

Sermon June 5th

St. Matthew Episcopal Church

Omar Rodriguez De la O

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, our Rock and our Redeemer, amen!

It is a privilege for us this morning to be standing in front of what will always be our Church, St. Matthew's Episcopal Church. We are grateful for all your support and constant prayers for me and Edwin. We are grateful to be a part of St. Matthew's.

Today's gospel narrates a conversation between Philip and Jesus. But let's look at Philip in the gospel first, we notice that Philip is not a major player among the disciples of Jesus. He raises his hand a few times, makes a couple of statements, and asks a question or two. However, when he questioned Jesus, it is then, and only then, that we take notice of him. In other times, he just doesn't come to mind.

We certainly don't think of him as a top-tier disciple of Jesus, do we? We don't see him in the transfiguration passage, and when Jesus went to the garden to pray the night before he yielded his life on the cross, we may notice that Philip wasn't asked to join Jesus to pray, why not? Maybe, he could have slept through the whole thing as easily as those who did accompany Jesus. If you were asked to name the disciples of Jesus, you might be hard-pressed to remember Philip.

However, today's gospel brings us the conversation between Philip and Jesus and teaches us two things about human nature, first, the need for companions and second, the doubts that we have as human being. There is no problem in having doubts, because doubts help us understand the things in which we have doubt. We can see it when he said, "...*Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.*"

Philip needed to understand that it was Jesus who was the Word manifested in flesh and who was in front of him, because at that time that Word was the companion among them. Later in the gospel Jesus said that the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in His name will teach him everything and Jesus who has been his companion would no longer be physically among them. The Holy Spirit would take Jesus' place as his companion.

In this conversation between Jesus and Philip we can see the connection that Jesus shows us between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, showing one of God's greatest attributes, about his own essence being 100% God and 100% human. As Jesus told Philip in John 14:9 "...Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" So, this Spirit-Paraclete (Spirit-Paraclete means that the Spirit is our comforter and counselor) makes sense when Jesus speaks of Him in His human sense (when He says He will leave) but at the same time return manifesting Himself in Spirit sent by the Father.

All based on love and keeping God's commandments, as Jesus said, that the greatest commandment was to love one another. "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another." Love is the only requirement to receive this promise and to manifest that love with others, in a world lacking love.

However, in the New Testament, the description of the Spirit as "Paraclete" is attested to only in John. In ancient extra-biblical usage, the word clearly has two dimensions: the "etymological" one, in the sense of a spokesman, and the "paratactical" in the sense of an advocate with a mandate. In this passage we also see Jesus announcing His coming again in different ways. Jesus coming not only as Spirit-Paraclete, but also as a personal experience, and to the church as a whole.

That Jesus not abandoning us as orphans is something He expresses as pertaining to the future, but His coming again is in the present. And yet, the promise of the Holy Spirit reflects the special way in which Jesus remains present with the believing community until today. At a time when Jesus knew that his disciples would feel alone or orphaned because their master would no longer be with them, this promise is a hope that Jesus would be in our company no matter His manifestation, in person or spirit.

Remembering the promise as Jesus says, "You will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me." But the conclusion points to the glorification as the time when the disciples will know not only Jesus' relation to the Father, but that such a relationship exists between Jesus and themselves and remains today among us, his church. And we can see it since the birth of the church on the day of Pentecost; that manifestation of the Holy Spirit is the continuation of it.

We can see in Acts 2 verse 1 where it says "...When the day of Pentecost had come, the disciples were all together..." as the disciples kept each other company while waiting for the promise of the Holy Spirit. This is a teaching on unity and the need to have the company of each other. This is very important in our life as the body of Christ.

Being together also means "mixture" because in a place where everyone is welcome a mixture is made among us. Simply put, in order to be one, this mixture needs to happen and our respecting each other's differences helps us maintain a healthy unity among the body of Christ, because each one of us needs the other despite our differences.