

Easter 6A - Comments and questions about the lessons for May 10, 2026

Acts 17:22-31

- Paul's speech to the Athenians contrasts sharply with the other sermons we find scattered throughout the book of Acts. Whereas the other sermons draw upon the Hebrew Scriptures to speak about God's work and the meaning of Jesus, here Paul draws upon the temples he sees and different philosophical concepts. His audience is different, so his message is different. We are also called to consider our audience when we speak about what the Gospel means. When might we have to change our message? Our style?

Psalm 66:8-20

- In the section of the psalm before our reading, the actions that the psalmist praises God for are not simply what God has done for the individual. The psalm appeals also to the Exodus experience. God has been with God's people in the past, and the psalmist declares that God will continue to be with them in the future.
⁵ *Come and see what God has done:
he is awesome in his deeds among mortals.*
⁶ **He turned the sea into dry land;
they passed through the river on foot.**
*There we rejoiced in him,
⁷ who rules by his might forever,
whose eyes keep watch on the nations—
let the rebellious not exalt themselves.*
- The psalm encourages us to recall what God has done for us in our individual past and for our community. When we do that, we become confident that God will continue to be with us no matter what we go through.

1 Peter 3:13-22

- What does it mean to say, "in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord"? The paraphrase of JB Phillips puts it this way: "simply concentrate on being completely devoted to Christ in your hearts."
- The writer encourages readiness with gentleness: "Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence." If someone asked you what your faith meant, would you be able to tell them in 25 words or less? How do we speak this with gentleness and reverence?
- The scriptural basis for the Creed's declaration that Christ "descended into hell/the dead" is found here when 1 Peter says that Jesus "went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison." He uses this illustration to say that suffering can bring about transformation. It also tells us that God does not desire anyone to remain bound or lost.

John 14:15-21

- John 14-16 gives us a speech of Jesus on the night in which he is betrayed. He speaks these words directly after he washed the feet of the disciples. Thus, keeping "his commandments" is not about the Law. Rather, he refers to the commandment that he has given them and demonstrated for them: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another." (John 13:34)
- The word translated here as "Advocate" is the Greek word *Paraclete*. It is only used in the New Testament here in John. In Greek, it often had a legal connotation, like a defense attorney, though the basic Greek word would mean, "one called alongside." Jesus connects this word with the Spirit, but what does he intend by it? Different versions understand this word in vastly different ways. The King James Version has "Comforter." Revised Standard had "Counselor." God's Word Translation has "helper." J.B. Phillips had "someone else to stand by you." The Message has "Friend." to understand what Jesus might mean. Two versions that try to cover the range of meanings are the Amplified Bible and the Contemporary English Version (listed below). Perhaps we do best by not limiting what the word might mean.

Amplified Bible (AMP): "and He will give you another **Helper (Comforter, Advocate, Intercessor—Counselor, Strengthened, Standby; Gr *Paracletos*, one called alongside to help.)**"

Contemporary English Version (CEV): "Then I will ask the Father to send you the **Holy Spirit who will help [*help*: The Greek word may mean "comfort," "encourage," or "defend."] you"**

Part of the problem in translating this word is that the range of meanings possible with Paraclete (comforter, intercessor, advocate, standby, counselor) are all found in the four passages in John 14-16

¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another **Advocate**, to be with you forever. ¹⁷This 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. ¹⁸ I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. (John 14:16-18 – **standby, counselor, comforter**)

²⁵ I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶But the **Advocate**, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. (John 14:25-26 – **intercessor, teacher**)

²⁶ When the **Advocate** comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. ²⁷You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning. (John 15:26-27 – **intercessor, advocate, (legal) counselor**)

⁷Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the **Advocate** will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgement: ⁹about sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; ¹¹about judgement, because the ruler of this world has been condemned. (John 16:7-10 – **advocate**)