

leave his friends behind to continue the adventure, but he will not leave them to journey alone. Jesus promises to send them a Guide, the "Advocate," the Holy Spirit, "*the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father*" (v. 26). As the Spirit testifies to Jesus and his mission, the disciples will take and share that testimony with the rest of the world.

This will be a "hard" adventure because that testimony won't be welcome in a world that is hostile to the truth about Jesus. "*They will put you out of the synagogues,*" Jesus warns. "*Indeed, an hour is coming when those who kill you will think that by doing so they are offering worship to God. And they will do this because they have not known the Father or me*" (vv. 2-3). You wouldn't blame the disciples for thinking that heading to the beach for some drinks with umbrellas in them would be a better and safer use of their time.

This is going to be a tough trek, Jesus warns them, but it's a necessary one if the good news about Jesus is going to reach the distant cultures and remote places of the world. It's going to take some eager adventurers who understand the need to speak the truth about what God is doing in the world, to bring light to the darkness, and life amid death (1:1-18).

Understandably, the disciples begin to ask, "Where are we going and how do we get there?" The disciples won't have Jesus as their on-the-ground guide anymore, but Jesus tells them that's a good thing. Sensing their sorrow and confusion, Jesus promises them a new Guide who will help them expand their trekking capacity and keep the big picture in mind. "*It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you*" (v. 7).

They need the Holy Spirit Guide Service. It used to be that hiring a guide meant that you would have someone directly on the ground with you in whose footsteps you would follow to get to the destination. While that's still true for many adventures, technology has made it possible for you to be guided virtually instead, tracked by GPS and connected via radio, or mobile or satellite phone to a guide who is always monitoring your progress.

Carlos Wilton tells of a family vacation to the Gettysburg battlefield. He writes:

We stopped by the visitor's center, and my dad went to look for a map of the battlefield. He came out saying, "Here's a map, but there's something even better. They tell me in there we can hire a guide to drive around with us and show us the battlefield." So, that's what we did. A man came out and sat in the front passenger seat of our car. Mom climbed into the back seat with us, and we set off, driving across the battlefield. Our guide told my father exactly where to turn. When he said,

"Stop here," we did, and he pointed out some monument or another and told us a story about it. It was a glorious afternoon. I remember it to this day. We didn't need a battlefield map. We didn't need to know where we were going. We had a guide.

Those early Christians did, too. When Jesus left them, he sent the Holy Spirit to be their guide. In Greek, the word for the Holy Spirit is *parakletos* which literally means "the one called alongside." The Holy Spirit is the person of God who comes to walk beside us through this life and into the next. The Holy Spirit is our Advocate, our Counselor, our Guide. The Holy Spirit Guide will point out the twists and turns in the route ahead and help the followers of Jesus know what to look for as they trek into the world. Jesus tells the disciples that their Guide will point out four wrong paths that the world offers, paths that their proclamation of the gospel, in the power of the Spirit, will correct (v. 8).

The Holy Spirit Guide will help understand sin (v. 9). The world says that sin is that sin is something that a person *does* or commits. But the world has it wrong. The problem of sin is not what we do with our hands, but who we are in our hearts. Not what we do, but who we are. Too many people think that all we need to do is work harder and do more good things than bad things and that someday, God will decide if we qualify for heaven. The Holy Spirit helps us conserve a lot of spiritual energy by understanding that in Jesus we are free from sin and free from the burden of "trying our best" so we can simply do the work God has given us to do.

The Holy Spirit Guide will help with the problem of doing good (v. 10). The world believes that goodness is something we choose to do. Thanks to the Holy Spirit Guide, we know that goodness is not doing, but being. For our journey, the Holy Spirit Guide provides us with a new nature, a new heart. It's like we're a "new creation"! Unfortunately, the world's idea of righteousness is that the more good we do the more righteous we become. The Guide, Jesus says, will help the disciples see what true righteousness looks like, using Jesus himself as the model. Through the Spirit, Jesus will continue to guide the disciples and empower them to do what he does. Indeed, they will do even greater things (14:12).

The Holy Spirit Guide will help us with the route (v. 11). We often make poor route choices because we begin with faulty premises and a poor understanding of the terrain. The world thinks success is measured by material things. The world thinks that greatness is when other people serve you. The world thinks that the one with the most toys wins. The world thinks that wisdom comes from being highly educated. The world thinks of "me-first," and instant gratification, and popularity, power and position. The Holy Spirit Guide

shows us a different way forward, a better way forward. In God's Kingdom, success is not measured by material things, but by the relationships we build. The greatest among us are the servants of others. The wisdom of the world is foolishness to God. Selfishness is not a virtue in God's world, and just because it feels good doesn't make it right. By understanding how God sees things, disciples of Jesus can make good decisions.

Finally, the Holy Spirit Guide will help us with the Truth (v. 11). *"When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come,"* says Jesus (v. 13). "Truth" is a major theme in John's gospel. In fact, it is Pontius Pilate who asks the question on the world's mind as they are confronted with Jesus: *"What is truth?"* (18:38). The truth is, however, that Jesus himself is the way, the truth and the life (14:6). In other words, if we emulate Jesus, our lives will not be a lie. Our lives instead will be lives of integrity, honesty, service, selflessness and humility, all counterintuitive from the world's point of view. If the disciples want to follow Jesus, it means following his way, his truth and his life in spite of the dangers, twists and turns ahead. The only way to navigate that way is with a Guide who will take what Jesus has said and done and "declare it" to us so that we will glorify him (vv. 14-15).

On this Pentecost Sunday, we remember that when the Holy Spirit Guide arrived, he launched the disciples on a new adventure. Following Jesus is never about retreating from the world to a tropical island and "getting away from it all," but about following the way, the truth and the life of Jesus to reorient the world for God's glory. It's a tough adventure, but it's the only destination that ultimately matters.

Prayer: Lord, I pray you would move the Spirit more boldly in my life. I know that any sin can grieve and diminish the voice of the Spirit, and I pray against the temptation of the world. Help me crave your presence more than I crave the things of this world. Help me grow in the fruit of the Spirit and so walk closer with You. I pray for guidance from your Spirit; let your will and promises always be a meditation of my heart. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Sources:

- "The rise of adventure travel: Are you brave enough?" artofttravell.tips. July 16, 2016. Retrieved November 18, 2017.
- Carlos Wilton, https://www.homileticonline.com/subscriber/btl_display.asp?installment_id=93041108. Retrieved May 13, 2018.

The Holy Spirit Guide Service

Pentecost Sunday, May 20, 2018

John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

Federated Church, Fergus Falls, MN

Summer is right around the corner! It's time for some well-earned vacation time. As a kid, vacation meant two weeks on the coast of Maine: a rental cabin, beachcombing, reading on the rocks, fish suppers, visiting lighthouses, and ice cream cones on the wharf. At first, it was great to slow down and relax; but by the end of week one, I was ready for a little more adventure: some deep-sea fishing, or mountain climbing, or hiking and camping. Sometimes you want "soft" adventures; other times you want "hard" adventures.

Nowadays, the tourism industry can cater to both kinds of vacations. "Soft" adventures involve getting away, but not too far away from the evening buffet. Think of an African safari: out on the savannah you're not the highest life form on the food chain, but you have the advantage of being in a climate controlled, protected vehicle and viewing the wildlife through a camera lens. Or snorkeling at a resort in the Caribbean, face-to-face with a sea turtle in shallow water without worrying about a pulmonary embolism.

On the other hand, there are the "hard" adventures. In a "hard" African safari you would be hiking and camping on the savannah with nothing between you and the hungry hyenas. In a "hard" diving vacation it would be you and the sharks all alone in the great, blue ocean.

An increasing number of people are looking for this "hard" kind of adventure: experiencing the world up close and personal through exciting, arduous and risky activities. For these types of adventures, it's best to have a seasoned guide along to direct you and keep you on track. A good adventure guide service will help you plan your trek and even make the arrangements for your lodging and meals. The service will provide a good packing list, the extra equipment you might need, maps and directions and even monitor your progress.

When we look at Jesus' words to his disciples in the gospel of John, we might see them as an advertisement for the "hard" adventure of discipleship. The Twelve followed Jesus up and down the hills of Galilee, on the long road to Jerusalem and through the deserts of Judea. They survived storms that tried to drown them, confronted demons that terrified them, and saw miracles that blew their minds.

Jesus was with them every step of the way as their guide and friend, but now Jesus is trekking to the cross, into the grave, and ascending to the right hand of God. Jesus will