

Pentecost Sunday June 8, 2014
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

John 16:5-11 (NIV)

But now I am going to him who sent me. None of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' (6) Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things. (7) But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. **Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.** (8) When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: (9) about sin, because people do not believe in me; (10) about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; (11) and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

In the name of our Ascended Savior fellow believers;

You've heard the phrase, "No pain, no gain." It's an exercise motto that promotes the concept that hard work will pay off in big results. The Apostle Paul and his partner Barnabas had their own variation of that concept. They told the early Christians, "**We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.**" (cf. Acts 14:22)

Jesus had a similar idea in mind as he spoke to his disciples on Maundy Thursday evening. He had spoken to them of his departure and his words filled them with grief. But that wasn't his intent. As he explains in our text his departure would be for their benefit. It's true that the disciples would lose something but their gain would be far more valuable than their loss.

It's been 50 days since we celebrated our Savior's resurrection. We know from the Scriptures that Jesus returned to heaven 40 days after his resurrection. Ascension celebrates a going and Pentecost celebrates a coming. This perspective will help us to better understand Jesus' words in our text. Let's take a closer look at

Theme: Ascension and Pentecost – The Christian's Loss and Gain

1. The Ascension "Loss"
2. The Pentecost "Gain"

Jesus spoke the words of our text both to comfort his disciples in regard to his impending departure and to empower them to carry on their ministry in this world following his return to glory.

I am going to him who sent me. None of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' (6) Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things.

Jesus had been sent into this world by God the Father to rescue the world from sin and to provide eternal life for sinners. But in their obsession with the present and the physical Jesus' disciples lost sight of the spiritual and eternal blessings they needed.

The disciples had an understanding the Jesus was no ordinary man. His teachings and miracles were evidence of that. However in their shallowness they didn't see the long-term picture. They only understood the "here and now." And what they knew is that if Jesus left them is that they would miss their friend and his teachings. They would miss the one who had fed thousands of people with just a tiny bit of food, the one who stilled the storms for them and the one who healed the sick and assured them of the forgiveness of their sins.

As long as Jesus was with them their hopes for a better life in this world had a solid foundation. There wasn't anything that he wouldn't handle for them. So long as Jesus was with them their hopes for political

reform and rescue from the tyranny of the Roman government and its dreaded taxes remained alive. And that would mean a bright future for them.

The disciples were like us. Don't we at times get so consumed with the here and now that we lose sight of the spiritual and eternal blessings we need? It's much easier for us to believe what we can see and touch and feel. It's much easier for us to have a positive outlook on life when everything is going well for us today. It's much easier for us to depend on our friends when their presence in our life is obvious. Who of us hasn't wished that we could walk right up to Jesus right now and see him in the flesh to enjoy the comfort and security he provides?

There are some disadvantages to the fact that Jesus is no longer physically present with us. But when we take a step back and evaluate the situation more carefully we will discover that the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages.

Let's begin by asking why Jesus had to leave his disciples. Jesus had to leave them so that he could go to the cross to complete his mission of rescuing us from sin. He had to pay the penalty for the sins of the world. If he failed to make that payment then the disciples and all believers would be stuck in our sins with no hope of a rescue. There would be no eternal life. The Scriptures make it clear that our hope in Christ extends beyond this life. (1 Corinthians 15:19 NIV) (19) **If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.**

Christ's departure gives us hope also for the life to come. He went away to prepare a place for us in his Father's mansion. After removing our guilt by his innocent death Christ rose again to show that death has been defeated for us. He then ascended into heaven where he controls all things for the benefit of those who believe in him.

Perhaps this example will help us put Christ's departure into a positive perspective. Think of a father who needs to take a job out of town and leave his family behind for a time so that he can provide them with the things that they need not just for today but for the future. Surely there will be sadness at that time but there will also be joy. And before the loving Father leaves he will take steps to be sure that the day-to-day needs of his family are met while he is away. That's what Jesus did for his disciples and for us prior to his departure.

He turned our Ascension loss into a Pentecost gain by sending the Holy Spirit to his disciples and to us. Jesus said, **But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.**

Jesus did not call the Holy Spirit by his proper name – rather he used a descriptive name. In Greek he called him the *Paraclete* – this word describes someone who gives assistance. Jesus promised to send a helper to comfort and aide his disciples while he was not physically present with them. The Holy Spirit keeps us safe until Jesus returns to take us to be with him. The word *Paraclete* was often used to speak of someone who gave legal assistance in court – maybe even someone who pleaded the case as an advocate. Jesus is speaking of that kind of help in our text for today.

The Holy Spirit is our great Pentecost gain. He is the one who links us to Christ and his saving word while empowering us to live as Christ witnesses. He is the one who calls us to faith and who strengthens our faith through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. He is the one who is there for us day-by-day as we travel through this life in eager expectation of Jesus' return. There is much that we could say about the personal daily blessings that are ours through the Holy Spirit.

But interestingly Jesus did not emphasize the personal impact the Holy Spirit would have on the lives of his disciples. He chose instead to emphasize the impact that the Spirit would have on the ministry of the disciples. He wanted them and us to understand that the Holy Spirit will advocate for us as we carry out his command to make disciples of all nations even as all our other needs are provided for us. So let's take a closer look at how the Holy Spirit helps us in our lives as witnesses for Christ.

When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: (9) about sin, because people do not believe in me; (10) about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; (11) and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

Jesus comforted his disciples with the promise of the Holy Spirit, the Helper, the Advocate who will now work along side of them. Through the gospel in word and sacrament which the apostles would preach and administer the Holy Spirit will show the world that it is wrong about sin. He convinces them that sin separates them from the blessings of God and convinces them to turn away from sin and to turn toward Christ in repentance. The Holy Spirit proves the world wrong about righteousness. The world seeks to provide its own righteousness to God but when he returned to the Father Christ presented his righteousness to the Father on our behalf. The Holy Spirit leads men to turn away from their own works and efforts and to trust instead in the works and efforts of Christ. Through the preaching of the risen and ascended Lord the Holy Spirit convinces men that the Devil, the prince of this world has been condemned. No longer does he have control over us rather Christ is the one whom we obey and worship and serve.

Let's list for ourselves once again the blessings that have come to us because our Christ's departure.

- Sin has been defeated.
- Satan has been defeated.
- Death has been defeated.
- The Holy Spirit has been given to us to assure us of our victory over sin, Satan and death.
- The Holy Spirit empowers us for our mission and assists us in that mission by convincing sinners of their sin, their need for Christ's righteousness and the victory of Christ over the devil.

Because of the Holy Spirit our journey through this life and our mission in this life will be blessed. And so while we might be disappointed and even a bit sad that Jesus is not present with us physically we realize that our Ascension loss is over come by our Pentecost gains.

Therefore let us gladly live for and witness to Christ while we eagerly wait for his when we will be with him forever in glory. Amen.