

Tuesday in the Sixth Week of Easter

May 11, 2021

By the Reverend Stephen Gerth

*Acts 16:16–34, Psalm 138, John 16:13; John 16:4b–11**

Our English word “Paraclete” comes from the Greek word *parákletos*. It comes to refer to the person of the Holy Spirit. Outside of the New Testament, its meaning is “one who appears in another’s behalf, mediator, intercessor, helper.”¹

It is used once in the epistle we know as the First Letter of John. Raymond Brown explained its relationship to John’s gospel this way: “In style and vocabulary there are so many similarities between I John and John that no one can doubt that they are at least from the same tradition.”² That said, in the First Letter of John, the word Paraclete refers to Jesus Christ, not the Holy Spirit.

In the 1928 Prayer Book, the celebration of the Holy Communion provided four different verses of scripture to be read after the confession of sin and absolution. The last of these was the verse in the First Letter of John referring to Jesus as our advocate: “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the Propitiation for our sins.”³

“Paraclete” is used four times in John’s gospel in the narrative of the supper before the Passover. In today’s appointed passage, it is as “Counselor.” The Paraclete’s role will be to “convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.”⁴ The narrative continues

¹ *A Greek-English Lexicon of New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (BDAG) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), *s.v.* “παράκλητος” 766.

² Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 383.

³ *The Book of Common Prayer* (1928), 76./

⁴ John 16:8.

tomorrow. We will hear the Paraclete identified clearly as the Spirit: “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth.”⁵

Before his death and resurrection, very few people come to believe in Jesus and share in his eternal life because they believed he was the Son of God. I’m thinking of the woman of Samaria and the people of her village⁶ and of the man born blind.⁷

As Jesus lays down his life, he hands over his Spirit to his friends. These are words from the gospel: “After this, Jesus having known that already all was finished, in order that the Scripture might be completed, says, ‘I thirst’ . . . So when he took the vinegary wine, Jesus said, ‘It is finished;’ and having bowed his head, he gave over his spirit.”⁸

In the newsletter for this week, I wrote briefly about God’s love for us and gift of forgiveness for whatever has happened in our lives that should not have happened. God’s Spirit invites us to live with his promises guiding our minds and our hearts.

✠ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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⁵ John 16:13.

⁶ John 4:1–42.

⁷ John 9:1–41.

⁸ John 19:18–30. Translation: Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave*, 2 vols. (Doubleday: New York, 1994), II:1032.