

The Sixth Sunday of Easter, Year C, 2010
John 14:23-29
The Rev. Ronald N. Johnson

The context for our Gospel in this Sixth Sunday of Easter may strike us as a little strange. This is the last Sunday before the Feast of the Ascension, which celebrates our Lord's ascent into heaven, and generally the lessons for this period in the church year, between Easter and Ascension focus on post resurrection appearances. Today, we hop back to just before the crucifixion and read of our Lord's promise to his disciples that he will not leave them alone, that he will not abandon them, but will send the Holy Spirit to them, to be their advocate and guide. The promise is that of a continuing relationship, a continuing presence of the Lord. Jesus said, if someone loves me, my Father and I will love him, and come to him and we will make our home with him. In short, when we love God and acknowledge our love of him through our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we find, in that faith, a living presence with the divine that somehow encompasses us and we enter into a presence with God in Jesus that is accepting, comforting, reassuring and we experience true and abiding peace.

Why do we feel that peace? I think that is because we feel safe. If God accepts us, if God understands us and sees us as we are, his eyes penetrating through each and every barricade of defense that we erect to keep even ourselves from the knowledge of whom we really are, and in seeing us perfectly still loves us and accepts us, forgiving us our trespasses by blowing them away as if separating the chaff from the wheat with his gentle breath of love, then what is left for us to fear?

I think that this is the promise of today's Gospel. If we faithful to our Savior, if we love him and remember and live by his teachings, if we believe his promises, we find that we are not alone. His presence, God's presence, in the form of the Holy Spirit is with us and enables us to dwell daily in the timeless reality of the Risen Lord. This is what Jesus meant when he said that if we love him and obey him, then we are at home with him and the Father. We dwell in the presence of God.

This also explains what he means when he promises us abiding peace. Nothing in the world, Jesus said, is like the peace of God that passes all understanding. It is a peace of perfect safety. It is a peace of perfect hope. It is a peace that tells us that if we are right with God, nothing else matters. "Let not your hearts be troubled," Jesus said, "neither let them be afraid." If God is with us, what can stand against us?

It is important that we understand this in the context of its immediacy before the crucifixion. The anxiety of the disciples could not have been higher. So this promise of peace, of safety, of enduring love that cannot be broken even by death was the ultimate reassurance. Let not your hearts be troubled. God's promise of peace is the ultimate reassurance to us. No matter how, confusing or troubling the world about us seems, if we dwell in the love of Christ, we will be at peace. *Amen.*