

## **“Help!” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Pentecost Day May 19, 2024**

- I. **John 15:26-27** – Jesus said, “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness about Me. And you also will bear witness...”
- II. **Everyone needs help sometimes.**
  - a. For many of us, we don’t like to admit we need help.
  - b. Maybe our parents instilled in us the attitude that we shouldn’t rely on others because we look weak... or we wouldn’t want to impose on or burden anyone with our problems or needs.
    - i. A huge movement is called DIY, or do-it-yourself projects.
      1. People are taking on every project imaginable around the home – and without the help of a professional.
    - ii. In our younger years, we don’t want help because it makes us look like babies, so we tell our parents to leave us alone.
    - iii. In our older years, we tell our kids we don’t need help because well, we look like babies and tell them to leave us alone.
    - iv. No matter our stage of life, most of us don’t like asking for help.
  - c. Sometimes we get help when we don’t even ask...
    - i. I saw a short video on Reddit from the 2023 London Marathon as one of the participants started struggling toward the end of the race.
    - ii. A man in a black cap begins to double over and looks like he’s ready to collapse as other racers are run right by him.
    - iii. But just before he falls to the ground, another runner comes from behind him and grabs his arm.
      1. He sort of props up the man who’s struggling, and begins helping him to keep going... then moments later, another man comes in and grabs the other side
      2. Together, the three runners make their way to the finish line.
    - iv. I’m not sure, but it looked like total strangers saw this guy in need, and they jumped in to lend a hand – regardless how many people were finishing before them.<sup>1</sup>
  - d. In many ways, this is like the power of the Holy Spirit... also known as the Paraclete, or the one who comes alongside us.
    - i. If you read other Bible translations, the Helper is also called the Counselor, or the Advocate.
    - ii. I appreciate the visual of me struggling to keep going, and the Helper comes alongside me to keep me on the path.
    - iii. Certainly, we can cry out for help... Lord, help me!
      1. Yet, many times, God knows we need support and comes next to us to prop us up, to give us strength, and keep us moving toward the finish line.

- III. **Life is full of struggles and temptations** that have us doubling over in pain.
- a. Oftentimes, it is the troubles of our own making – as we choose our own way over the way that God wants us to go.
    - i. It's a constant temptation to go along with the world as your helper... from family and friends who don't follow Jesus, to the different forms of media that encourage us to live without the help of God.
    - ii. Maybe some of you heard about the Kansas City Chiefs kicker who recently gave a graduation speech at an all-girls Catholic college.
      - 1. He set off a huge debate by talking about mostly good Christian values – including humility, the vocation of mothers, and the blessings of family – but he is being condemned for going against the views of our society.
    - iii. No doubt, you will face pressure from people outside... or maybe even inside the Christian faith... that your views about the Bible and God are too extreme... or too old fashioned for this time.
    - iv. Yet, when we go through life ignoring God and His will, we suffer the consequences of bad decisions.
  - b. Other times life throws us things we could never see coming.
    - i. We are going along just fine and then out of the blue, someone close to us gets sick... or even dies.
    - ii. We might get sick or hurt, and it's hard to stay positive when we hurt.
    - iii. Lots of other bad things can happen – like when our car breaks down, our job gets cut back, our friends decide to stop being friendly, or we experience failures and setbacks.
    - iv. I've heard people ask why they have so many bad things happen to them and their family... and all I can say is that we live in a sinful, broken world – and we can't get away from the trouble.
- IV. **Jesus is giving us some confidence in our Gospel reading today.**
- a. He gathered up His disciples and was giving them a rundown on how things will be when He goes to heaven and can't be with them in person anymore.
    - i. They don't really understand what He means, but He knows that He must Ascend to heaven if the Holy Spirit is going to make His grand entrance on Pentecost Day.
      - 1. Jesus says, "For if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you." (vs 7)
    - ii. The Father has a plan that includes the Son being in heaven with Him while the Holy Spirit makes His way through the whole earth.
    - iii. I've used this illustration before, but it's like the difference between a battery, which is direct current, or DC, and a wall plug which is alternating current or AC.
      - 1. Batteries are limited in the distance they can send power, but AC electricity can be sent for thousands of miles.

2. No longer do people have to be right next to the source of power in Jesus, but the Holy Spirit sends the power of God to all people everywhere at the same time.
- b. The Holy Spirit is the Helper, the one who comes alongside us and supports us to finish the race.
    - i. Imagine you're running a marathon, and you have about a half mile to run... and you are shuffling along with nothing left in the tank.
    - ii. You see the finish line... and your muscles freeze up... you get muscle cramps all through your thighs and calves... and you begin to go down to your knees.
    - iii. When all of the sudden, someone from beside you grabs your arms and holds you up – not only giving you the strength to stand, but an emotional boost that reminds you that you are not alone.
    - iv. The race we run is life, and yes, sometimes it has ups and downs.
      1. The finish line is the arms of Jesus in paradise...
      2. The Person alongside and holding us up is the Helper, the Holy Spirit... who isn't concerned about glory for Himself, but always wants to point to Jesus.
      3. Jesus said, "[The Holy Spirit] will glorify Me, for He will take what is Mine and declare it to you." (vs 14)
        - a. Yes, the Holy Spirit will continually point you to Jesus and the truth.
  - c. The message that the Holy Spirit shares with all people is what you find right in the pages of your Bible... just like I told the Confirmands as we sat in my living room the other night... I asked, Audrina and Antonio what is the most important message in the Bible? That God so loved the world, He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16).
    - i. The Holy Spirit always points to the finish line, eternal life... and our Savior Jesus.
    - ii. Without that power and strength, none of us could make it all the way.
    - iii. Yet, that is the great gift of God, even when we don't cry out for help, He will still support us and keep us going in the struggle.
      1. Of course we should, and can cry out for help, but He is always there to keep us in our baptismal grace.
  - d. And so the Lord provides His Spirit of help and support as our Confirmands today will always know – through Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and His Word.
    - i. These are the ways the Holy Spirit constantly points us to Jesus and His forgiveness.
    - ii. We give thanks and praise to God today, not only for our Confirmands and their statements of faith, but in the Holy Spirit our constant source of help as He brings us to Jesus. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Sara Barnes, "Struggling London Marathon Runner Gets Help From Fellow Athletes To Finish the Race," My Modern Met (5-11-23)