Sixth Sunday of Easter: Confirmation Sunday

May 14, 2023

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Acts 17:22-31 1 Peter 3:13-22 John 14:15-21

“You in me – I in you”, this is Jesus’ message of good news for us today. That no matter what the future holds, we will not be alone. “You in me – I in you”. We are the body of Christ; we are not alone. We have purpose and meaning to life because we are loved by God. “You in me – I in you”.

Into such a world that craves connection and community comes today’s text. “You in me – I in you.” This is what the world is looking for, an intimate relationship with God. Jesus comes to us and promises us that we will not be alone, that we will know God, that we will find purpose in sharing the love that we have experienced through our shared faith together.

The tragedy is that the Church as we know it is not even on the radar screen of so many people. We sing in our liturgy, “Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words to eternal life. Alleluia!” We are sent out into the world to proclaim that in Jesus Christ, we are to find life, hope, and a future in all abundance. Why is the message not getting to those who need it the most? Are we having trouble believing it ourselves? Do we need to rediscover, “You in me – I in you”.

When we know that we are loved we will look upon others with grace and acceptance. When we experience God who loves us as we are, the grace that is showered upon us, we should want to share the same with those desperate for the same acceptance. When we pray “thy kingdom come” with “You in me – I in you,” we can pray, “help me spread your joy and kindness and shine your light in the lives of everyone we meet today.”

The sinner in each of us wants us to dwell on the negative, to get caught up in our own little world with little concern for others. The sinner in us sees the gospel as something to be kept inside these walls without any need to take the message of hope to the world in which we live. We get so caught up in our way of doing things that we forget our task as disciples of Jesus Christ.

To think, “You in me – I in you”, in the presence of someone else, changes how we relate to each other. Each person is a gift from God who wants to be noticed and loved. But sin makes the love of God seem common-place and something that we earn, and therefore not to be shared. It is taken for granted rather than treasured.

But what if we can make our community something more? What if we could make our community as author Mike Slaughter says it this way in his book *Unlearning Church*, “A safe-space that would encourage us to be honest enough to work on our stuff.” Imagine if we could come here without the forced smile that keeps our pain locked inside because we do not dare to let it out. Imagine if the people around us were to see our community as such a safe place where God’s love is expressed in our mission together. That is who we are called to be, we are called to be a healing place. That is whom we are created and empowered to be by God.

We have the gift of being a part of the Kingdom of God happening around and among us. It can be frightening and seem an overwhelming task to be a part of. Jesus assures us of his presence among us in our work together. We will not be left orphaned. He has sent us the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us, to help name the sin that creeps in and hinders us from being the people we are created to be, hinders our ability to clearly point others to the love of God. To help us recognize the negativity that hinders us from seeing the love of God lived out in our lives.

Today, our 2023 Confirmation Class stands before us to affirm their baptismal promises and to continue to participate in the mission of the church. It is a beautiful thing to see how God’s Spirit has enabled our young people to grow into the leaders that they are today. Dear friends, I encourage you to continue your studies of the scriptures, keep Jesus’ commandments close to your heart, and know that God’s Spirit accompanies you (and all of us) in your walk of faith, just as God has always done.

When God spoke to Moses in the burning bush and called him to confront Pharaoh, God said, “I will be with you.” When Joshua led Israel after Moses had died, God promised him, “As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.” When Israel faced exile and challenges, God vowed, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you.” And when Jesus departed from his disciples, his final words were a promise: “Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Friends, the Spirit of God, our Advocate is with us in all times and in all places. We are not alone. We are not left orphaned. God’s Spirit walks with us, arm in arm. Amen.