

Text: John 15:26-27. CSB translation. Pentecost Sunday. **May 31, 2020.**

Grace and peace are yours through the Spirit, who testifies to Jesus. Amen.

Have you heard the name George Calhoun? Do you know who he is? Any idea? Before you scramble to google the name on your phone, I'll give you another name, probably one you do know. Curly Lambeau. Heard of him? Did you know they were both, both of them, co-founders of the Green Bay Packers? Co-founders. There would not have been the Green Bay Packers without George Calhoun. He helped found the team. He promoted the team. He passed the hat at early games to collect money for the team. He wrote about the team in the Green Bay newspaper. He entertained and networked with other reporters so the Packers got publicity around the country. And he was happy to have his name forgotten and names like Curly Lambeau, Green Bay Packers, remembered.

Now I know plenty of you watching would be happy if George Calhoun or Curly Lambeau or Green Bay Packers never existed. And let me be very clear that I am not comparing the Packers to God. Very clear. But this holiday we celebrate today, Pentecost, is about someone who is happy if you forget his name, as long as you remember the others. We hardly mention the Holy Spirit. Yes in the Apostles' and Nicene Creed. Yes at the beginning of the service in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, but other than that? How often? And that's the way the Holy Spirit wants it. The Holy Spirit wants you to remember Jesus. The Holy Spirit testifies about Jesus. You would never have heard of Jesus, you would not have faith in Jesus, you would not be going to heaven through faith in Jesus without the Holy Spirit. So the Holy Spirit may be forgotten, but he's not gone. He's still testifying to Jesus. He's still helping and advocating and comforting and encouraging. The Spirit is still the Comforter. The Spirit is still testifying.

Jesus uses this big word, Comforter, with a capital C, as a title for the Holy Spirit. There's probably three sermons in this title Comforter and all it means. Don't worry, I won't preach all three sermons, but let's make three points of what this title means: Helper, Advocate, Encourager. Helper, Advocate, Encourager.

Let's start with helper. Wow, do we need help. One family sickness and faith gives way to fear. One cut back in hours and trust gives way to temptation. One person I know doesn't have my great faith and my great trust and I look down on them in awful arrogance. Shows us that trust is not our natural condition, tripping over temptation is. Faith is not natural, faithless fear is where I naturally live. I'm steeped in sin, from birth, and I can't help myself out of it. I can't help myself to fix it. I need help!

So Jesus sent a helper, the Counselor. And the greatest way he helps me is first of all to get me to see my sin, so I see I need Jesus. I see that Jesus met my greatest need. Jesus saved me from my sins. Jesus forgave my sins. Jesus helped me out of the situation of sin from which I could never, ever rescue myself. I won't apologize for saying that every week. We need to hear it every week. And the Counselor brings us that good news, every week. He helps me to see my need for Jesus and shows me Jesus met my need.

Then the Holy Spirit is my Advocate. This pictures someone who stands in court and pleads the case of another. Picture you, in a courtroom. I've only been there a couple times. It's scary, even just as an observer. What's the judge going to say? Will I somehow be dragged into this? Now imagine you are on trial. You are the defendant. The prosecutor speaks first. He's Satan. That name means accuser. He has

plenty of evidence. Getting nervous? He brings up sins you had forgotten about. Scared? But now you have your defense dream team. Two perfect Advocates, both pleading your case. Both holy. Both on your side. Both speaking in your defense. The first advocate stands up. He holds out nail pierced hands. Evidence your crimes were already punished. He presents an empty tomb, evidence so rock solid that no prosecutor even dare raise an objection. And then the second Advocate on your dream team, usually silent during the proceedings, stands up and says, "Your honor, the evidence can't be refuted. Father, (he calls the judge Father, think they are in cahoots?) Father, this defendant is not guilty. We washed away his sins in our own name. See our baptismal mark on his forehead? I loved her so much I brought her my Word. You can see the faith in her heart. You must declare, 'Not guilty.'" Maybe you are still a little nervous, but your dream team has no doubts. The Father's voice says, "Not guilty!" It booms through the courtroom, "Not guilty!" You breathe the biggest sigh of relief, "Not guilty!" Satan has no appeal. "Not guilty!" What an Advocate! What a Counselor! Remember the third part of that title? Helper. Advocate. Encourager.

Aren't you encouraged to know this Counselor is on your side? Aren't you empowered to hear the Holy Spirit plead your case? Aren't you bold to say, "Jesus loves me so much he died for me! And my Counselor loves me so much he chose me out of all the people in the world to hear and believe it!" I know we live in strange times. We could easily feel powerless, like God has forgotten us. Others are saying Jesus is punishing us and giving our country what we deserve. God hasn't forgotten us. He can't. That's his promise. All God can forget is our sins. Jesus isn't punishing us. He was already punished in our place. Jesus' followers might have felt like Jesus left them when Jesus ascended to heaven. Maybe Jesus in one sense was gone. But thanks to the Spirit, Jesus will never be forgotten.

It was good that Jesus wasn't with them in the same way. Still with them, but now not confined to one place, but instead, having the Counselor work in every place. Notice what the Spirit used and how the Spirit worked and works. What did the Spirit use? The truth. That's how the Holy Spirit is described, the Spirit of the truth. The truth. I know the isn't there in our translations, but it's there in the original. The Spirit uses the truth, the one and only truth. The Spirit can never work through lies or through false teaching. The Holy Spirit doesn't direct us to a truth, there like there many truths and you can pick the one that works for you. The Spirit uses the truth, the timeless truth: Jesus died for you. The one and only truth we find in God's Word. Jesus himself said, "I am the way and the truth." That's what the Spirit uses: the truth.

And look at how he uses it. He put that truth in his Word. And he uses that Word to work the greatest miracle of all: faith in Jesus. Yes, at that first Pentecost there were displays of the Spirit's power: wind and fire and people speaking foreign languages. Those displays of power made some people critical, accusing the language speakers of being drunk. Those displays made some people curious, "How can they talk about God in my language?" But what converted? What changed hearts that first Pentecost? The Word! An ordinary guy, with a closet full of skeletons, stood up. Encouraged by the Encourager, he spoke up. Helped by the Helper, he shut people up. With what? God's Word. How? With a sermon. Yeah, with a boring old sermon, and 3000 people were brought to faith. The Christian Church was born. You see the Christian faith wasn't really spread when Jesus rose. Fifty days after Easter there were 120 people. The Spirit brought the explosion of faith! The Spirit used the Word to spread the good news of Jesus' resurrection. 2000 years later and half way across the world? We would never had heard about Jesus without the Spirit spreading that Word, using this Pentecost sermon to work faith. Using sermons

week after week to strengthen faith. Using the Spirit's testimony time after time to keep faith alive and growing.

The Counselor. He testifies. First, he testifies to Jesus and without that testimony we never hear about Jesus or believe in Jesus. But let's stop at that word testify. Our word martyr comes from this word testify. A martyr would rather die than change his story, would rather give up his life than give up his testimony. Look at how Jesus says it, "You also will testify." Not you could testify. You might be called on. You should testify, like there's guilt. You will testify.

The first people Jesus' followers testified to? The people right in front of them. The people in their own town. They went from house to house, proclaiming good news. They used the same Word, from the same Spirit, to do the same work the Spirit tells us we will do: bring hearts from unbelief to faith.

Now, maybe like that first Pentecost, you will do some odd thing that makes people curious, but only the Word converts. An example. We got a new roof on the house God has graciously given us. My neighbor saw the extra shingles, still in bundles on the lawn and asked, "Would you sell some of those shingles? I'm looking to build a little shed." Now my first reaction should have been to do the odd thing, give him the shingles, not sell them. Sorry to say that wasn't my first reaction. But ultimately that's what happened. Free shingles aren't exactly a miracle, but can they be an odd thing to get a hearing for the Word? I've encouraged my neighbor to watch some of the devotional videos on our Youtube channel, because free shingles aren't going to get you to heaven. But hearing God's Word is the Spirit's tool to get people to heaven.

Sorry if it's taken me a long time to make this point: testifying doesn't have to be this great Pentecost sermon. Maybe testifying starts with a strange act of love, that opens the door for a little of God's Word, with someone you already know. You don't have to be a pastor to give away shingles, or shop for groceries, or call a neighbor who's lonely. In fact, what stood out about the Pentecost preacher, Peter? What astounded people about the guys who first heard Jesus promise the Counselor? It wasn't their schooling. They didn't have formal training. It wasn't their charisma. They were ordinary guys. Check out this book in the Bible. Acts. Chapter four, verse thirteen. People took note that they had been with Jesus. Why did Jesus say, "You also will testify"? Because you have been with me. You've been with Jesus. Many of you from the beginning of your lives. You've been with Jesus. You can testify. You will testify. We don't care if people remember us any more than people remember George Calhoun. But we do care if people remember Jesus. That's what the Spirit wants, that people remember Jesus, that Jesus lived. Jesus died. Jesus rose. Amen.

Christ has sent the Counselor. You will testify. Amen.