

**St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas, GA**

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commings+ Rector

Scripture: John 14:15-21

***"Never Alone"***

Today's Holy Gospel is from the Apostle John and this is from an especially important chapter, it takes place in the upper room- it is from John chapter 14. On the night before Jesus died, He tells the Apostles that His Father's house has many rooms, and He is going to prepare a place for them. He says *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." "You know the way to the place where I am going."* (John 14:3-4) Thomas asks Jesus *"Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"* (John 14:5) It is here that Jesus makes a most important statement, which we all know *"Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.' 'If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.'"* (John 14:6-7)

Jesus is the perfect reflection of God the Father. Mankind was created to be reflections of God – made to be in His image and likeness – but our image is tarnished because of what took place in the Garden of Eden. Jesus' reflection of God is perfect –absolutely perfect – without blemish or defect. Jesus said *"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* Isn't it interesting that the first two words are *"I am"* – the very words that the burning bush spoke to Moses in Exodus chapter 3, when Moses wanted to know the name of the One who was sending him. *"God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"* (Exodus 3:14) In Greek it is ἐγώ εἰμι (ego eimi) the very same words *"I am."* He is the way – He is not one of many ways. The truth is - if anyone says that Jesus is one of many ways – then they do not believe that Jesus is truthful. Famous Anglican author C. S. Lewis, who wrote the Chronicles of Narnia as well as Mere Christianity among others, was at one time a stalwart atheist, and then the Lord Jesus touched his life. Lewis had this to say about Jesus: *"He is either a liar, a lunatic or Lord."* Well, I believe Jesus' words to be absolute truth – and therefore He is Lord!

There was much more that happened on that night before Jesus was arrested and taken into captivity. Jesus was removing any doubt that the Apostles might have had when He told them, *"Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves."* For three years these 12 men have been following Jesus, learning from Him, witnessing miracle after miracle; healings, walking on the water, calming the storm, and so many things that took place. Jesus said *"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father." "And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father." "You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."* (John 14:11-14) When Jesus says, *"in my name"* - and so praying *"in Jesus' name"* means that as we get to know who Jesus is – we get drawn into His life, love, and His sense of purpose. Then we will begin to see what needs to be done, what we should be aiming for, and then what resources are needed to do it. I know that I am preaching to the choir now – because 8 years ago on Pentecost Sunday, without hesitation you walked into the wilderness, away from

Fifth Sunday of Easter, May 2, 2021, Year B

a church that left Biblical teaching – and then you began writing your own history as Saint Andrew's Anglican Church, and for that I applaud you. I thank you for your bravery and your willingness to stand on the truth. You saw what needed to be done and you did it, bringing pews into this church at midnight from Nashville, TN, and much more. I have heard the stories from many of you, and you continue gathering week after week, pandemic or no pandemic, honoring, and worshipping the Risen Lord Jesus in this place. It has changed just a little – as y'all took it over on May 2013; we got the floors re-done, there is a beautiful cross up here that Kit Carson made, there is Steve Williams and his work building this altar rail, the Building Design Committee that had the carpets changed into red, the whole platform was redone by Steve and his people, and then the altar and reredos by Rowan Evans and so much more. It is just incredible, not to mention the beautiful Celtic cross up here donated by Jeanette and George Blampied along with Ron and Terri Macy. So many things in this parish and we are grateful for that.

Today's Holy Gospel begins with verses 15-21 when Jesus enlightens them more about His relationship with them and with the Father giving them a new and incredible promise. Jesus says, *"If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever-- the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."* (John 15:15-21)

None of us has ever seen the wind. We see the effects of the winds – (a week or so ago we really saw the effects of the wind with the tornado) but can you see the wind? You can hear it blowing, and you can see the trees go back and forth; you can see branches fall off – but do you really see the wind? The same with the Holy Spirit and ironically the Hebrew word for wind is the same for spirit- *ruach*. *Ruach* means wind, or breath – the "*Ruach Ha Kodesh*" means the Holy Spirit –the Holy Breath or the Holy Wind. When Jesus breathed upon the Apostles in John 20 – they did not see His breath – because He was not in New York during a cold, cold winter, or in a freezer. You do not see those things but you know they are there. We know the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit is in us, we see the works of the Holy Spirit all around us.

Remember that these words were spoken on the night that Jesus was betrayed, arrested, and denied three times, and so Jesus gives the Apostles promises of encouragement and warnings of what is to come. Previously, Jesus has told the Apostles many times that the Son of Man, He is going to die and be raised up – but now He is telling them that in spite of His death – they will never be alone, and that He will not leave them as orphans. At the end of this chapter, Jesus assures them that His Holy Spirit will be with them. *"When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me." "And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning."*

Fifth Sunday of Easter, May 2, 2021, Year B

(John 15:26-27) When the Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles on that magnificent Day of Pentecost – all of their doubts and fears disappeared. These 11 who were left after the betrayal of Jesus, chose a new one called Matthias – to restore the 12 – and then went out into the world – facing death in order to teach the world about their Risen Savior. We will celebrate the feast of Pentecost on May 23<sup>rd</sup> this year, and I want to encourage everyone to wear something red that day to honor the Holy Spirit. It will be a beautiful thing.

We, as believers and followers of Jesus Christ have the Holy Spirit's presence in our hearts – and we will one day share in Jesus' glorious Presence for all eternity. Without Jesus in our lives – everyday problems and challenges would appear to be huge unreachable mountains. Without Jesus in our lives we would be at the mercy of this cruel and heartless world. When we give our lives to Jesus Christ we receive the kind of hope that gives us strength and we are empowered to put our daily struggles into His loving hands. How many times have I reminded you about “help me Jesus?” And then of course, “thank you Jesus!” Calling upon Jesus and asking “help me Jesus” - if you know Him and love Him – you are never alone! We do not need to feel worried or afraid when we know that we have Almighty God walking with us on our life's journey – as I said – and as He said - we are never alone!