

Sixth Sunday of Easter - May 22, 2022, Year C
St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas, GA

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ Rector

Scripture: John 14:21-29

"The One, True Light"

Chapter 14 of the Gospel of John is very powerful and it is very important for all of us. Jesus, on the very night that He gave us the gift of His Body and Blood in the Eucharist also told the Apostles exactly where He and they were going. Without a doubt Jesus also told them His true identity and offered to all His disciples the wonderful gift of His comfort, helping to take them through their trials. Please remember that the word disciple means follower, and that word still holds true today. There is a great difference between an apostle and a disciple because an apostle can be a disciple, but a disciple cannot be an apostle unless they are handpicked by Jesus, Himself.

Jesus is also very clear as to who He considers His disciples. He says, "*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 14:21) Please remember that the time that Jesus walked the earth was centered around the male – and so the masculine pronoun is always used but I believe that the feminine is also included.

In John 3:16-18, Jesus says who is included and who is not included - as He told Nicodemus, clearly stating the rules for salvation when He says, "*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.*" Those words are true and are very important as are verses 17 and 18. The world just loves to stop at the end of verse 16. Listen to what verse 17 says, "*For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*" That is not so bad, and people will go along with that for a little bit, but it is verse 18 that many absolutely want to avoid. "*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.*" Jesus clearly states people who are saved in John 14:23-24 when He says, "*If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.*" (John 14:23-24) Once again – the word 'anyone' includes women as well. Like John 3:16-18, people will listen to John 14:6 where Jesus says, "*I am the way and the truth and the life*" and they don't want to hear "*no one comes to the Father, but through me.*" Jesus clearly sets the ground rules, and how hard is it to understand that believing in Jesus is the key to eternal life in Him. These are not just statements, but clear promises as when we walk with Jesus, the one true light.

Jesus' promises are true, He always keeps them. Jesus promised to come for His people and to answer when we call on Him. The Counselor that Jesus promised when He said, "*But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*" (John 14:26) The promised Holy Spirit,

has come and has taken up residence in each one of our hearts, continually teaching us what God wants and bringing peace to our souls.

We all face many difficulties, both because of sin in our own lives, and the incredible evil that surrounds us. We are reminded here that God is just as real and as close to us as Jesus was to the disciples almost 2,000 years ago. That much is true, even when we are so rooted in our problems that we forget to call on Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Our problems, Jesus will take from us when we call on Him. Remember the three-word prayer: 'help me Jesus?' It should always be followed by 'thank you Jesus.' The Holy Spirit comes and has taken up residence in our hearts. You know as well as I do, that we face many difficulties. Our faith can be smothered at times by the problems around us, that we lose sight of the fact that a Savior is with us. The Apostle Paul reminds us of the confidence that we can have in one person - Jesus Christ in Romans 8, "*who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" (Romans 8:35,37-39) He goes to the extremes, talking about heights and depths, angels, and demons, do you get the message? Nothing can separate us!

We are not supposed to compromise on our faith. Either we believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the way, the truth, and the life, or we believe that He is something else. Those who believe and stay close to Jesus, and refuse to settle for a second-best, compromised discipleship, will find that His peace comes to them as a gift, a peace of a kind that 'the world' can never give." We have the freedom to worship in truth and on the blessings of God's Word – right here. Jesus said in verse 27, "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*" This peace will assure them of Jesus' presence and support, filling them with the knowledge that the Jesus they know and love is truly One with the Father.

Remember that they are in the Upper Room and this is just a short period of time before Jesus is arrested and taken from them. He wants to prepare them for what is to come, even though they truly have no real idea of the depth of the separation that is about to take place. Jesus told them, "*You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.*" As closely as they followed Jesus for the three years that they walked with Him, I truly believe that they did not fully understand – and would not really, until Jesus arose from the dead on that Sunday morning, ascended to the Father in their midst, and then would fully understand, just ten days later, when they received the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and wisdom on the day of Pentecost, fifty days after Passover. We will celebrate the Feast of Pentecost just two weeks from today, and I urge you to wear something red. I know I will. Isn't it true that sometimes we need a little help

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in understanding and strengthening our belief – and that is where the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, comes in. Just last year, we had lemonade on the lawn, and we had cookies. We are going to try to have cookies and cupcakes, two weeks from today, so that we can celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit together as a community. We will do it right outside near the sign and the flagpole. I think it is a great thing to celebrate our community as followers of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Isn't it true that sometimes we need help in understanding more about our faith? Let me repeat to you what Jesus said in verse 26, "*the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, (a counselor is someone you go to for help, for guidance, or in legal terms a counselor is your defender, taking your case, standing before a judge, and saying, 'not guilty') whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*" If we are searching for answers, struggling with our faith, or even wrestling with doubt – we only need to call on the Holy Spirit, who we received in the Sacrament of Baptism, to help us, to counsel and strengthen us in our walk with Jesus.

To keep all of these words in perspective, we need to look at the last two verses of chapter 14, that are right after today's Holy Gospel. Jesus said, "*I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me, but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me. "Come now; let us leave."*" (John 14:30-31) They would now be leaving, on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane, on the way to the Mount of Olives, and walking across the Kidron Valley. Jesus is preparing His Apostles and disciples for what is about to unfold – and that the prince of this world, Satan, will begin his final assault on the life of Jesus. Let me repeat Jesus' words, "*He has no hold on me, but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me.*" Jesus said that Satan has no hold on Him, and as believers of Jesus, we can rebuke him in our lives, telling him to get lost, to depart from us, by the power of the Name and Blood of Jesus Christ! If he is getting under your skin – tell him, "in the Name of Jesus Christ be gone!" He has to obey! There is power in His Name. When we give our lives to Jesus, the Savior of the world, we receive the kind of hope that gives us strength for today, empowered to put our daily struggles in His hands. We don't need to be tentative when we know that we have God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit walking with us, stride for stride. Jesus encourages us to be walking with Him, with Jesus, the one true light.