

5/10/26  
**6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter**  
**For Group Meetings from May 3<sup>rd</sup> – May 9<sup>th</sup>**

**OUR MISSION:** As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

**Prayer of the Day:** Almighty and ever-living God, you hold together all things in heaven and on earth. In your great mercy receive the prayers of all your children, and give to all the world the Spirit of your truth and peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER:**

**Share:** How did last week's scripture (John 14:1-14) work in your life this week?

**Mission:**

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

**Hear:** John 14:15-21

**Explore Questions:** (Use these or develop your own.)

1. What connection does Jesus make between love and obedience in verse 15?
2. How is the "Advocate" (or Helper) described in this passage?
3. What promises does Jesus give about his presence with the disciples?

**Connect Questions:** (Use these or develop your own.)

1. Where in your life do you find it hardest to trust that you are not alone?
2. Can you think of a time when you sensed guidance, conviction, or peace that may have been the Spirit?
3. Who has been an advocate for you? Who have you been an advocate for?

**Memorize this verse:** "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." (John 14:21) What would it look like to listen more intentionally for God's voice this week?

**BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:**

**Obey:** During this week follow through on your intentions.

**Meditate:** Meditate on Psalm 66:8-20. How does this speak into your life?

**Reflect:** What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

**Notes for ChristCare leaders:**

If last week was a time for lament, perhaps this week is the time for promise. Neither of those ever happens in isolation. Endless lament that doesn't lead to an openness to a new and different future is simply despair, and a promise that is offered too quickly is meaningless, even insulting. But just as we took Thomas' and Philip's challenges to Jesus last week as permission to name our own fears, insecurity, and confusion, so also, we might this week take Jesus' words about the coming Spirit as permission to hear and claim and be transformed by God's promises. It's a powerful promise made to disciples who were afraid and uncertain about the future nearly two thousand years ago, and it's a powerful promise made to disciples who are afraid and uncertain about the future today. It's also a promise made more meaningful when you open it up a bit, and perhaps that's the opportunity before us this week.

Jesus uses a specific and distinct word to describe the Spirit in John's Gospel: paracletos – literally, one who comes along side you. It gets variously translated as comforter, helper, counselor, and encourager. But perhaps its most literal translation is simply "advocate," the one who pleads your case, who takes your side, who intercedes for you, and who stands up for you. At various times across church history, and in various traditions of Christianity today, it may be tempting to imagine that, defined this way, the Spirit's role is to intercede for us before God. The Spirit, from this point of view, is one who pleads our case that, though we have fallen short, yet because of Jesus and his sacrifice we deserve to be forgiven. But the picture of God this implies – God as needing to be persuaded to love and forgive us – feels so foreign to John's confession that "God so loved the world that God gave the only Son..." (3:16). So perhaps it's actually the other way around. Perhaps it is the Spirit who intercedes on God's behalf before us. That is, perhaps the Spirit is the one who comes to remind us of our identity as children of God, as sheep who recognize the voice of our shepherd, those for whom the good shepherd lays down his life. Because, Lord knows, that can be a hard identity to hold onto, a hard identity to believe is really ours, especially when we are stressed or frightened, unsure about our future and it feels like everything has been turned upside down.

Or maybe it's that the Spirit comes along side us and advocates for us in the face of all the challenges of the world, reminding us of Jesus' promise to be with us and for us in the face of all the things that conspire to make us doubt our worth in God's eyes, let alone the world. Both of these last two possibilities create in us the ability to not just survive the challenges of the day but also flourish amid them. Even more, the Spirit's work of advocacy creates the possibility that we can then do that same work for others. Just as the Spirit is the second advocate – Jesus' being the first – so also the Spirit invites us into similar work, to be a legion of advocates helping, comforting, encouraging, counseling, and lifting up others. This is perhaps why Jesus moves immediately from commanding his disciples to keep his commandments to the promise of the Holy Spirit. No one can hope to love others as Jesus did apart from the advocacy, help, comfort, consolation, counsel, and encouragement of the Spirit.

**Thanks be to God,**

Pastor Thadd (tbook@desertcross.org)

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*Traditional version:*

Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us  
from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power,  
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

*Contemporary version:*

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,  
your will be done on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those  
Who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial  
And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the  
power, and the glory are yours,  
Now and forever. Amen