

Sixth Sunday in Easter
Wicker Park Lutheran Church
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May 26, 2019

Today's gospel reading is part of a long conversation Jesus had with his disciples. In the book of John, it's known as Jesus's "Farewell Discourse." And, this final conversation began with Jesus washing his disciples' feet, it continued with last Sunday's reading reminding us of the new commandment to love all people, and just before today's reading two disciples ask Jesus some questions. Today, we got Jesus's response to a third question.

Now, in the previous two questions, Jesus said that soon the world won't see him but the disciples will. This was an odd statement at best, and so, Judas wondered how the disciples would be able to see Jesus but not everyone else. And, in today's reading, Jesus answered that question. Jesus said that the disciples would see Jesus if they would dwell in his words. And, furthermore, the essence of Jesus's ministry would be preserved by the Holy Spirit who will remind the disciples of all that he said, which includes a vision of peace beyond what the world can give.

Now, that's a lot to unpack. So, to understand what is going on here, we need to get into the mental state of the disciples. Remember, Jesus is talking to the disciples about being separated from them. At some point, we have all felt abandoned, lonely, or alone – maybe it was at a divorce or a breakup, perhaps at the death of a loved one, possible at the termination of a job, or maybe it was that first day of school as a child. A constant in our lives is change, and something that goes along with change is separation.

Yet, today's gospel gives us an opportunity to see resurrection in a new way. What we discover is that if we are committed to following Jesus, then we will strive to keep Jesus's words. And, in John's gospel, the Greek term for "word" is *logos*. And *logos* means more than a spoken or written word. *Logos* is the moment when our mind and will become embodied in words. *Logos* is when what is uttered is connected with inward thought. But it's not just aligning what we think and what we say, it's more than that. Because, in John, the word became flesh in Jesus when God's will and speech became embodied in action. So too, when an individual embodies Jesus's thoughts, words, and actions then God is present and Jesus is alive and resurrected. Is that making sense?

Let us unpack this a bit with an example. As a pastor, I've attended and conducted a number of funerals. These are tender moments of separation no matter if the death was a lengthy or sudden. One of the things that often happens at a funeral is storytelling. As people gather, they tell the stories of the loved one. We hear about how Hank loved fishing or how Regena loved to knit. So, when we think about Regena, we may remember her sitting with yarn and the ways she moved to make those stitches come to life. We might tell a friend about the impact Regena had on us and how much we miss her. But, when we pick up the yarn, when we move it, pull it, gather it, and create a scarf just like Regena, then Regena has been resurrected in our actions. In our actions, we allow the essence of Regena to live on in the ways that new scarf impacts the wearer and transforms the one who embodies resurrection.

And, we could work that same process of resurrection with Hank, or my grandma, or with Jesus. You see, what Jesus is saying in today's gospel is that when we embody the essence of Jesus's character by offering ourselves with a self-giving love then Jesus is

there, resurrected, alive, and among us. So too, in the ways we see another sharing that same love, we experience the resurrected Christ in another.

But we're not alone in this work, for Jesus promises the support of the Holy Spirit to remind us of Jesus's teachings. And, if we remember that the word translated as "spirit" in Greek also means "breath," then how can we not think of that first story in Genesis. The moment where the essence of God enlivened all that is by breathing into that earth creature, who we often call Adam. That time when God looked around and saw that all of creation was good. That point when God said that it is not good for humankind to be all alone in this world. And so, in Genesis 2:18, we remember when God created all of the birds and wild animals to be companions with humankind. It is the breath of God, that Holy Spirit, which enlivens all of creation. And so, when we take a walk and we see a bird flying through the air, there is the Holy Spirit reminding us to care for all creatures by preserving their habitats. When we see a tree with lush leaves and budding flowers, there is the Holy Spirit reminding us to strive for clean air for all. For the Holy Spirit enlivens creation and is a part of our lives to remind us of all the Jesus has said and done. To remind us of the logos, or word, for us to glimpse and embody.

And that is the peace that Jesus leaves with us today. Jesus, in the moments before being separated from his disciples, reminds them that the way the world works is not the way God works. The peace of God recognizes that experiencing separation is a part of the human condition, but that wholeness and tranquility are found in true community. Peace is not avoiding change but rather peace is acknowledging the good in change and looking for God's logos among us and with us.

So, the next time you see someone embodying Jesus's logos, know that you've experienced the resurrected Jesus. The next time you hear a dog bark or a cat purr, know that God is reminding you of the presence of the Holy Spirit. And in those moments of separation, recall the gift of God's peace freely given for you – a peace that surpasses all that the world can give. Amen.