

Introductory

This material is exclusive to John. In TLH, this is the reading appointed for Whitsunday. In LW, vv. 23-29 are appointed to be read on Easter 6C, and this Sunday is the only time LSB appoints this text to be read. We continue to look back after the foot washing and Sacrament, in the Garden, before the betrayal by Judas.

This text consists almost entirely of words spoken by Jesus, and it is part of a sermon by Jesus that began at the beginning of this chapter. During the course of that sermon, He is speaking to the entire group, and He is interrupted several times by questions, first by Thomas (v. 5), then by Phillip (v. 8), and now by Judas, but not *that* Judas.

For two verses, He will respond specifically to the inquiry of Judas, and then, after that, He will continue to speak to the group. Jesus has already mentioned “the world” twice during this sermon, and here He again uses the word. In v. 17, He talks about “the world,” and says that the world cannot receive the “παράκλητος – the Counselor.”

In v. 19, He says that “the world” will no longer see Him. Keeping in mind that this is Pentecost, an observance intimately connected with the Holy Spirit, the “παράκλητος – the Counselor” ought to be the focus of this sermon, and particularly the role of the Spirit in the life of the Church militant, which lives in the World.

I always preach from the Gospel text, and the primary reason for doing that is that the Gospel text contains the very words and acts of Jesus. The OT talks about the coming Christ, and the EP talks about the having-come Christ, but the Gospels put us front and center into the words and acts of the Christ, and He’s an interesting guy.

Using that same rationale, there’s an argument to be made for preaching from the EP today. We are celebrating Pentecost, an event to which Jesus refers in the GO as a thing that is coming in the future, while the book of Acts actually relates that actual day. That text talks about the words spoken and actions that occurred on Pentecost.

Much of the Epistles can be seen as commentary on not only the words and acts of Jesus, but also on the words and Acts of the Apostles on Pentecost. At the very least, if the preacher chooses to preach from the Gospel text, he will make ample reference to the Acts reading, and at some point you end up preaching from the Acts text.

When we talk about the meaning of Pentecost, we talk about the Holy Spirit, using words like “outpouring” and “manifestation” and “filling” and “etc.,” and I’m not sure that any

of those words quite capture the moment, nor am I certain that *any* word has the ability to do that in a satisfactory way. It means that somebody is about to proclaim the Word.

The elephant in the middle of the room on Pentecost is the seeming incongruity of the main characters – the Apostles and others – being Christians, who could not have gotten to be Christians without the life-giving Holy Spirit, now being given the Holy Spirit, Who you either you have or you don't have, in some greater measure.

Certainly, something is going on at Pentecost. On Pentecost, God is doing something that is not only miraculous, but in a sense is a one-time thing, which should not surprise us. This is a time of one-time happenings, revolving around the one-time entering of God into His creation. He has left the planet, and where will this thing go without The Leader?

Pentecost emphatically answers that question. Take away Pentecost, and what happened at Pentecost, and the story of the Christian Church, born on that day, is a fundamentally different story, a story that is surely somehow incomplete. With Pentecost, we see how the Church was born and get some very useful insights about the very essence of it.

The most striking thing that we observe at the first Pentecost is the dramatic change that comes over the Apostles of Jesus, who are no longer fearful, but are bold, who come out of hiding to proclaim Jesus as the Christ, who went to the farthest corners of the known world to do that, who write the Bible, who are even martyred – except for John – for Christ.

It is upon these twelve men hand-picked by Jesus – Matthias included, that the task falls to carry on the work of Jesus after the Ascension, and we must say that they were up to the task, and they did well. They were real people, they stepped up, and by their acts and their later writings they are the foundation on the foundation of The Christ.

Textual Notes

23. John tells us that “Jesus answered and said to him – ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ.” The object “αὐτῷ – (to) him” is singular, not plural, meaning that these words are directed at Judas. In verse twenty-five, He uses the word “ὑμῖν,” the plural of “you,” meaning that at that point He once again is talking to the entire group.

So we are to see verses twenty-three and twenty-four, and only those two verses, as being directed to Judas (not Iscariot, otherwise called Thaddeus) and in response to his question; “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the World? (22).” It’s a very basic question often asked by Christians; why us and not them?

It’s a theological question that is important enough to have a Latin phrase; Cur Alli, Non Alli – why some, not others? John has made it crystal clear that the World is against Jesus,

and have not received Him, and eternity for the World does not look good. Why then does Jesus not just do something to make the World receive Him.

Right before this, He has been exhorting them to “keep” the Word, and by that He does not mean obedience to the Ten, but rather to “guard” the Word. Judas asks the question, and the answer Jesus gives is to continue along the same lines, the same exhortation, “ἐάν τις ἀγαπᾷ με τὸν λόγον μου τηρήσει – if anybody should love me, he will guard my Word.

The answer to the question of Cur Alli Non Alli is that you should guard the Word, i.e. you should consider it to be a very valuable thing, you should use it, and you should not tinker with the Word. Not all people look at the Bible that way, and not all Christians think that way about the Bible, and many attack it with a savagery not used on many other writings.

Although He is speaking to Judas, in response to a specific question asked by him, Jesus uses very non-personal language in reply, beginning with the conditional “ἐάν τις ἀγαπᾷ με – if anybody should love (subjunctive) me,” and saying that, He is noting that not everybody is going to love Him, and not everybody is going to do these three things.

If a person loves God – if he is a Christian, then three things will happen; that person will keep His Word, the Father will love that person, and the Father, Son, and presumably the Holy Spirit will dwell in that person. All of the verbs are in the future tense; these things will happen later, and as noted above, conditionally; not everybody does them.

We are a “truth and purity” people when it comes to the Bible. We believe it to be without error or contradiction, authoritative, and true in all things. God loves it when people think of His beautiful Word in that way. It would do well to bring that love to mind when others are mocking and attacking and slandering us for thinking of the Bible in that way.

The last promise is that “we” will make “μονὴν παρ’ αὐτῷ - an abode with him.” The noun “μονὴν” occurs in the NT only twice; here and in 14:2, where Jesus tells these same people that He is going to make an “abode” for them in heaven. The word is followed here by a preposition and then a pronoun in the dative case, locating the Trinity beside the Christian.

One day, the Christian will go to heaven to abide with God, but for now God will come to earth to abide with the Christian. This takes place through the same Word we are to guard, and if you don’t guard it, then you may end up with a jumbled-up mess. Apply that same Word – the correct words – to bread and wine, and you can see it, taste it, touch it.

24. He then uses a participle to speak of “ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν με – the one not loving me.” and points out that the person who does not love Him thinks and acts differently from the one who does; the unloving one “τοὺς λόγους μου οὐ τηρεῖ - does not guard my Word,” and we see a lot of that, don’t we; sloppy eisegesis, scorn for the miraculous, and the like.

Going to another common Johannine theme, He then adds, or should we say that He reminds them that the Word of the Son is one and the same as the Father's Word, and that the Father was the sender of the Son into the world. Why does He keep saying the same thing, but in a different way? For the same reason why we do that all the time.

25. Speaking now again to the group, not just to Judas, He speaks of “Ταῦτα λελάληκα ὑμῖν παρ’ ὑμῖν μένων – these things I have spoken to you, while remaining with you.” The noun “things” at least certainly refers to His very recent words to Judas, and almost certainly to the entirety of what He has said in this sermon, and even at other times.

The first verb is in the perfect tense; things that have been said in the past, whose effect endures to the present and into the future. During their time at His side, Jesus indeed did a lot of talking to these men, teaching them, speaking the very Word of God, and especially at and after Pentecost we will see the tremendous effect the Word had on them.

The second verb in the phrase, μένων, is the verbal cognate of “μονήν” (sv. 23). It occurs one hundred eighteen times in the NT, and it is a participle. It is followed by the preposition “παρ,” followed by “ὑμῖν” in the dative case, and it paints a similar picture as the one articulated in the two verses previous; God beside the Christian.

26. Now He says that the Father – who sent Him – will soon be sending another; “ὁ δὲ παράκλητος – the paraclete,” whom He identifies with “The Holy Spirit – τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον.” The translations like the following words for “παράκλητος;” helper, comforter, counselor, and advocate, none of which are necessarily wrong.

This word is a uniquely Christian word, and any translation into another language is going to fall short. The Douay-Rheims Bible agrees, rendering the word “paraclete.” The word makes five NT appearances, all of them in John, two of them in this chapter, once each in fifteen and sixteen, and once in the first Epistle (2:1), where it stands in apposition to Jesus.

Because the word refers to both the Holy Spirit and to Jesus (1 John 2:1), we must conclude that the word refers to something that can be said about both the Second and the Third Persons of the Trinity. The first thing is that Paraclete, the Spirit Whom the Father sends, will be sent “ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι μου – in my (Jesus’) name.”

In addition, it will “ὑμᾶς διδάξει πάντα – teach you all things,” and it will “ὑπομνήσει ὑμᾶς πάντα ἃ εἶπον ὑμῖν ἐγώ – cause you to remember all that I (Jesus) have told you.” When looking at the “teaching” and “reminding” functions of the Holy Spirit, we must always keep in mind that the work of the Spirit takes place through Word and Sacrament only.

Not in a vacuum. If you’ve ever been around spiritual people who think that they are being directly directed by the Holy Spirit – apart from Word, or maybe using the Bible in a

profane way – then you know how important it is to keep the Word in the mix. Any thought, deed, or word that goes against the Word is wrong and sinful.

27. Speaking now in the present tense, Jesus assures His hearers that “Εἰρήνην ἀφήμι ὑμῖν εἰρήνην τὴν ἐμὴν δίδωμι ὑμῖν – peace I leave you, my peace I give to you.” We have talked here before about the meaning of “shalom – peace – εἰρήνην,” that it means that things may look pretty bad out there, and it may look as if God is not in control, but He is.

This word is especially emphatic, spoken as it is in the midst of several mentions of “The World,” including one coming up right about now. The peace that Jesus is able to give to the Christian, even to them right before He is betrayed and given over to death, is different from what “the world” can give to them, and to us.

He does not contrast the peace that He offers with the peace of the world, nor does He even talk about the world giving us any sense of peace; it doesn’t. The world offers nothing like peace, but only uncertainty and death, and at the best it can offer some sort of social ordering, which we call government, which Paine calls “a badge of our lost innocence.”

If that description of the world sounds like hyperbole, we need but take a quick glance at the entire scope of human history, not just our own little time and place. In many parts of the world even today, there is precious little stability, let alone social, economic, or any other sort of certainty, and nothing close to the lives of relative luxury lived by Americans.

Even here, in the midst of people living the dream, we have much uncertainty, and precious little peace. The KJV “let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid,” is an exceedingly poetic, beautiful phrase, but “μὴ ταρασσέσθω ὑμῶν ἡ καρδία μηδὲ δειλιάτω” is more accurately rendered “stop your hearts being troubled; stop being cowardly.”

Both verbs are preceded by “μὴ” and are in the present imperative form, a command to stop an act that is already being engaged in. They are troubled, and they are being timid, and Jesus tells them to stop it. It is the lot of the Christian to be troubled, and we are, and courage often flees in even the smallest of matters. Thanks, I needed that.

The first verb, “ταράσσω,” is one of several in the Greek language used to express consternation, it is used a total of eighteen times in the NT and is reserved for describing a state of the most extreme agitation. The second verb, “δειλιάω,” is a hapax in the NT, so we turn to MM and BAG and other outside sources to help us better understand its meaning.

From them, we see that the word is used to describe the emotional state of one who is (for example) facing death or wild animals, and not handling it very well. Paul (2 Tim 1:7) uses the verb’s cognate noun to tell a young pastor that such a spirit is not from God, but that God gives things like power, love, and self-control.

Do you think that the young pastor was under duress or persecution and was feeling timid and not handling adversity very well, and that the Apostle, who by then had seen it all, is telling the young pastor to stop it? Compare that to our lesser adversity, our almost total lack of persecution, our First Amendment. Thanks, I needed that.

28. He now seems to be giving them a rationale, a reason for them to stop being troubled and timid; He has told them that He is going away, but that He will be coming back. He then tells them that “εἰ ἠγαπᾶτε – if you had loved Me,” then they would have rejoiced that He is going to the Father, which is a good thing for Him and for them.

Then, speaking within the Trinity, He says that the Father is “μεῖζων μου ἐστίν – greater than I.” What does he mean; speaking within the Trinity? To put a couple of millennia of theology into a couple of sentences, “within the Trinity” there is an ordering of the Persons; first the Father, second the Son, and third the Holy Spirit.

That’s within the Trinity. Outside of the Trinity, at the same time, all three Persons are One God, equally divine in all ways. Go ahead and talk to your people about things like that. The human brain has been made not only to understand, but to be in fact stimulated by new or newly explained ideas like that. Go ahead and teach Christian terms as well.

29. And now another verb in the perfect tense, “καὶ νῦν εἶρηκα ὑμῖν – now I have told y’all” before it happens, implying a coming event in the future, “ἵνα ὅταν γένηται πιστεύσητε – so that when it does come to pass, you should believe,” and He has in mind here Pentecost, and at that time they became very strong believers.

Again, He has told to them things in the perfect tense, and the effect of those things that He has spoken to them sticks around, and very specifically, when the things of which He has been telling them do come to pass, their veracity and authenticity should be validated by these very words with which He predicted them, and at Pentecost they are.

30. He continues on, telling them now that He will not be talking to them for very much longer, meaning that He will soon be leaving, and also meaning that what He has said to them about the coming events is sufficient; when these things happen, they will have had a heads-up, and should believe that what has happened has happened.

Not only that, but they will know that Jesus Himself is aware of all that is about to happen. It will be no surprise to Him, and now it should be no surprise to them, not should these things catch us unawares; things like the hatred of the world, that not all are saved, that guarding the Word is important, and to not do that has disastrous consequences.

He then goes on to talk for two more chapters, preaching the vine metaphor, speaking of the coming hatred of the world and the coming of the Holy Spirit, telling them once more (16:12) that He has a lot more to say to them, but that they are unable to get their heads around the saying. You may recall that we had that text a couple of weeks ago.

We also had the “little while” text, and then He goes on for another chapter (17), and then over to Gethsemane and betrayal by Judas. That betrayal is what He has in mind when He says that “ἔρχεται γὰρ ὁ τοῦ κόσμου ἄρχων – comes the one who is ruling this world.” He uses the word “world” yet again, a synecdoche – the whole for the part – for Judas.

Judas represents the world and its posture towards Jesus. More to the point, he represents Satan, the ruler of the World of which He has spoken at length. In addition to that, Judas will set into motion the final rejection of Jesus by the world – which had rejected Him from day one (see chapter one) – making the rejecting Sanhedrin the final ally of evil.

The final phrase “ἐν ἐμοὶ οὐκ ἔχει οὐδέν – with me he has nothing,” is a double entendre. The noun “the world – τοῦ κόσμου” is a masculine noun, and Judas is a masculine person, and the “he” refers to one and to the other, who are not at odds with one another, but who are in fact in cahoots, along with the religious leaders.

The meaning of the phrase is that God and His allies and Satan and His allies are not only at war one with another, but they are at polar opposite of one another; one has absolutely nothing to do with the other, and that’s the source and genesis of the conflict. The Christian ought to remember that there are only two sides, and you want to be on the right one.

31. Beginning this sentence with the emphatic “but,” He notes that “ἀλλ’ ἵνα γινῶ ὁ κόσμος ὅτι ἀγαπῶ τὸν πατέρα – but that the world should know (subjunctive) that I love My Father –” They will know that He loves His Father because they will see that He obeys His Father, and isn’t that how you know that a son loves his father?

Sons either want to be like their fathers, or they don’t. You can tell the son who wants to be like his father because he imitates his father; he talks and acts like his father. The son who doesn’t want to be like his father will often go to great pains to separate Himself by what he says and by what he does. Jesus obeys His Father even into death.

He commands them to “rise - ἐγείρεσθε,” a present imperative verb and another double entendre. The word is used by John for things like getting up from the table and the lame man picking up his pallet, and for people including Lazarus and Jesus to rise from the dead. They are to rise up because “we should go from here – ἄγωμεν ἐντεῦθεν.”

After that, He then talks to them for three chapters, and then they go from there.

Law/Gospel.

Love God/God’s Love - The Law commands us to “Love God and love your neighbor.” For some reason people think it’s actually possible to love God perfectly. John Wesley,
