

Advocate
John 14:15-21

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the words of my mouth and the ears of our hearts be open to the word of God this day. AMEN.

Today we hear a promise in our Gospel reading. And it is a wonderful promise. Promises are great and magnificent. But a promise by itself is useless. We all know that promises are filled with wonderful possibilities but they only become fulfilled promises once an action takes place. Today's Gospel reading is news of a promised gift to you and me but it only becomes effective if we believe the premise of that gift.

Another way to look at this is if I state a fact to you – say that this wood is purple, then that is my fact and that is all it is. For a fact to be useful you have to accept that premise that the wood here is colored purple and accept that fact also as true. Just me saying it doesn't do anything unless you receive it and accept the premise that this wood is purple and believe it. The same thing works with this great gift that we hear about today. We can not receive the promise unless we accept the premise that it is based upon. That is one of the points made by Jesus Christ in the Gospel for today.

The first part is that there is a promise made to each of us. Something that we all probably want and desire because are here today. Something that we would cherish and hold dear beyond other things. A promise from our Lord that he send an advocate to be with us. This is the same promise he said to his disciples in this scene from John 14. It is the last night before his death. They have eaten the Passover meal, he has prayed for them and for us, and he is about to enter into the death of that dark Friday. But before he departs from his friends and his beloved disciples he gives them his promise. He is preparing them for what is coming, when they see him dead, and buried and they feel lost or forsaken. We the feel abandoned and are in mourning. When they feel afraid and lost. He makes them this promise that they will not be left orphaned.

Literally in Greek it means to be left without a father. To be left without a leader, a guide, a teacher, a beloved caregiver. Jesus knew that left abandoned the disciples would dwell in darkness and despair, so he gives them a promise of a hope that will sustain them and give them the ability to continue on. So he said, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate, to be with you forever."

Jesus made a promise. He promised an advocate. Now an advocate is one who is called in as to give favorable witness for the defense; one who was called to give advice or to revitalize depressed and dispirited individuals or to assist those in trouble or doubt or distress

of belief. Christ was promising a comforter, but not simply one who would sympathize and pat us on the head and say, "There, there everything is going to be all right." No, Christ was promising to call in one who would enable the disciples to be courageous enough to cope. One that would empower the disciples to bear the weight of the consequences of being Christians. One that would inspire, guide, direct, and challenge and give connection with God everlasting. Jesus was calling in the one who will assure us of our redemption and our relationship with God over all this world. And I believe that is the promise we all want.

On the other hand we don't want to be left alone, totally alone, forgotten, abandoned. To be parentless without hope, that is what we fear the most in our spiritual sense. We may dread the bleakness of despair and depression. The darkness of being cast out. In a world that is determine to live in sinfulness and war, and pain, and suffering, disease and trauma we all need a promised comforter that will carry us through that valley of darkness. We don't want to be orphans at the mercy of the despair of sin.

We face guilt that gnaws at us. We can be pulled down in fatigue, frustration and foolishness. We can be smothered by the carelessness of others, of the thoughtlessness of strangers and supposed friends alike, all constantly raising obstacles before us in this life. We seek joy and peace and achievement but we all the time know that in this world we will never achieve perfect joy, peace, achievement. So we need that advocate to call to us and surround us and bear us up.

We each have to make difficult decisions every day. Many times it is about money, jobs and savings, but not all of them are just around simple economic questions about affording this months bills, that house payment, that new car, or a planned vacation. Some of them have to do with discovering how to love and grow in marriage or in new relationship or how to guide your child no matter how old they ever are, even though they constantly pick the foolish path in life, or it could be we are struggling with how to cope with aging parents that constantly need support and patience. Every day someone is called on to make decisions about work, relationship, divorce, diseases, death, and so many other situations of life. So we desire to call in one who will give advice in the midst of difficulty to have that advocate to guide us.

Of course we can also be overwhelmed in this world. Tight schedules, uncooperative persons, little accidents, faulty electronics, missed deadlines, appointments or goals – all darken more than just Mondays. We long to call in one who will do something to revitalize us to give us strength to continue on. We pray for the presence of one who will get us up by his power and give us courage enough to pull ourselves up and continue on. That is the promise we want. And Christ gives it.

But there is that second point we must grasp. There is the action needed taken. The promise is meaningless without the power of the action taking place. Jesus as the Son of a loving God, gives us a gracious gift. This love of God is so great that Jesus gives it to all people, all of humanity, all those who were ever born. point it is important to remember that Jesus Christ is the gracious Son of an all loving Father.

Yet our Lord said to his disciples. “If you love me you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to be with you forever... They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me and those who love me will be loved by my Father and I will love them and reveal myself to them.” Ahh, there is that action required.

To receive the promise and make it effective we need to take hold of it and believe it and live it. Jesus' says, If you love me and keep my commandments then I will ask. Jesus indeed promised but he also based it on a action that we need to take, that we be willing to receive what he is offering – the love of God.

Now, you and I must remember that we think of love in terms quite differently from those used by Jesus. For us love is an emotion, a feeling or a sentiment. Love is the warm fuzzy, soft and cuddly, relationship we hope for. But to Jesus the love is much simpler than that. For him love is primarily commitment to the commandments that call us to serve him and our neighbor. For him love is obedience. For him love is being the kind of person God wants us to be and doing that very thing that God would have us be doing and living.

We are to live receiving this promise and this gift, to fulfill it in its entirety and live it. May we as the church as individuals of God's family, hear that promise made to us today, that the Spirit of God, the advocate will come and be with us, May we hear that promise and receive it and follow in all that God has given us to do. May we open our hearts, minds, and bodies to the word of God this day and receive the holy Advocate to guide us in our week ahead. Amen.

May the peace and Grace of God be with you this day and throughout the week to come.
AMEN.