learned, in most circumstance, even after 2,000 years of insight.

The misunderstanding of the disciples makes it apparent that they need help. Thus, Jesus promises them that help is on the way and it is coming in the form of the Holy Spirit, or the Advocate. The advocate will help the disciples remember what Jesus said and taught. More importantly, the Holy Spirit will help them understand what Jesus meant.

It is quite intriguing that this chapter began with Jesus sharing with them that he is leaving them to prepare a place for them in God's house. There will be many rooms. Now, the promise brings it a lot closer. He is sharing with them that he is turning believers into a home for God.

Some powerful stuff and I believe we really need to allow ourselves to rest into that concept.

If that is not enough, Jesus promises that he would give his disciples peace. Remember, this is on the night that he will be killed and the disciples will be confused and searching for answers. The words that Jesus shares go a little deeper. Hear these words:

Be at peace and do not let **your hearts** be troubled.

Carolyn Helsel shares that the peace that John uses echoes the words of Matthew in many ways. She suggests that the peace Jesus gives is a peace that may not evoke calm and happy moments free of conflict.

Instead, Jesus gives peace in the midst of conflict. It is a peace that enters into conflict to serve as a peacemaker.

In this case, Jesus wants his followers to know that he wants to comfort those who will be left after his death. His death was going to bring them great fear. In these promises, Jesus was saying:

[Type here]

Stop being afraid. Because of everything that I am saying to you, you can stop being afraid.

One of the subtlest yet harmful threat to a thriving Christian faith today is **fear**. We hear, see and sense fear today just like the early disciples. Thus, I think we can grab onto the words of Jesus and make a healthy step forward.

The following message might be difficult to hear, but at times, the more that we allow our lives to be shaped by fear, the easier it becomes to value being safe over being faithful. When we tighten our grip and close our hands, we become individuals who are uncharitable, inhospitable and maybe even unchristian. However, if we flip the script, and we live into the concept that God is living in us, then we will be busy fulfilling the early promise of Jesus: “doing the works of Jesus.”

It could be overwhelming to think of but we have the same promise that Jesus gave to his earliest followers. Jesus will NEVER leave you **orphaned**. Now, there is another component to this very important message. The Holy Spirit was not designed as a private companion to each of the disciples. Many times, that is the way that we look at it. Instead, we need to see this a community aspect. The reason that is important is the following: When the Holy Spirit lives and moves among us, a Spirit-animated community is the Gospel’s response to our individual fears and anxieties.

As I get ready to close this sermon out, let me share with you another reason that our liturgy is very important. In our worship service, we say the following words:

Pastor: The peace of the lord be always with you.

Church: And also with you.

We do this each and every week, because this is what the church needs. The peace of Christ is just what we need, especially when we feel that we are in times of hardship and conflict.

I hope that you do not mind, but I am going to give you a homework assignment for the week. When you feel like the world is crashing in on you this week, I want you to pause, take a deep breath and then breath it out. But when you do ...

Breathe in Peace

Breathe out Love

It is the presence of this peace, given by God in Jesus name, which enables the disciples and us to live in lives of faithfulness.

Amen.