

Sermon – June 5, 2022
Pastor Dan Hollis
John 14:12, 16-17, 25-27

When I was Assistant Director of a summer camp, every two weeks I would get a weekday off to keep myself fresh—often a Tuesday, because by then things had smoothed out after the kids arrived on *Sunday*, and there weren't usually any fires left for me to put out. On my desk the night before, I would leave a sheet of notebook paper, titled, "To Be Dan" (not to be confused with "To Be Determined"). It was a list of the things I usually *do* on that day, along with any unique tasks that couldn't wait until I was back at camp.

I recently found in my storage unit a couple of those old "To Be Dan" sheets. And they had a number of notes that I'm *sure* made sense in context. Things like: "Keep track of who pays/doesn't pay for their ice cream." "There should be a med kit in the woodshop (I asked Mikayla to put it there)." "If you have time, call those needing things." That's all it said.

"When Emmalee is done in kitchen (8:30), she should go to bottom to warn drivers of their impending demise."

"Descriptions of water lines do not inspire confidence."

"You can do the slideshow however you want, or I can talk Andy through it over the phone from the beach. Smiley-face."

And my favorite: "Stay golden, Ponyboy."

That's what *I* left behind. And I do know that it was helpful to the people I *left* it for... but it clearly didn't stand the test of time.

Sometimes *parents* will head off on a trip for the weekend and leave the kids with the usual spiel: "Emergency numbers on the fridge, food's *in* the fridge, there's money in the jar for pizza Saturday night (and pizza *only*!); I replaced all the batteries in the smoke detectors, and I need you to mow the lawn at *some* point before we get back."

That's great. It's the resources you need to survive, a back-up plan or two, and guidance for the future. Love it. 'Course if the parents aren't *back* yet by the time Monday rolls around, things are gonna start to get dicey.

Oh, and here's one that I love: people who pay for the car behind them in the drive-thru. "Whatever coffee or food they just ordered, put it on my card." 'Cause then, if the person behind them really *needed* those few extra bucks, that's wonderful—a random act of kindness that makes someone's whole day better... and if they *don't* need it so much, then they have the opportunity to keep the train going and pay for the *next* car's meal. It's a lovely surprise, and a chance to keep something good going down the line until it hits someone who needed that gift today for one reason or another.

What is "left behind" is so important, right? It can be useful, it can have lasting impact, it can be something needed, it can offer guidance, it can be a bright light in a dark world, it can be able to spread from person to person, or it can offer opportunities to do more.

The notes *I* left behind accomplished a *couple* of those things. Those things parents leave behind for their kids when they go out for a while accomplish a few more. Even paying for the latte of a person coming up behind you—that you'll never meet—makes the grade in some ways. And of course, when we contemplate the brief time we have on this Earth, we find ourselves thinking long and hard about what we leave behind, who we leave it *to*, and how our little lives can make the biggest impact.

The Holy Spirit... is *all* of those things. Left behind, for all of us. The Holy Spirit is a charge—a Divine to-do list, in a way; it's also a *resource* for when the well runs dry, and it's a source of joy and perspective. It's whispered guidance for a life that didn't come with

a map; it carries with it opportunities for wonderful, powerful work... and it's the last will and testament of the greatest Teacher who ever walked the face of this planet.

We remember, some time after Christ left this world, the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came from Heaven and fell upon the disciples like tongues of flame, *igniting* their hearts and empowering them to do amazing things—*necessary* things. And that Holy Spirit never went away.

Sometimes it's a wind that blows through us. Sometimes it's an energy that fills us up. Call it gasoline, or an electrical charge, or a roaring fire, or refreshing water—it is all of those things. And it's more. The Holy Spirit offers us the power to change lives, *and* the wisdom to *use* that power. It *inspires* us to new heights... and it gives us the ability to achieve them.

That's the story we usually talk about on Pentecost Sunday. That's the work of the Holy Spirit that we *focus* on. That the Holy Spirit is Christ's tool for turning *us* into *God's* tools. That somehow, when we need it most, we can breathe in the transformative power of God, and have the ability, the wisdom, and the courage to do God's work.

Every time in this church that I charge you to go forth and do God's work in this world, and every time Pastor Eric tells you that *this* service has ended but *our* service is only just beginning... it's the Holy Spirit that makes it possible for you to *do* all that, just as it empowered those first few believers. It was the Holy Spirit that made it possible for them—*normal* people like you and me—to turn the counter-cultural, unknown teachings of a counter-cultural unknown man from a... backwater town in a backwater region of a backwater protectorate... into one of the most influential movements in all of human history.

But our Scripture *today* isn't talking about a Spirit that *will* come to you when you need it most; not anymore. The point of Pentecost is to try to get you to *remember*, or maybe to realize for the first time... that the Holy Spirit is and always *has* been *at* your disposal. We're not talking about a God billions of miles away on a fluffy cloud somewhere on Pentecost. We're talking about what Christ *left* behind. What Christ *left* for *us*. What Christ left *with* us. What of God that's *waiting* for you to *grab* onto it like a live wire.

What we *don't* talk about on Pentecost Sunday that often... is all those times that we *don't* feel the Holy Spirit close at hand. Those times that... sometimes feel like the *norm*, rather than the exception. The days when nothing works the way we want it to. The days when we feel alone and unloved. The days when we're suffering, or lost. The days when we might *want* to do God's work but *can't*... *and* the days when we can't see any *way* that we could be of *any* use to God.

"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him because he abides with you, and he will be in you."

The Holy Spirit *never* left you. It's been here for *you* since before your *grandparents* were born. It's within you now, and it always *has* been, *even* when you can't feel it. It's the only reason we *survive* those terrible days! Those days of suffering, of loss, of directionlessness and struggle. The reason we can *make* it to the next day at *all* is because the Holy Spirit is standing up *for* us, and holding our hands and filling our lungs, propping us up, and keeping our souls intact even when the universe batters our bodies.

Sometimes we can't *see* God's hand in our lives; sometimes we can't *feel* God's presence in our hearts... but that *doesn't* mean that God has *abandoned* us, or God is holding *back* God's Spirit from you.

Christ may have left this world two thousand years ago, but what he left *behind* stands the test of time in the way no to-do list or emergency number or surprise latte ever could.

It's the journey of a lifetime to *recognize* the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. But I *promise* you it is there, now, working within you, every second of every day. Transforming you and filling you with God's own power.

The only thing "to be determined" about the Holy Spirit is what *you're* gonna do with it.

So when you feel lost, without guidance or resource... "do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid." Because you are *not* alone. You are not left with nothing. For as Jesus himself said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give as the world gives." There's no expiration date on what Jesus left for you. There's no day that will come where you've "run out" of what God left in the jar. The Holy Spirit is as fresh and revitalizing (and *necessary*) as it was two-thousand years ago, and if you'll let it—if you'll grab onto it, and keep grabbing onto it anew each day—it will empower you to do amazing things. I don't know what those things will be... but God am I excited to find out.

Aren't you?

Thanks be to God. Amen.