

Sermon Title: **“I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you”**

Bible: **John 14:15-21**

Where & When: at Gilroy UMC on Sunday, May 17, 2020

Audience: about 25 YouTube Live-streaming viewers

Opening Prayer

Oh Jesus, even though you are God, you became a human being to be with us. You were with us on the earth. Furthermore, you wanted and decided to be with us forever. You asked the Father to give us another Advocate. Thank you so much for loving us and being with us forever. Please guide us to love you more and more. In Jesus' name. Amen.

1. Between Easter and Pentecost

According to the Gospel of John, the Word became flesh and lived among us. God became a human being. Baby Jesus was born in a manger, in the lowest place. He suffered on the cross, and after three days, he was risen from the dead. After resurrection, he stayed with the disciples. Even though today's Scripture Reading was what Jesus taught to the disciples, before his crucifixion, the promise of the Holy Spirit is good to read between Easter Sunday and Pentecost Sunday. Do you remember when Easter Sunday was in 2020? Easter was April 12. This year Pentecost will be May 31st. Pentecost is the Sunday of the coming of the Holy Spirit, after Eastertide, the period of 50 days spanning Easter Sunday to Pentecost Sunday.

2. With Piaget's Theory

According to the lectionary calendar, we are within that 50-day period between Easter and Pentecost. If we were Jesus' disciples at that time, how would we feel during these 50 days? Can we trust the promise of the Holy Spirit? Or are we afraid of Jesus' absence from us? The world will no longer see Jesus, but we will see Jesus in a little while. What does it mean to us?

Do you remember when you were a baby? Can we remember when our moms played peek-a-boo with us? According to Jean Piaget, a psychologist of children's development, we had the sensorimotor stage when we were babies. I want to show one video - https://youtu.be/NjBh9ld_yIo I know that we really enjoyed playing peek-a-boo, when we were babies. But do you like to play peek-a-boo games together now? I hope not anymore, because we are adults now. And I want to show another video - <https://youtu.be/4jW668F7HdA> This is called the A-Not-B Error. Where was the toy for the first time? Where was the toy the next time? The toy is the same, but the location changed from A to B. But the babe thought that it was in A all the time.

It gave me some ideas of how to understand the Holy Spirit and God. When we play the peek-a-boo game, we think that when we cannot see or hear it, the object does not exist. But once we grow up, we know that the object still exists, even though we cannot see or hear it. How about the Holy Spirit? Does the Holy Spirit play peek-a-boo games with us? Or do we know that the Holy Spirit is in us, even though we cannot see or hear the Holy Spirit?

Sometimes, we need to open our eyes or our hearts. Because the Holy Spirit is not there where we found the Spirit before. Like the A-Not-B Error, if we try to find God where we experienced God before, we might make the same mistakes as the babies. Yes, God was there before at that time. We should be thankful. But many times, as we grow up, God is waiting for us in a different place, because God wants to show us more people and more of the world that God loves and God cares about. Then, we might need to go to B, not A. In other words, we might

need to go out of our comfort zone from where we have experienced God before. For example, now we cannot have in-person worship, where there are hugs, eyecontact, and smiles. We miss in-person worship so much. But now we know that even through this Youtube Worship, we have experienced God's love and grace. We should be proud of our YouTube Worship that we made together!! Without your new adventure to the online world, we cannot be here together at the same time.

3. The Holy Spirit As Another Advocate

There are many descriptions of the Holy Spirit in the Bible: dove, fire, helper, comforter, etc. In the Gospel of John that we read today, the Holy Spirit was described as another advocate. What image do you have of the word "Advocate?" In the time of the Gospel of John, Advocate was a very powerful word. That's because it was dangerous to believe in Jesus at that time. Those who believed in Jesus were likely to be put out of their community. In other words, they could be in danger of excommunication. In John 9, there was a story of a man born blind who receives sight. In John 9:20-22, it says "His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue." The parents could not be glad that their son received his sight. They were afraid of being excommunicated from their community. And

in our church history, it is not only their stories, but also many of our faith ancestors. They took the risk of following Jesus! I believe that the Holy Spirit as an Advocate was in them.

4. El Camino Real District Covid-19 Relief Project

Does the Holy Spirit abide in us? If so, how about the Holy Spirit in us? Is our Holy Spirit an Advocate here and now? In this Covid-19 season, thankfully, most of our congregation have been safe and healthy. However, when I learned about our district Covid-19 Relief Project and other churches, I felt some movements in my mind. Among 5 districts in our annual conference, our El Camino Real District covers a kind of southern bay area. There are about 55 churches. Until Tuesday, May 5th, 121 families had asked for help through this relief project, which is a total of 485 people, including 253 children. Among three stories in the letter of our District Superintendent Shinya Goto, this story touched my heart. The names were changed for privacy. “Sophia and her brother are a freshman and sophomore in high school. They are both very active in a youth ministry program at their United Methodist Church. Their father returned to Mexico four months ago where he died unexpectedly of a heart attack. Unable to travel to Mexico, Sophia, her brother, and her mother are doing what they can to keep the family together amidst their grief. It was then that her mother was laid off from a fast food restaurant where she had worked for many years, and the family is not able to receive any assistance from governmental programs because of their visa status.”

Thankfully and generously, our lay leadership team decided to donate all we have remaining in our 31-year-old Sears Special Giving Fund (\$745.51) to this relief project. As of last Sunday, our congregation collected \$520 for this relief project.

I know that helping undocumented workers could be complicated or controversial. But can we think of what it means, the Holy Spirit as an Advocate? When I became a member of the United Methodist Church in 2012, my church welcomed me and loved me, regardless of my visa status. Of course, before I became a pastor, they checked out my visa status. And then, the California and Nevada Annual Conference has sponsored my religious worker visa, with the help of Gilroy United Methodist Church. I have experienced the spirit of an Advocate from this church every Sunday. Without your advocate spirit, I cannot be here. The Holy Spirit tells me, “I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you.” I am not an orphan in this foreign county, because I am loved by you, our congregation. I am so thankful and blessed to have this congregation and this church. I am also glad and joyful to see that our 121 district families, 485 people, and 253 children have our congregation as their Advocate. With our collective relief fund and prayers, our generosity and our love, we are telling them, “We will not leave you orphaned, we are coming to you.”

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, you sent us the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is with us as an Advocate. As you said, we will love you and your people. Pour out your grace and love upon us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Questions.

1. How do we know that the Holy Spirit is in us?
2. How do we experience the Holy Spirit as an Advocate?