



THE SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
MAY 26, 2019
JOHN 14: 23-29
"THE DIVINE THERAPIST"

Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Anyone 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.

"All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, 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. 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.

"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.

- A couple was having some trouble, so they went to see a counselor. After a few visits, the counselor informed them he had discovered the main issue.
- He stood up, went over to the woman, asked her to stand, and gave her a hug. He looked at the man and said, "This is what your wife needs at least once a day."
- The man looked puzzled, thought for a moment, then replied, "Okay, what time do you want me to bring her back tomorrow."
- If you have ever worked well with a psychological professional, there comes a time when that person takes up residence in your soul.
- For example, it's a good sign when your therapist shows up in your dreams. Your counselor has entered your inner life.
- If your therapist has entered your inner life, in time of need, you are able to recall helpful things your therapist has said. The flesh-and-blood counselor has become an inner guide.
- This is the process that Jesus references as he is about to take leave of his disciples. In his leaving, he is pointing them inward: to the Holy Spirit, the advocate, the counselor, who will now remind them of the wisdom Jesus has imparted to them.

- Whether or not we are aware of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit has been in the midst of all creation since the beginning, with us since birth, and awakened in us through our baptism.
- This morning, let's become more aware of our inner guide, our advocate, our Divine Therapist.
- At the end of the first session with a new client, I always said something like "I don't see any reason why we can't work through this." And I wasn't blowing smoke. I always felt we could affect healing. I might add that "We are going to be at this a long time" or ask if the person is willing to do the work.
- Truthfully, what I was offering was a word of hope. Because Jesus once walked the earth and showed us the way, there are countless healing paths in life. That doesn't mean any of them are easy or fast, but this is a characteristic of the Holy Spirit, the Divine Therapist, an inner word of hope.
- As God promises Ezekiel, "I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live."
- People come to a counselor when old patterns are no longer working. Life has lost its meaning, its zip, its sense of well-being.
- Typically, a person is trapped in their version of insanity.
- As we know, insanity is doing the same thing and expecting a different result.
 - We keep going back to the same person looking for love, understanding, or care and we get kicked in the teeth for the 977th time and finally we say enough.
 - We keep following the advice given to us by our elders and it doesn't work for us once again and we feel the need for a different way.
 - The past has grabbed us and the more we ruminate, the more depressed we get.
 - We need to move forward in life and the more we consider it, the more paralyzed and anxious we become.
- Without God, the Holy Spirit, the Divine Counselor, there is no inner momentum to heal our wounds. When the Spirit is alive in us, we awaken from our routinized way of thinking and enter the world of co-creative power. Like Pinocchio, we move from wooden to real. The Spirit is the energy in us that enables us to keep going, to keep

recovering from our wounds, to keep hoping. The spirit in me recalls the words of Jesus, “Unless you become like children, you will not enter the Kingdom of God.”

- Why? Because children have the ability to fall, cut their knee, crack their head, cry and then ten minutes later say, “Can we go get ice cream?” For me, the Spirit of the risen Christ keeps a twinkle in my eye, a sense of humor on my lips, and a spirit of optimism about the possibilities in life....
- Wisdom of the Spirit dictates that no one should go into his or her head alone. Whenever someone refuses the help of another person because he or she is “*working on things on their own*,” I know it will end in disaster. The mind that creates the problem cannot find the solution.
- Earlier I mentioned that the world of the Spirit is one of co-creative power. It takes two. And that’s scary. To let someone else see you in your misery.
- Isn’t it interesting that Jesus said, “Where two or three are gathered in My Name, there I am in the midst of them,” not “When you sit by yourself gazing at your navel.”
- It takes the intimacy of two to affect healing....
- I brought my psychotherapy practice to a close last week in Bloomington. As I was finishing up with one long-term client, she said with a smile, “I knew you when you were young.”
- I laughed hard....and doubled her fee.
- If we think of our relationship with the holy spirit as akin to a therapeutic relationship, then we are speaking of intimacy: “I knew you when you were young.” A knowing that has deepened past the superficialities and defenses to a true connective knowing.
- A good counselor does not sit as an expert, but as a fellow human being willing to join in another person’s pain and heartache, willing to go into the abyss of suffering with that person.
- So, it is that the Spirit knows us better than we know ourselves. As Luther was fond of saying, “The spirit of Christ is closer to us than the shirt on our back.”
- The spirit is in our corner, nudging us toward our best selves, if only we allow it....
- The Spirit is a Spirit of truth. The Spirit reminds us that Jesus said “The truth shall set you free.” Our task is to recognize the truth wherever it appears in whatever form. But as Richard Rohr says, “The truth will set you free, but first it will make you miserable.”
- So, in divine therapy, we first face the miserable truth. The truth we didn’t want to see because it is painful, because it contradicts some long-held belief, because it means we

will have to change, because it means we will have to let go of some precious but painful way of doing life.

- So much of what people deal with in therapy has to do with suffering in relationship. Here, hope is a double-edged sword. Because hope is always the last thing to die.
- Coming to the truth that there is finally nothing we can do to elicit love from someone we love is terribly painful. To face that we need to let go of the hope that it will one day happen is almost too much for some to bear.
- At age forty, I was a Pastor of a congregation that worshipped a thousand people a weekend, larger than all but forty of the 10,000 ELCA congregations.
- My father came to visit for the first time. I had started a contemporary service on Saturday evening, was responsible for all the adult education on Sundays and Wednesdays, had created a system of publicity, receiving new members, and assimilating them into the congregation and more.
- My Aunt told me later that he called her after his visit, unable to comprehend how I was in this position in the congregation. He couldn't see me. He didn't understand who I was and what I had to offer.
- My Aunt told him, "It's not surprising, Ken. You've never been able to see Scott."
- That hope that my father would one day see me had to die. I would always be some goofy, irresponsible kid to him.
- "Doctor," says the receptionist, "There's a client here to see you who says he is invisible."
- The therapist replies, "Tell him I can't see him right now."
- One of the greatest gifts we can give one another in our families and in a spiritual community is to see one another for who we are and what we have to offer. This is when the Spirit in us see the Spirit in another. What a great gift and blessing....
- One of the maxims in psychotherapy is that love does not heal, but nothing happens without love.
- If love in itself heals, then life would be a lot easier. But Freud called the primary work of therapy a "working through." More recently scholars have re-examined his original writings in German and corrected that phrase to indicate he actually meant a "suffering through."
- So, the Holy Spirit places within us the love that exists between the father and the son, but it does not stop there. The Spirit's true work is to be an every-present inner

companion as we suffer through whatever stands in our way of becoming who God would have us be. The Divine Therapist....

- Michaelangelo was given a damaged piece of stone and out of it created the magnificent statue of David. Not a pristine or perfect stone, but a damaged one. When asked about the difficulties in creating such a masterpiece, it is purported that he replied, "It is easy. You just chip away the stone that is not David."
- This is work of the Spirit, the Divine Therapist. Chipping away all that we are not until each of our beautiful forms become visible....
- One of my longest-term clients is both a therapist herself and a professor at a Graduate school of social work in Chicago. She tells each of her classes this story: "When I went looking for a therapist, I had in mind someone about my own age, a lesbian, and preferably a person of color. What I found was an older straight white guy who is a Pastor."
- One of the beautiful aspects of the Holy Spirit, our Divine inner guide is that, if we allow it, we get what we need not what we want.
- The Spirit leads us away from crowd, away from the collective and shows us our own very personal, peculiar and particular path in life.
- Join me in praying the prayer found after the sermon title in the bulletin:
 - God for us, we call you Father.
God alongside us, we call you Jesus.
God within us, we call you Holy Spirit.
You are the eternal mystery that enables, enfolds, and enlivens all things,
Even us and even me.
Every name falls short of your goodness and greatness.
We can only see who you are in what is.
We ask for such perfect seeing—
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.
Amen.
- SERMON SONG: **WE SHALL BE FREE** BY GARTH BROOKS