

Trinity Sunday, Sunday, May 22, 2016, Year C

St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas, GA

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ Rector

Scripture: John 16:5-15

"The Verdict is In"

As has been the case the past several weeks, Jesus and the Disciples are in the Upper Room on the night that Jesus would be arrested. He has so much to tell them – and to give to them. He washed their feet – showing them the heart of a servant, and He gave them the Sacrament of Holy Communion – by which they would keep the body of believers fed. Jesus told them where He was going and that He was the Way – the only Way to the Father. During this time Jesus foretold of His betrayal – and sent His betrayer away. Most importantly, before Jesus prayed His High Priestly Prayer, found in John 17 – Jesus made a remarkable promise that He needed to go away in order to send the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Counselor, the Spirit of Truth – who would guide them - continuing the work Jesus had started with them.

Can you just imagine how unsettling it must have been for them to realize that Jesus would really be leaving them and that they would no longer be able to speak with Him in person? When Jesus taught – if there was anything that they didn't understand – they could go to Jesus ask Him as He would take the time to explain it to them. But now they will feel terribly alone – until the Holy Spirit would speak to them – not face to face – but heart to heart!

Jesus told them that when the Holy Spirit comes "*He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment*" (John 16:8) Many times in the history of Israel – they were wanting a judgement from God – praying that He would act as Judge and decide who was in the right – Israel or the nations that conquered and ruled over them. They had seen Jerusalem conquered, the people exiled and taken off to Babylon, and when they returned they were overrun and oppressed by one foreign power after another – with the Romans the conquerors in Jesus' day. It seemed as if it would never end. They truly believed that Yahweh was a God of justice. There was only one problem – Israel was constantly going against what God asked them to do. God had called them many times a 'stiff necked people,' a 'stubborn people' because they did what they wanted – even when He had delivered them from Egypt, they complained "oh if only we had leeks and onions to eat like we did when we were in Egypt. They got tired of Manna and quail! God told them many times what to do. He used His Prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel (chapter 9) spoke about Yahweh bringing condemnation against the people. But they were a people who God described as stubborn and stiff necked. BUT – these same prophets also saw God taking His judgement seat and giving a different verdict – one in which God would find in favor of Israel and against the nations that attacked it – demonstrating that the world was in the wrong and His people in the right.

Jesus speak about the Holy Spirit – as the Counselor coming as an advocate – proving that the world is in the wrong, but this time God's people are followers of Jesus. The "world" is made up of the pagan Gentile nations, and those Jews who have not believed in Jesus. (We are talking about Jews who heard of Jesus but refused – NOT the ones who came before and knew and loved Yahweh. Often people will ask "what happened to the people who came before Jesus if they loved God, they loved Yahweh? They were redeemed; they were saved, and we have proof

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of that. All we need to do is look at the miracle of the Transfiguration. Who stood on that mountain with Jesus in glory? Moses and Elijah! They weren't alive when Jesus was, but yet – here they stood with Jesus in glory. You can be assured that if they loved God, then they are with Him in paradise. If we love Jesus – we can do the same.

I cannot help but imagine when you talk about the word Counselor it for some reason gives me an image of a courtroom. A giant royal courtroom – in which God the Father sits as judge, with Jesus sitting at His right hand – and the defense attorney is none other than the Holy Spirit – our Counselor! Certainly no offense meant to any attorneys that might be present – but if I could choose who to defend me against the accusing, prosecuting attorney named Satan – I am going to go with the Holy Spirit, each and every time – hands down!

Jesus tells them what to expect – and even though they will be sad – they shouldn't forget about the “promised helper!” who is our advocate before the Father.

He will be arguing three important points in your case against the accuser - Satan:

First, the Holy Spirit will demonstrate that the “*world*” is in the wrong – in relation to sin; the culture today is in the wrong! Since the “*world*” has not believed in Jesus – they have no means of forgiveness and repentance – and they are bent on having their own way instead of God's way.

Second – the Holy Spirit will demonstrate that the world is on the wrong side of justice. The world thinks it has justice on its side, but what Jesus will do as He “*goes away*” will vindicate believers in Jesus. All those who follow Jesus will share in the verdict in favor of Jesus Christ the righteous One. When repentant believers stand in judgement before Almighty God – He will not see our unrighteousness – but the Righteousness of His Son – the perfect righteousness of His Son, Jesus Christ! Sounds to me like what we call “justification by faith:” “*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.*” (Ephesians 2:8)

Third, the Holy Spirit will demonstrate that the world is wrong in relation to judgement and condemnation. The world thinks it can pass judgement on Jesus' followers – even to the point of persecution, or ridicule – as we can see in today's media, but what happens in the next few days in the life of Jesus; His death and Resurrection will prove decisively that they are wrong. Jesus' death and resurrection will be irrefutable evidence that the “ruler of this world” – Satan, who has kept humanity enslaved – through sin and death has been condemned! His main weapon – and that of tyrants – death – has been defeated by Jesus on the cross.

Jesus gave us His own words regarding the Holy Spirit as our Counselor and advocate. If you have ever had to go to court you may have given a deposition. In doing so you would meet with the attorney, and you talk with the attorney who will give you some good advice. Jesus said this “*When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.*” (Luke 12:11-12)

And now, in this courtroom - I would like to introduce another piece of evidence into our defense. These are the words of Jesus, Himself, from which you will see that the verdict has already been declared. *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. (This is the portion of this Scripture that most people stay away from and sweep under the rug) **This is the verdict:** Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."* (John 3:16-21) Sadly, verse 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21 are usually ignored. We need not ignore them because they have our hope – emboldened in RED Letters.

These words should give a tremendous amount of HOPE to believers of Jesus as Lord and Savior. I know many people who are absolutely terrified to die and stand before God, as judge. Please remember the verdict that Jesus said and we should have complete confidence in our Advocate – our defense. The Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 3:12 *"In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence."* We can "approach the bench" any time we need to. The Temple Veil was torn in two giving us access to the Holy Spirit, no longer one person going into the Holy of Holies on the 'day of atonement' – but instead we have free access to the Holy of Holies – because when Jesus said 'it is finished' the Temple Veil tore in two, and the Holy Spirit was let loose on creation; that believers in Jesus Christ could then receive Him into their hearts, into our hearts, and we have full access to God. Is that good news? Yes, indeed it is! The knowledge and trust in the righteousness of God Himself, and faith in Him and all of His promises, tells us that we need not fear – but approach with grateful hearts – singing "holy, holy, holy!"

It is our human nature to be worriers; we look at the news and we worry; we look at our checkbooks and we worry; we look and we start thinking about the things we need to do – and we worry – instead of trusting in God – we look at things we did in our past – and we worry - and Satan, the accuser, the prosecuting attorney - loves to remind us of our sins, trying to make us doubt the complete and total forgiveness that comes only from God Himself. God not only forgives the sins we have repented of, but He forgets them! It is we who remember them and as Satan reminds us of them, we carry along unnecessary guilt and shame. I am here today to tell you that you can take that guilt and shame and throw it away. If you have given those sins to Christ – that guilt and shame has no place in your life. I am once again drawn to the image of the courtroom – the court of the King of Kings as foretold in our first reading this morning from Isaiah 6:3-7. *"And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined!"*

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For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty." Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." Jesus paid the price – He didn't have to – He wanted to!

Remember the verdict, remember the cross and remember how Jesus made forgiveness possible, remember your defense team – and remember the righteous Judge – who loves you so much – that He sent His Son – in your place.

The Verdict in In!