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**A: Easter 6
John 14:15-21**

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“Flip Phone or Smart Phone?”

Do you remember the days before cell phones? Do you remember the days before smart cell phones? I do!

Our family was an early adopter of mobile phones.
We had a car phone I think in the early 80s when they were very uncommon.
And our family was also an early adopter of cell phones.

I think my children were probably among the first in their grades to get them way back when they were in elementary school. They thought we were really cool parents to give them cell phones.
But to be honest, I didn't get the phones for the kids as much as I got them for me – first and foremost for emergencies so my kids and I could always be in touch, and then, secondly, for my own convenience – so they could call me when sports practices were over and I could leave to pick them up then, instead of going at a specified time and maybe having to sit in the car and wait and waste time.

My husband was an early adopter of smart phones, but I was not. First, they were expensive, and second, he seemed to spend far too much time on his phone. I simply had no interest in getting one. Until I came to Salem. Because when I came to Salem, I knew I would be doing youth ministry for the first time in 18 years, and I also knew that there was no way I'd have any credibility with youth if I didn't have a smart phone. Not knowing what kind to get, I asked the rest of the staff here at Salem. Our secretary, Buffy, had a blackberry; our musician, Liz, an android; and our custodian, Manny, an iPhone. Manny, as it turned out, was the best sales person because I ended up getting an iPhone. Now remember that I didn't get the phone because I wanted it; I got it to fit in with the youth. Personally I didn't see any need to have a smart phone. That was 12 years ago and boy, has my life changed!

On Tuesday the alarm on my phone woke me up at 6:30 for my morning prayer call but when I went to turn off the alarm and dial in to the call, the screen was frozen. That had happened once or twice in the preceding week or two. I did a forced restart on it and after several minutes, it eventually came on. And then it froze again. It froze 6 times and I was 10 minutes late getting on the prayer call; and after the prayer call, it froze again, and by that time the only thing I could think about was getting my phone fixed! Because I just can't function without my phone!

I use it for everything.
I use it to keep my calendar.
I use it to tell me the time and I set alarms to wake me up in the morning and to remind me about meetings and about prayer time.
I use it every time I get in the car to tell me the best way to go at that particular time on that particular day.
I use it to communicate with people by text or email or direct message or Facebook or LinkedIn.
When I'm not near my laptop, I use it for zoom meetings.
I use it to count my steps and my miles each day.
I use it to keep my daily journals – my “best thing of the day” journal, my “10 things for which I am grateful” journal, and my “daily disciplines” journal.
I use it for Bible study - and have 9 different translations on it.
I use it to listen to books or to music or to podcasts.
I use it to watch TV or movies. I use it to take pictures.
I use it to find the cheapest place for gas for my car.
I use it to open the back door of my house.
I even write sermons like this one on it by speaking into the Notes app.
And then there's Google where I can access an entire library's worth of information from any time and any place.

I spent decades of my life and was perfectly content without a smart phone,
but now that I've come to see the amazing things it can do for me, I simply cannot imagine my life without it.
But in order for me to have all the advantages of a smart phone,
I have to have one, I have to make sure there's service on it, and I have to keep it charged.

OK. Now this is not a commercial for iPhones. There's a reason I've talked so much about my phone.
Can anyone guess where this is going? That's right. It ties right into our gospel for the day.
The disciples, who had lost Jesus once before between the crucifixion and the resurrection,
were afraid that they would lose their connection with Jesus again when he ascended into heaven.
But just as I wanted cell phones for my children so that they and I could be connected,
so Jesus wanted something to connect him with those he loved.
He was worried about them, concerned about them, and wanted to protect them and keep them safe,
and so he asked his heavenly father to give his friends something that would keep them all connected,
so that he would be in God and his disciples would be in him, and he would be in his disciples.
He asked God to give them – and us – something akin to a smart phone.

Now I'm pretty sure you've all heard about the Triune God, about the 3-in-1 & 1-in-3,
about God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, right?
Well, let me ask you... which of the 3 do you have the closest relationship to or to which do you pray?
How many of you pray to or relate primarily to God the Father/Creator?
How many of you pray to or relate primarily to Jesus? How many of you pray to or relate primarily to the Spirit?
I've always heard that Roman Catholics tend to relate primarily to God the Father, Protestants to Jesus,
and Pentecostals to the Spirit, and when I think about where our focus is in Lutheran liturgy and Bible study,
I'd say it's primarily on God the Father if we're talking Old Testament
and on Jesus if we're talking about the New Testament, but we don't spend a lot of time talking about the Spirit.

Now I don't want to speak for all of you or for all Lutherans, but I am a lifelong Lutheran,
so I would guess that my experience would be similar to yours, but if not, you can let me know later.
I used to think of the Spirit in much the same way as I used to think of smart phones –
as something that was new and unfamiliar and uncomfortable and strange and a bit scary and perhaps costly;
as something that was obviously unnecessary – I mean I had never had one before so why would I need one now;
as something filled with all kinds of applications that some folks raved about, but that seemed out of my experience.
But then, just like I eventually broke down and got an iPhone. I eventually broke down and got the Spirit.
Now I've said before that I believe that every human has some measure of the Spirit by the very fact that we breathe,
because that breath, that wind, that ruach, that pneuma, is the very Spirit of God.
I've also said that I can think of times in my life when the Spirit connected me with God
so that God could speak to me or show me something or teach me something.
It was like having a car phone or an early model flip phone, but about 5 years ago I finally got a smart phone version of the Spirit,
and now I can't imagine my life without that smart version of the Spirit any more than I can imagine my life without my iPhone.

Look again at the gospel.

Jesus said, "... 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."

Now listen carefully to these next words of Jesus: "You know him, because HE ABIDES WITH YOU, and HE WILL BE IN YOU."

In other words, Jesus is saying that the disciples already know the Spirit, that they've seen him,
and that the Spirit abides WITH them.

All of those things he's talking about in the present tense.

And it's a good way to describe how the Spirit used to be present in my life up until 5 years ago.

I knew the Spirit was with me and I knew that on occasion the Spirit had connected me with God.

But Jesus goes on to say something else to his disciples: "The Spirit will be IN you".

So at this point he is no longer talking to them in the present tense

about what they have had and what they have continued to experience,

but rather he's talking to them in the future tense about something that they will receive in the future.

He's making them a promise; he's promising them a gift. The Spirit that is now WITH them will be IN them.

And of course, that promise is fulfilled on Pentecost when tongues of fire appear on their heads,

and they speak in tongues, and their lives are changed forever.

Among the whole spectrum of Christianity, I am a late adopter when it comes to the smartphone version of the Spirit;
but among Lutherans, I'm an early adopter.

And like Manny the custodian who convinced me to get an iPhone,

I'd like to convince you to trade in your flip phone model of the Spirit for the smartphone version.

Let me give you 3 reasons why.

1. When the Spirit is inside of you, the Spirit does the work so you don't have to.

For example, if the Spirit who was WITH me but not IN me suggested I tell someone about Jesus, I didn't.

Of course I knew that evangelism was something I was supposed to do both as a Christian and as a pastor.

But like most Lutherans, I turned that into an easier, more acceptable task:

that of simply working with people in my church to get others to come to church.

Uncomfortable with talking about our faith, we Lutherans have basically ignored the Great Commission

and turned Evangelism into marketing and publicity, and made it not about salvation but about church growth.

Instead of inviting people into relationship with God or Jesus, we invited them to join our church

in the same way invited them to join the garden club or the Lions' club or our gym.

Even though the Spirit suggested I tell people about Jesus, I just couldn't bring myself to do it.

But once the Spirit was inside of me, it was no longer about doing something

that something outside of me was telling me I should do, but instead, I simply found myself doing it!

2. The second thing that happens when the Spirit is inside of you is that it changes how you see God, yourself & the world around you, how you understand life.

That's because the Spirit has many gifts to give – there are the 7-fold gifts of the Spirit –

the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge

which gives us trust both in God's boundless power and in God's endless love.

Those are the ways that God changes how you understand life.

My understanding of how God works in the world has increased dramatically.

It's like instead of being lost in a maze where you can only see right around you,

you are handed an aerial photo of the maze that gives you a broader perspective

and shows you maybe not the whole picture but certainly a bigger one.

3. The third thing that happens when the Spirit is inside of you is that it changes how you feel.

That's because the spirit plants seeds within us, and when we water them with prayer, nourish them with worship,

and expose them to the light of God's Word, they grow and bear fruit – like the 9 fruits of the Spirit –

love and joy, peace and patience, faithfulness, kindness, goodness and gentleness, and self-control.

I have to tell you that I feel all those things in much, much greater abundance than I ever did before.

4. And the fourth thing that happens when the Spirit is inside of you is that it changes your understanding of your call.

The scripture mentions other gifts of the Spirit – gifts for healing, for prophecy, for the working of miracles,

for the discernment of spirits, for speaking in tongues, and for interpreting tongues – but there are many, many more.

You can follow a call that you hear externally when the Spirit is simply WITH you –

like my call to be a pastor – and it can be fulfilling.

But when the Spirit is IN you, it sets your heart on fire, and a passion burns within you,

and not only do you have this deep desire to do something, it brings you all of the opportunities that you need to do it.

The Spirit just puts you in the right place at the right time.

And that internal call for me came 5 years ago when I knew that there was a way to a future church

that is somewhere between White main line Protestant and Black Evangelical.

My new internal call, my desire, my passion was to be a bridge

between worlds, between races, between cultures, between denominations.

And I didn't even have to figure out how to do that!

God just made it happen by putting me in the right place at the right time,

& connecting me with the right people and the right resources & leading me step-by-step to do what God has called me to do.

And doing it brings me the most incredible joy!

Jesus told his disciples that they knew the Spirit, and that the Spirit was WITH them,

but Jesus promised them something more - that the Spirit would be IN them.

Jesus tells us the same thing – that we know the Spirit, that the Spirit is WITH us,

and Jesus promises us that the Spirit can be IN us too.

So how do you know if the Spirit is IN you?

You'll know the Spirit is IN you because you will be doing things that you never thought you'd do –

like getting up for a 6:30 am prayer meeting, or rethinking your theology, or telling people about Jesus.

You'll know the Spirit is IN you because you'll see God and yourself and everyone else and the entire world differently - from a different, higher, broader perspective.

You'll know the Spirit is inside of you because you will feel different.

You will have a greater love, a more abundant joy, a deeper peace, an increased patience, a stronger faith, and you'll grow in kindness and goodness and gentleness and self-control.

And you will know the Spirit is IN you when your understanding of your life's purpose and plan and call changes and it's no longer just what you do, but it's who you are, and it becomes the passion that drives all that you do.

You will know if the Spirit is IN you if you find yourself doing things, you never thought you'd do, if you see the world differently, if you feel different, and if you feel a new call on your life.

When I look back on my life BEFORE my smart phone and my life SINCE my smart phone, I am so grateful!

I'm grateful for the increased safety when Siri tells me when and where to turn as I drive!

I'm grateful for the 42,000 pictures I have on my phone!

I am grateful for the thousand plus books that I have read in the last 12 years!

I'm grateful for all the people that I'm in contact with, including 2500 Facebook friends!

I'm grateful that I can have a meeting with just about anybody in the world on zoom!

But as grateful as I am for my smart phone, I am even more grateful that I not only have the Spirit WITH me, but I have the Spirit IN me, and for all of the amazing changes that has made in my life.

I'm grateful that I know God better.

I'm grateful that I'm in a deeper relationship with God

and meet with God for conversation 15 times or more each week.

I'm grateful that I hear God more and see God more and feel God more in my life.

I'm grateful for the growth in love and joy and peace and patience and faith and understanding.

I'm grateful for all that God has done, is doing, and will do - for me and In me and through me.

Just as I can now no longer imagine my life without my smart phone,

I can no longer imagine life again without the Spirit's abiding presence IN me.

So as I wrap this up, let me say just 2 things:

If you don't have a smart phone, you don't know what you're missing!

And if the Spirit is not IN you, you REALLY don't know what you're missing!

Let's pray.

O gracious God, God of boundless power and endless love,

pour your spirit into everyone who opens themselves up to receive it this day.

Don't just let your Spirit walk beside us.

Fill us.

Fill us with your Spirit that we may receive all of the gifts that you have to give.

Live in us. Grow in us. Work in us.

And work through us – that all may know your power and love.

I pray this in the name of Jesus by the power of the Spirit. Amen!