

Pentecost Sunday – Year C
May 23, 2010
Faith Lutheran, Radcliff, KY
John 15:26-27
Pastor Paul Horn

**Looking for a good counselor? Hire the best one in town...
He instructs, He empowers, He comforts**

²⁶ “When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. ²⁷ And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

Even if you haven't lived here in Kentucky long, you could probably complete this advertisement jingle: The Heavy Hitter is the way to go call 458-1000. And the name of the attorney? Daryl Isaacs. How about this one: Been injured in a car wreck? Call Becker today.

The night Jesus was arrested in the garden, on Maundy Thursday, he was dragged away to illegal court proceedings by the chief priests and the Pharisees. He wasn't so much concerned about his lack of legal representation by Daryl Isaacs or the Becker Law Firm. He was more concerned about his disciples. Knowing all that was going to happen to him, he says to them as they dine at the Passover meal in the upper room, “I will send you a counselor from the Father, the Spirit of truth.”

Counselor in the Greek language is pronounced *paraclete*. The word was used among the common people to refer to a defense attorney. But the simple meaning of the word is “one who is called to stand at one's side.” In deployment to a combat zone the *paraclete* might be your battle buddy. If an individual is in rehab the *paraclete* might be their assigned sponsor. The Women of Faith are establishing a hospitality committee, so that when member or friend of our congregation has a loved one who dies, the women of our church step in and take of whatever needs to be done – they stand at the side of those who grieve.

Why would the disciples need this counselor and what would he do? First of all, the disciples still did not comprehend why all these horrible things had to happen to Jesus, especially since he was supposed to be the Messiah. Jesus promised his friends that the Holy Spirit would cause them to understand in a way they had never before. Just 50 days after Christ's resurrection (10 days after his ascension) a special and miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit took place. The Holy Spirit removed the roadblocks that their sinful minds had set up. He gave meaning to all Jesus had done the last three years of his life. Proof was seen in Peter's wonderful sermon to the people in Jerusalem. He beautifully explained Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah and how Jesus was the fulfillment of those prophecies, proving that Jesus was the Savior of the world.

It must have also required a special gift to Peter to be able to preach so boldly in front of so many people. Every year Americans are polled as to what they fear the most. Public speaking always tops the list, even ahead of death. This gift again came from the one Jesus promised his friends; the Counselor.

He had told his friends, **Vs27 “You will testify.”** I don’t know about you, but I’ve never been placed on the witness stand in court before, can imagine that it would be nerve wracking. The disciples were commanded to take the witness stand and testify to the courtroom of the world! The apostle Peter in 2Peter 1:16 wrote, **“We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.”** Jesus told them, **“You have been with me from the beginning,** the beginning of my ministry, **you will testify to what you have seen and heard.”** To carry out their work, the Holy Spirit would act as counselor once again, not only helping the disciples understand the Scriptures, but empowering the disciples to teach the Scriptures.

Again, we see the proof is on Pentecost Sunday. The Holy Spirit rushed in, and made them burn with great fervor to be bold preachers and teachers of the message of Jesus Christ. On that day 3,000 people were baptized and brought to faith in Jesus. The disciples knew the message that they shared with the people was power. Through their testimony of the Word of God, the Holy Spirit opened the hearts of the unbelievers. Just as tongues of fire danced on the heads of disciples, the Holy Spirit lit the fire of faith in the hearts of unbelievers through their testimony about Jesus.

But these situations were not always so successful. They did not always face receptive crowds. In the previous verses of our lesson from John 15, Jesus told his friends, **“The world hates me, they will kill me, they will do the same to you, the people of the world will hate you, they will throw you out of their synagogues, they will kill you, and they’ll even think they’re doing God a favor.”** Jesus promised to send the Counselor, someone to stand next to them, to remind them of God’s promises to them, **“He who stands firm to the end, end of his life, will be saved.”** The Counselor came to comfort the disciples.

I don’t know if you’ve had a chance to visit the Creation Museum in Petersburg, KY yet, but they’re purpose is to present the Biblical viewpoint of the beginning of our world: that God created the world in six, 24hour days by the power of his Word. Did you know that when the Creation Museum opened, writers for major newspapers around the country were quoted as saying, “This museum is inappropriate for children under the age of 16yrs. Your child will be brain washed if they tour this museum.” Did you know that the museum receives bomb threats every year? The museum employs the use of bomb sniffing dogs and a visible security presence in the parking lot and the front of the building. Why this violence and animosity? Because people don’t want to hear the message of the Bible.

Last year President Obama signed a law that makes it a federal crime to assault an individual because of his or her sexual orientation or gender identity. In early 2009 in Sweden, which also has strict hate-crimes laws, a pastor was arrested at his church after he began reading Bible verses that condemn homosexuality. Jesus said, “They will hate you because of me, they will throw you out of the churches, they will kill you, and think they’re doing God a favor.”

While we may not be arrested for preaching the truths of Scripture, there are many people in our country who oppose what Jesus tells us to preach and teach. People grow violent to the idea that there is only one way, one truth, one life... and knowing that this opposition is out there... it

causes us at times to shy away. There is the fear of confrontation, the fear that we might say the wrong thing, so we don't say anything at all. There is the fear that we might lose a friendship, or make the work place awkward, or family gatherings uncomfortable if we speak the truth in love. Jesus has called us, you and me, to testify what we have heard and seen and believe so that they might hear and see and believe.

My friends, do your hearts condemn you for failing to witness, for being afraid to witness? Yes, I know they do, because my heart condemns me, even the great apostles. The apostles saw what was happening to Jesus, that he was arrested, tortured, nailed to a tree, and they didn't want that to happen to them! They ran away and hid. Peter even publicly denied knowing his Lord and Savior!

When your hearts condemn you, you have a Counselor who reminds you that you have a defense attorney. The Apostle John wrote in 1John 2:1, **“If anybody sins, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.”** After he died, Jesus approached the bench in heaven's court and spoke to his Father. “Father, although they have broken the law by failing to stand up for you and me, although they are guilty of fear... I'm asking you to throw out the evidence. Look at my life instead of theirs. I am the Righteous One. I never committed those crimes. I always preached the truth of your holy Word. I was always willing to testify to that truth, even if it meant that I died for my testimony. Look at my righteous life and apply it to them. As for your sentence of death on them for their sins, I took that sentence on myself, as if I had committed those crimes. I died for these sins in their place. Set them free for my sake.”

And the Judge had to throw out the evidence against you and me, because Jesus took our guilt on himself, and he took his perfect life, and set it on you and me. The Judge slammed his gavel down and declared, “You are not guilty!” And that is what you are! You stand innocent in God's courtroom! And Jesus didn't turn to us and say, “Here's my fee. Make sure you pay me back!” The lawyers on TV make this offer, “If you go with our firm, there's no fee unless you win.” Through Jesus, we have won freedom from our guilt and from death, but there is no fee for his services. His Righteous life and all-atoning death are free of charge! His gift to you!

And so, when your hearts condemn you, and you feel the guilt of your sins, Jesus sends the Holy Spirit through his Word and Sacraments (Baptism and Lord's Supper) to stand next to you, to be your counselor, to remind you of those things that your Savior has done for you. Knowing this will you not take advantage of every opportunity to let your heavenly Counselor instruct and comfort you?

This month is breast cancer awareness month, and the Women of Faith are raising money for this wonderful organization. They have special reason to... I know of at least six women in this congregation who have fought breast cancer and have won. Their testimony is powerful, listening to them talk about their victory over cancer – they're fearless and bold in their witness.

Through the message of Christ's victory over sin, death and Satan, Jesus sends his Counselor to empower us to be witnesses of that same message. The Counselor takes away our fear, our fear of saying the wrong thing, of not knowing what to say, he takes away our fear of losing

friendships. The Counselor stands next to us and empowers us to testify to our friends, family members, our neighbors and coworkers. And even if we don't say the right words, even if we stumble along in our witness, the Counselor works through his Word in spite of who we are to show Christ's love to those people. What a privilege that he uses us to testify to the truth! Will you not also, along with Peter and the Apostles, ask the Counselor to stand next to you, to instruct you, to comfort you and empower you? Yes! Come, Holy Spirit! Renew our hearts and kindle in us the fire of your love! Amen!