

Sixth Sunday of Easter - May 26, 2019, Year C  
**St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas, GA**

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins+ Rector

Scripture: John 14:21-29

***“Walking with Jesus”***

This chapter, John 14, is so very important for all of us, in that Jesus, on the very night that He gave us the New Covenant – the gift of His Body and Blood in the Eucharist, He also told the Apostles exactly where He and they were going, but also without a doubt He told them His true identity. Jesus also offered to all His disciples the wonderful gift of His comfort and help to take them through their trials. Please remember that the word disciple means follower, and that word still holds true today, whether it is a 9AM service, a 10:30 service or an 11:30 service – whatever the service – if people are in church today – I pray that they are followers of Jesus and that means they are disciples. There is a great difference between an apostle and a disciple. An apostle can be a disciple, but a disciple cannot be an apostle unless they are hand picked by Jesus.

Jesus is 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) Remember the time and the setting for this is the first century, and the masculine pronoun is always used – but it is inferred that the feminine is also included. Just as in John 3:16-18, Jesus says who is included and who is not included: *“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) Those words are in parallel with John 3:16-18, where Jesus told Nicodemus, clearly indicating the rules for salvation, *“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.”* How awesome that even in football games in the end zone a person with a rainbow wig sat there with a sign that said “John 3:16” those words are true and are very important and so are 17 and 18. The world loves to stop at the end of verse 16. What does 17 say? *“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 knocks the point home. *“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.”* 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.”* They don't want to go there! Both of these statements by Jesus clearly sets the ground rules. 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 we walk with Jesus.

Jesus' promises are true, and always kept. 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 Holy Spirit, has come

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as promised and has taken up residence in our hearts, continually teaching us what God wants and bringing peace to our souls.

You know as well as I do that 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 entrenched in our problems that we forget to call on Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Our problem, Jesus will not take from you unless you call on Him. How many times that I have taught over the nearly four and a half years that I have been here, have I spoke about the three-word prayer: 'help me Jesus?' It is always 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) That is truth!

There is no attempt here to make the kind of compromise that so many Christians will settle for, bending over backwards to discover places where they and 'the world' are not so far apart. We are not supposed to compromise on our faith. Either we believe that Jesus is the Christ, the way, the truth and the life, or we believe that He is something else. That is often the right thing to do in the world; but the fact remains that much of 'the world', to this day you just have to look around you. 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." I stand in the pulpit of St. Andrew's Anglican Church, in the Anglican Church of North America, that refused to compromise on the Word of God. I don't have to tell you – you made the decisions to bring us here. Some of that is pain and some of that is rejoicing. 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 have already received His precious Body and Blood. This just a short period of time before Jesus is arrested and taken from them. He is trying 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*

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*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, 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 in understanding and strengthening our belief – and that is where the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, comes in. 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. In legal terms a counselor is to defend you, to take your case and stand before a judge and say ‘not guilty’ – this is a term we need to be in touch with.) 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 need to only call on the Holy Spirit, who we received in the Sacrament of Baptism, to help us and strengthen us to be walking with Jesus.

To keep all of these words in context, we will need to look at the last two verses of this chapter, 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) You know what? I have read this so many times, and I never really heard those last words - *“Come now; let us leave.”* I always thought that Jesus' High Priestly Prayer which will follow in chapters 15, 16 and 17 – were in the upper room, but no, they were on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane, on the way to the Mount of Olives. They would be walking across the Kidron Valley. I never got that until just preparing for this sermon. Jesus said, *“Come now; let us leave.”* Jesus is preparing His Apostles and disciples for what is about to unfold – and that the prince of this world will begin his final onslaught on the life of Jesus. I want to 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 Jesus, and as believers of Jesus, we can rebuke him in our lives, and tell 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 – *“in the Name of Jesus Christ be gone!”* He has to obey! There is power in that 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, as we are empowered to put our daily struggles into perspective. 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. We don't need to waver.

I close with Jesus' words to those who followed Him that night, He said, *“Come now; let us leave.”* These words show us that they began their journey to the Garden of Gethsemane, and ultimately Jesus to His journey to the cross. Though these words, Jesus encourages us to be walking with Him, with Jesus, the one true light.