

Second Sunday after Pentecost  
June 10, 2012  
John 14: 15-27, John 20: 19-23

## **Promise of the Holy Spirit: One Who Comes Alongside – We are not left to walk on our own**

I discovered a couple of weeks ago that the Holy Spirit has a name.

Though many do not know how to speak of the Spirit and so often refer to the Spirit as an “it”  
– I discovered that the Spirit not only has a name, but also gender.

The Spirit’s name is Hilary – at least over a week ago for me, hiking up Mt. Elbert,

Hilary encouraged me in doing one of the most physically difficult things I have ever done  
– and so Hilary is the name of God’s Spirit sent alongside of me to encourage me.

At any given moment, in any situation – the Holy Spirit’s name is Becky, Patty, Joni  
– and also, the Spirit is named Chuck, Gerry, George, or Jeff  
– the promised Holy Spirit whom Jesus promised to be with us resides in each one of us who are followers and disciples of Jesus Christ  
– we are the vessels, the bodies of the Holy Spirit.

Another thing I discovered – hiking up a mountain like Mt. Elbert in Colorado  
– can be a metaphor for our walking with Jesus as his disciples  
– walking in the presence and power of the Spirit  
– walking and living our lives in the everydayness of life.

In our text, we see Jesus’ disciples troubled; they are filled with anxiety  
– because of what Jesus has been saying:

Jesus predicts that he would die;

He predicts that he will be betrayed by one of them;

He predicts that Peter will deny him;

and now he makes it very clear and predicts that he will be leaving them.

How are they going to manage?

They had given three years of their life to following this radical teacher, one who upended the religious tradition, one who stated that God’s reign is now in their midst  
– they needed him with them if they were going to be able to go on  
– and now he was leaving?

I can just imagine what is going on – the disciples are having a difficult time breathing, anxiety is taking hold of them, they are hyperventilating – their hearts are troubled!

How can they go on without Jesus?

They are not sure they can take another step.

Something like I experienced at 12,000', 13,000', 13,450', 13,900' as I attempted to climb to 14,433'.

At each of these elevations – it was not so much that I did not have the legs – I did not have the air.

I knew I was going to be in trouble, when the day before we were at the Continental Divide at 12,095' and I was getting winded walking horizontally to the observation area.

Now here I was hiking up Mt. Elbert with steep grades up to 45%, trying to suck in enough oxygen to keep on climbing higher.

But Hilary was with me – she encouraged me with:

“Don't look where you need to be going dad, see how far you have come.”

“We can rest as long as you need to so that you can catch your breath.”

“You're doing great dad – just keep taking one step at a time.”

I remembered Cliff's advice to me: “Take a number of steps, then stop and take a few breaths, then go on and do it again.”

I even found myself praying – bent over supported by my trekking poles to get my lungs horizontal with my mouth in order to get as much air into my lungs as I possibly could – “Holy Spirit, I am having a tough time breathing right now  
– breathe your breath into me!”

The disciples were living and walking with Jesus  
– breathing in Jesus' breath  
– and now he was going to leave them – how were they going to keep on breathing?

Jesus reveals something to them – that we need to hear as well.

In John 14: 16ff: “Yes, I am leaving, but I am asking the Father, ‘and he will give you another advocate, another counselor, another comforter, another Paraclete to help you and be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. But you know the Spirit for she lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.’”

And then in John 20:21-22: after the Resurrection, we see Jesus with his disciples and what does he say, what does he do: “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

We are not alone on the mountains we encounter in life, (valleys are actually the easier places to be, mountain tops are hard to get to)

We are not alone on our journeys,

We are not alone in our living as a new humanity in the world

– Jesus breathes, bestows the Spirit upon us.

Two weeks ago I was speaking with Jason Boone – Coordinating Minister of the Peace and Justice Support Network for MCUSA and editor of *Peace Signs*, who learned about what the Spirit of God is doing here at NSMC through the article about us in the May issue of *The Mennonite*.

We talked about many things and particularly that we do not have much of a developed theology or understanding of the Holy Spirit as Mennonites because we are so Jesus focused  
– as a result we have tended to neglect the Spirit of Jesus among us and in us.

**But Jesus comforts us,**

Though stating that he can no longer be physically with us,

**Yet he will not leave us as orphans**

– as followers and disciples of Jesus, we will be filled with the Holy Spirit who walks alongside us.

Literally, Jesus expresses that we will be given “**another Paraclete**”

Another: *allos* = another of the same kind; i.e., just like Jesus  
– we will recognize the Spirit because the Spirit will be just like Jesus  
– same characteristics, same focus, same mission.

What Jesus is saying is **not** that he will send a heteros (another of a different kind) Paraclete, **but another of the same kind to be with us.**

*Paraclete*: literally – “one who is sent to come alongside” – to provide active help, active encouragement.

The Holy Spirit has been sent so that we are not left alone and is therefore

- the One who stays with us
- the One who walks with us
- the One who will never abandon us
- the One who sticks to us like glue
- there is no where we can go where the Spirit will not be with us
- = the Spirit is one who actively comes alongside us.

The Spirit of God is with us, in exactly the same way Jesus was with his disciples!

What is true of Jesus with his disciples is true of the Spirit with us!

When Jesus says, “Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light”

This is also true of the Holy Spirit who has been sent to come alongside of us – perhaps even more actively – in yielding ourselves to the Spirit’s presence and power – we are in the presence of Jesus.

Jesus is with us in the Spirit = this is the promise of the Spirit that Jesus expresses to all who are followers of his.

But the Spirit is more visible than just a feeling or sense that God is with us

– the Spirit is present to each one of us through the Body of Christ, through the people of God, through and in Hilary, Becky, Patty, Joni, Chuck, Gerry, George, Jeff . . .

We who are the Body of Christ are the ones indwelled by the Spirit of God – the Spirit is here among us, in us, in our community;

– because we are here with one another; the Spirit in indwelling each of our lives is physically present here with us through each of us

– the Spirit walks alongside with us as we walk alongside with one another.

Hilary was the Spirit for me on Mt. Elbert.

As she encouraged me, I knew I was not alone.

Without her, I would never have made it to the top – With her **we did it!**

Without her I would have been discouraged, but she encouraged me;

Without her I would have feel overwhelmed, but she comforted me;

Without her I would have felt alone, but she stayed with me and accompanied me (though she could have climbed much faster).

I was able to climb Mt. Elbert because she was with me.

And we are able to be the people of God in the world, participating together with God in God's mission, because we are with one another, the Spirit is with us; **we are ones in whom the Spirit dwells.**

**That is why we are encouraging our community to be intentional about gathering together with one another.**

– not just on Sundays, but during the week, in small groups, gatherings, ministry, events, activities

– because we realize we cannot be the new humanity of God's reign without one another

– the Spirit is poured out in our midst through our being together!

Doing life together is not merely because we do not know how to be American individuals

– it is because we can only be like Jesus in the world

– carrying on the ministry and mission of Jesus, when the Spirit of Jesus is in us and with us

– when we are the Body of Jesus together.

We need one another to be the people of God

– because together we are the community in whom the Spirit dwells

– together we are not alone, nor left alone

– but we are filled with the Spirit of Jesus.

So, receive the outpouring of the Spirit into our lives

Receive the Spirit who comes through each of our lives to walk with one another

Receive the promise of the Spirit that Jesus promises

Breathe deeply of the Spirit that Jesus breathes upon us

**Receive the gift of the Spirit so that we may live as the people of God in the world,**

**Participating with God in what God is accomplishing in making all things new.**