

## **Gospel and Sermon Transcript - 6th Sunday of Easter - May 25, 2025**

Welcome to worship on this sixth Sunday of Easter.

I'll start with a few Thanksgiving prayer notes, which is always encouraging.

Many weeks ago, we were asked to pray for a young man by the name of Chris, who was in a car accident that broke about every bone that a person can have.

We got to see a video of Chris walking out of the hospital under his own power.

He uses a walker, and his next step is outpatient therapy.

So we rejoice with this family, and I think we should keep those prayers coming.

So thank you for remembering Chris, Rachel, and their family as they navigate these challenges.

I'm sure there's much to do, but the progress is astounding,

and the smile on Chris's face told quite a story.

The other note of rejoicing, and I think can be an ongoing prayer,

for the Northwest, Lower Michigan Synod, I know you've all been there, no I'm kidding.

But delightful news this week that one of my dear friends, this family friend and classmate,

was elected their new bishop.

So we give thanks for Pastor Julie Schneider Thomas,

as she anticipates taking on this role in the fall.

She's a tremendous pastor, and a good friend,

and I am just so excited about the possibilities for her as a bishop.

So I'm inviting you to offer prayers of thanksgiving along with us as we think of them today.

As far as the order of worship goes, a few things to be acquainted with,

I think we can point a few out.

During the season of Easter we rely on two books.

So the large book, which many call the Cranberry Hymnal,

I'm smirking because I wish there were better and more economical names.

But here you will find the Psalm for the day as well as our hymns.

So that's what this book will be good to be used for today.

Also you can find the Nicene Creed in here in multiple places.

One is page 104, but also, I just learned this, so I'm kind of excited about this new bit of knowledge,

there is a fold in the back of the hymnal and a slip of paper that has the Creed on it.

So if you'd like to use that, you're welcome to do that.

And we'll be using the Nicene Creed.

Remember the Apostles Creed is printed on one side and the Nicene Creed is printed on the other.

The Psalms, thanks to Bob's work, we can at least get you located in here to the Psalms,

that there are some tabs provided to get you to the Psalm.

And then once you get there, today's Psalm will be 67.

And now to talk about the other book that I also wish had another name.

Maybe we could call it after one of the people for whom this was dedicated.

I don't know if that would be flippant or not, but the hymnal supplement,

this is where you will find the communion part of our service.

And much of that is liturgy that we sing together.

So occasionally we'll make notes about which book we're in just to give you a minute to navigate those two.

I'm starting to feel like an infomercial when I say, "And there's more."

The worship guide also helpful because it has the Scriptures printed on back and the order of service in this folded area here.

And then the inside contains both announcements and also one of the things we'll be doing very shortly,

and that is the Thanksgiving for baptism.

Oh, what else should I talk about except communion?

That all who hunger gather gladly and we come and receive the gifts of God's presence

and God's grace in bread and wine.

So the way we arrange ourselves is that when the time comes,

you come and form a single line across here, and I will bring bread to you first.

And if you would mind waiting for me, then I'll circle back around with cups of wine so that we can commute together.

Now there are a couple today who have said that not a good day to be moving around,

so we will be going to them where they're seated.

So as I'm making my way forward, if you're one of those people, maybe just flag me down a little bit

and I'll watch for your cue and we'll make sure that the folk who are receiving communion seated receive communion first.

How about that?

**The Holy Gospel according to St. John the 14th chapter. Glory to you, O Lord.**

Jesus answered, "Judas, not as scary yet. Those who love me will keep my word and my Father will love them,

and we will come to them and make our home with them. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words,

and the word that you hear is not mine alone, but is from the Father who sent me.

I have said these things to you while I am still with you, but the Advocate, the Holy Spirit,

whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I've said to you.

Peace, I leave with you, my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Do not let them be afraid.

You have heard me say to you, "I am going away and I am coming to you."

If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father because the Father is greater than I.

And now, I have told you this before it occurs so that when it does occur, you may believe.

The Gospel of our Lord.

Won't you be seated?

[Pause]

**The Sermon**

Grace, and peace to you from the One who was, who is, and who is to come.

And now a commercial wealth sorter.

So, we've taken up a slightly different practice of presenting the sermon online

so that it's more of a commentary because there are so many things to look at and they're not always easy to organize into a sermon.

But it's important material and important to ponder.

So, if you're looking for additional resource material, you can now go to the website

and there are some commentaries that I'm putting together that maybe are a little bit fuller as far as content goes.

And believe it or not, that actually relates to where we find ourselves today

and that is that in this Easter season, we have been shuttling back and forth through John's Gospel.

And the reason is not to confuse us, but it's to invite us to both look forward and also to look retrospectively, to look behind.

So, here we are, smack in the middle of a long section that is called, if you like the fancy schmancy term,

the farewell discourse of Jesus. Let's call it the long goodbye, Jesus to his followers.

And in this lengthy goodbye, he has already said, "Do not let your hearts be disturbed.

Do not let them be overwhelmed. Believe in God."

He speaks of a promised spirit that comes into our midst, or literally, and I love the word,

and it can be picked apart in two different languages, but you come up with the same result.

One who is called to be alongside the advocate.

Now, back to the notion that we have shuttled backward to hear about this promise of the Spirit of God,

but remember where we were a couple of Sundays after Easter toward the end of John's Gospel?

There was a locked room. People huddled there for fear of the religious authorities.

I mean, they were thinking maybe they were next on the Roman persecution card.

And what happens next? The risen Christ punches in the keypad.

No, no, that's a new version of the Bible. No, I'm kidding.

Jesus passes through a locked door. He appears among the followers.

And what does he say except, "Peace be with you."

As in, not the kind of peace that the world promises, or that the empire promises, or world structures promise,

but the promise of peace that only Jesus can give.

And the next thing that happens is that Jesus breathes upon the followers the very Spirit of God.

Now, the Holy Spirit is not the youngest member of the Trinity, folks.

We often think so because when we do the creed, we kind of talk about it this way,

but old people got into, they really did get into fistfights about this stuff in the 4th century.

St. Nicholas for one. St. Patrick for another.

But the Holy Spirit has always been.

Think about creation and the chaos and the nothing.

What is it but the Spirit that moves over the waters

and intervenes in the chaos to bring beauty and order and life.

This is the same Spirit that Jesus breathes onto his followers.

And did that fix everything?

Well, no.

But we know that we are not alone.

The Gospel text today speaks about fear and about anxiety and about troubled hearts.

I think it would be a graveness service for a pastor such as myself to say,

"You should never fear anything and you should never be anxious

and to shame people for having those experiences."

You see, God planted in our little noggins something called the amygdala, shaped like an almond.

It's a tiny thing near the core of the brain and guess what it's there for?

Well, when the saber-toothed tiger comes calling, the amygdala kicks in

and it fires adrenaline from your adrenal glands so that you can get out of dodge.

So, fear is not inherently bad.

And we know a lot more now medically about what anxiety is about too.

So to tell people, like most of my family and myself to a degree, to just knock it off

is sort of like telling me to change my height or my eye color.

It's part of the wiring.

Sometimes there are chemical things that happen that make people chronically anxious.

So again, it would be a huge mis-service to tell people to stop being anxious.

But it is a service of the gospel to say that if that's how we're wired

and if we are indeed fearful, Christ has promised the spirit into our midst

just like the chaos preceding creation.

The spirit wanders into our chaos too.

To be called alongside us to teach, to remind.

And as long as I'm peeling back the word study of advocate,

it took on several different connotations in the Bible

and among writers at the same time the Bible was being penned.

Imagine an advocate being like your defense attorney.

Imagine someone who stands up for you, who's got your back.

Another connotation actually was that the advocate was the prosecutor.

And guess what?

Sometimes the spirit needs to prosecute our society and our institutions

because we're not really that good at being just all the time.

And if you think, well, that was a new line item in the Holy Spirit's job description,

the effect of some 800 years before Jesus' time with the prophets Isaiah and Amos,

who saw egregious abuses in systems where people who were poor were made poorer,

so rich people could be made richer and the prophet wasn't having him.

He excoriated people for their religious assemblies while they were kind of in the back of their heads

making a little shopping list for ways that they were going to continue to defraud people.

The spirit of the prophets spoke justice a bit like the prosecuting attorney.

Now there may or may not be links to current events, so I don't know, I'll leave that



to you.

But the spirit is called the comfort, to encourage, to guide, and to be alongside.

And individually, we can give thanks for that.

But if we look carefully at the creed that we're going to say together

from whichever source you find it today, in whichever hymn,

it is the spirit who is involved with the called out ones that we name as church.

Isn't it great though that we're a fearless church now?

Some of you are used to my irony, aren't you? I noticed you're chuckling.

It's like, oh, here he goes again.

Well, I hope to elicit at least a chuckle, but for a particular I-Hope holy purpose.

It is tough being the church now.

Truth is it always has been.

Every generation has had to figure out how do we live forward.

But before, where we thought there were things we could count on, those are absent now.

So yes, sometimes we are anxious and sometimes we are afraid.

And in our anxiety and our fear, sometimes we trot out solutions that are a little out there thinking,

well, we got to do something.

It is the spirit's job, not the pastor's job, but the spirit's job to teach us and remind us that

how do we in fact move forward faithfully and in hope, even though we do pack anxiety and fear with us?

In fact, the spirit enlivens and animates the church.

It's not just a dusty old bit of teaching that maybe is good for catechism class,  
but I think it's probably more for the lived life.

How does that spirit that abides in creation and moves over waters of baptism,  
stir in the life of the church that however we find ourselves,

we continue to be empowered to do the thing that Jesus told us to do, which is to  
love.

I don't remember saying it was easy.

I don't remember experiencing it that way either.

But that's what Jesus calls us to do and then promises it is the spirit who gives us  
the power of love,

especially in a world that seems very much in love with power.

In the spirit of opening the Christmas presents a week or two early,

when we get to Pentecost, there's a song that has a line in it that I think we could  
say to Jesus,

I think we could say today as well as we say it on Pentecost Day,

Send forth your spirit, O Lord, and renew the face of the earth.

Send forth your spirit, O Lord, and renew the face of the earth.

May that be so within and among us.

There's a word for that. Amen.