

Dear Friends,

John 14: 15-21

Jesus knows that he's about to be arrested. Soon after that he will be put to death. He knows that this will leave his friends feeling devastated. It will be the biggest hard knock of their lives. Jesus wants to help them so that they will not be overwhelmed. He promises that they will not be orphaned. He will still take care of them and be their teacher and guide. He also promises that they will be given the Holy Spirit, who he describes as a "paraclete". He says, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another paraclete". The Greek word "paraclete" has been translated in a number of different ways such as "advocate", "helper", and "comforter". Jesus says that they will be given "another paraclete". The idea is that Jesus is a paraclete and the Holy Spirit who God will give is another paraclete.

What is a paraclete? A paraclete is one who is called alongside to give strength. The paraclete strengthens in two ways, by challenging and comforting. Notice that the paraclete does not come and make everything easy. The paraclete does not come and sort everything out so that you don't have to. No, the paraclete strengthens you so that you can handle whatever it is that you are facing and do whatever it is that you need to do.

The paraclete challenges you, stirs you up, gives you a kick up the backside. Today you get motivational speakers who are good at urging people to be the best possible version of themselves that they can be. In sport, teams need to have someone who is good at motivating the players to perform to the highest standard, to the best of their ability. The Paraclete does this. The Paraclete challenges you.

The paraclete also comforts you by gently and tenderly bringing you relief and consolation when you face trouble, stress or suffering. The paraclete brings this comfort by being with you. We've already noticed that the paraclete does not take away the hard knocks. They keep coming. What the paraclete gives you is the presence of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In that presence you may find the comfort that you need.

And notice how deeply that presence of God comes to you. Jesus promises to be more than just alongside of you. He says, "I am coming to you .... on that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me and I in you". Jesus promises nothing less than a relationship of mutual indwelling, he in you and you in him. That's the treasure in the field or the pearl of great price for which you can give up everything. It is all that you need, it is all that matters.

And this presence is always there. You go through life, you have to face and deal with all kinds of things, but you can always pause, be still and reconnect with the presence of God which is with you and in you, and which never leaves you. From God's side there is never any disconnection. All you need is to turn to God and God is already there.

God bless you,

Tony