

## ENOUGH TO GO ON

A Sermon for the Feast of Pentecost, May 23, 2010

Text: John 14:8-27

*“Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.”*

[A word of explanation: For the sake of a demonstration, as becomes clear part way into the sermon, the first few paragraphs were spoken aloud in Melanesian Pidgin, a language of Papua New Guinea.]

*Pastaim bai mi mekim sampela tok nating long tok ples bilong narapela kantri. Dispela tok ples ol i save kolim Tok Pisin.*

*Mi laik mekim olsem, bilong wanem mi laik soim yupela as bilong dispela tok yumi harim nau tasol.*

*Olgeta manmeri, ol i save pilim olsem dispela samting ol i kolim “Holi spirit,” em i narakain olgeta. No inap lukim, no inap harim, no inap pilim dispela samting. No inap save long en. Long wanem, Holi Spirit i stap long ples hait. Em i stap we, yumi no save. Husat i gat dispela samting, yumi no save. Laik bilong Holi Spirit, yumi no save.*

*Tasol long tok bilong God bilong tude, Jisas i lainim yumi long Holi Spirit, em i wanem samting. Em i tok, em yet i save givim dispela samting long yumi, olsem senis bilong em. Pastaim em yet i save stap wantaim yumi, tasol nau em i laik lusim ol disaipel bilong en, na bai em i no stap moa wantaim ol. Em bai i go long Papa bilong en, long Heven, long ples we yumi no inap lukim em. Tasol Jisas i laikim olsem, yumi no ken pret. Long wanem, Spirit bilong em bai inap i stap wantaim yumi.*

Several years later, writing the book of Acts, Luke told Christians that for a while—for a long while—it did not make sense. But then it did. The penny dropped. Pentecost.

Jesus had been a very confusing figure. People followed him because they thought they were going somewhere. But . . . were they? Or was that brief, shining moment, being followers of Jesus, just an interlude in their ordinary lives?

On the one hand, Jesus spoke and healed with unique authority. He seemed to be on intimate terms with God. On the other hand, he taught in riddles, made startling and extreme claims, and his behavior made enemies. When he was killed, that put paid to the notion that Jesus was going to take them somewhere.

Then he appeared again! Alive! To many people!

However, then he went away. He told his friends, most of them from Galilee, to wait in Jerusalem. The day he left, angels poked fun at them, saying “Why are you standing there looking up into the sky?”

But then they said “He will come back.” So they stayed in Jerusalem, waiting, puzzling, anxious. Maybe Jesus would send them something to help them make sense of it all.

And then, Luke tells us, one day it all came together for them. Just as when I switched to English a minute ago, and you started knowing what I was saying. People from all sorts of

places, speakers of many languages, heard a message about Jesus, and it clicked for them. It became clearer what was up in Jesus. The church was born, out of a new and common vision that Jesus *did* make sense. And that what they had *was* enough. Enough to go on.

The church did not have everything figured out on the day it was born, not by a long shot. We're still working on it. But the essential thing became evident, and it was this: *what they had in Jesus Christ* was enough. Enough for them. Enough for the world. Enough to proclaim.

In our Gospel story, which took place before Jesus' death, Philip displays the sort of confusion Jesus' disciples felt there at the end. Like, this has been good so far, but what can we do with it? Can we live with just this? Do we need a sequel? A prequel?

"Show us the Father," Philip asked, "and we will be satisfied." Literally, "that for us will be enough." Several chapters back, he was telling others that Jesus was the Messiah, but now he wishes Jesus had given them more.

And Jesus said, "Whoever has seen me *has seen* the Father." Strange claim. "You don't think I'm doing this on my own, do you?" *And then he spun out for them a world in which through his mediation God the Father would be in us.* The Father—the God they knew—was in him, and he was in the Father, and the Father would send his Spirit in Jesus' name, and the Spirit would be in us, so we would be in the Father, and we would abide in Jesus, and the Father and the Spirit and we would all be one because of the love of the Father for us, which is like the love of the Father for Jesus himself, who did nothing on his own but only what the Father wanted done, and so should we and so on. Something like that. A little confusing, but you get the idea. Basically, don't ask for more of anything; begin living in what I have already given you.

I don't think that made sense to Philip that evening in the upper room that God would be in them, but at some point it started to click for a whole lot of them. People like Saul of Tarsus. As an example, many years later he would pray for a favor—just take this pain out of my side. Three times he asked, and the Lord said: "My grace is enough for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." From then on, Paul decided to boast all the more gladly of his weaknesses, so that the power of Christ might dwell in him.

The Holy Spirit which came down on Pentecost did not bear some new message that was added on to the message about Jesus. And it did not give us a different way to relate to God, than Jesus had given already. The Spirit bore witness that what the world had received in Jesus, was just what the world needs. When Peter quoted Joel about the Spirit being poured out on all flesh, he was not saying that beginning now we're going to get all kinds of further knowledge about something else. He was identifying the message about Jesus as being the dream and the prophecy which was from God. You have that Holy Spirit, when you have the Gospel about Jesus.

The word Philip used when he told Jesus "Show us the Father and that will be *enough* for us," is the word Paul used when he said that the Lord had told him "My grace is *enough*." The only two places that word is used, in the New Testament, and what a contrast. We want God to . . . do this or that favor, show us this or that, and then we can go on. But God says his grace in Jesus Christ is enough to see us through life.

What we get in Jesus is this peculiar and sometimes elusive thing, grace. The knowledge that God has shown his grace to us in his Son Jesus Christ, in a remarkably backward way, providing for us even as he leaves us, taking our burden off of us, telling us to bear one another's burdens and so to fulfill the new commandment he gave us.

Paul reveals in 1 Corinthians that people may demand signs, and people may desire wisdom, but what we proclaim is . . . Christ crucified. That bothers everyone more or less, Paul is aware. It bothers people who demand signs—who want something more impressive in their Gospel. And it bothers people who desire wisdom—who want the Gospel to make more sense to them. But Christ crucified is what we have got. And the Holy Spirit assures us that it is enough to go on.

When we walk through the valley of the shadow of bankruptcy, or that of solitude, or cancer, or imprisonment, or defamation, or divorce, or aging, or war or calamity, we are able to go on being God's faithful people because his rod and his staff **are** with us, and they make us strong. God's presence in us, the advocate given us in Jesus' name, is enough to go on.

God is with us, not against us, because of Jesus Christ. That good news is something that translates into any language. Parthians get it, and so do Papua New Guineans, when we say: God i no stap birua bilong yu. Em i stap wantaim you, long Jisas Krai. I tru. God is not against you. He is with you, in Jesus Christ. Amen.

