

Wicker Park Lutheran Church

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Today's gospel is part of a longer conversation between Jesus and his disciples known as Jesus' "farewell discourse." This final conversation began when Jesus washed his disciples' feet, and it continued with last Sunday's reading sharing Jesus' new commandment to love one another. Today, Judas (and not the Judas most people know but the other one) asked Jesus for clarification.

You see, Jesus said that soon the world would not see him, but the disciples would. That was confusing to Judas. So, he asked Jesus how that would work. Jesus said that when they observe his word, God will come and dwell with them, and that the Holy Spirit would remind the disciples of all that Jesus said, especially Jesus' vision of peace and love.

To understand this exchange, we need to recall the psychological state of the disciples. This was Jesus' final speech. These were his parting words to his closest followers before he was arrested, falsely accused, and executed. Jesus was telling them that they would all be separated from one another. Chances are that at some point, you have felt separated, abandoned, or alone – maybe it was at a divorce or a breakup, perhaps it was the death of a loved one, possibly a termination of a job, or maybe it was moving to an unknown place. We all have moments where we feel cutoff from that which we've known, where we're stripped from the familiar, and where fear and uncertainty become our currency.

Yet, Jesus invites to see opportunity even amid loss. Remember how Jesus said in today's reading that when you keep his word that God will dwell with you? Well, in John's gospel, the Greek term for "word" is *logos*. And *logos* means more than a spoken or written word. Yes, *logos* is the moment when our mind and will become embodied in language. And, it's not just aligning what we think and what we say, it's more than that. Do you remember the very first verse of John's gospel? "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And a few verses later we're told that "the Word became flesh and lived among us." And John the Baptist came to testify to this word, and to prepare for the living word, Jesus, to preach, teach, and live the way of love and peace. And then the Holy Spirit was sent to remind us of Jesus' love and peace. To remind us that the God's *logos* is the enfleshed *logos*, and that when we embody that same *logos* that God and Jesus will come to dwell within us. Is that making sense?

Let us unpack this a bit with an example. As a pastor, I've had the honor of being present when people die as well as officiating funerals and memorial services. These are tender moments of separation no matter if the death was expected or sudden. One of the things that often happens at a death or 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. 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. And, when we pick up the yarn, when we move it, pull it, gather it, and create a scarf just like Regena, well then Regena has been resurrected in our actions. That is because in our actions, we allow the essence of Regena to live on in the

ways that new scarf impacts the person who wears it and how it transforms us as we embody Regena's essence. And, we could say that same thing 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 being generous with our time and resources, then Jesus is there, resurrected, alive, and among us. When we, like Jesus, love without exception, then Jesus is resurrected, alive, and within us. When we, like Jesus, embody God's peace and care, then Jesus is resurrected, alive, and within us.

Moments ago, during Leilani's baptism we lit a baptismal candle from the large paschal candle. With that candle, we were reminded that each one of us have the potential to reflect God's light in all that we do. So too, we are reminded that every person has that same potential burning within them. For our God goes about showing up in all living things to remind us of God's presence and peace. So that in those times when we feel abandoned and separated, we can see the love of God working through friends, family, and acquaintances. When we feel forgotten, we can see the presence of God in the bark of a dog or the chirp of a bird. When we feel like nothing good comes from the news or from that bleached home in D.C., we can look toward the peace makers advocating for the most vulnerable as the *logos* works through them.

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 isolation, recall the gift of God's peace freely given for you. Amen.