



St. Stephen's Traditional Episcopal Church

11856 Mays Chapel Rd., Timonium, MD 21093

The Fourth Sunday After Easter, May 22nd, 2011

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

*When he, the Spirit of truth, is come,
he will guide you into all truth...*

In last Sunday's Gospel lesson, Jesus told his disciples of his forthcoming departure from them and the suffering it would involve. But, like the pain of child birth, that suffering would soon be forgotten because new life has been attained. "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy."

In today's Gospel lesson tells them of that new life that they will come to know. "If I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart I will send him unto you." The work of God Incarnate on earth will have been done, and the fruit of that work, a new, inner, spiritual, relationship with God the Father will be accomplished among Jesus' followers.

"It is expedient for you that I go away" Jesus says "for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come

unto you: but if I depart, I will send him unto you." The God who leaves us is the God who saves us. Only through Christ's departure are we able to know the presence of the Father and the Holy Spirit.

So long as Jesus was physically present with the Disciples, they would continue to relate to him in worldly ways. They would continue to think of him as a great teacher, a political leader, a healer and wonder worker. But, as Jesus told Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world," and only by departing from their world could Jesus draw them to his world. Only through his physical absence would the disciples' relationship with him be purified to become a spiritual relationship. "if I depart, I will send him unto you."

Jesus speaks of the effects of this new spiritual relationship. "When he is come, he will reprove the world of

sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.” To know God as Spirit is to be given a new and expanded viewpoint. Indeed, it is to be opened up into a process of growth toward God’s viewpoint. Sin, and righteousness, and judgment are no longer seen in terms of earthly standards and conventions. Sin is in essence – unbelief, a turning away from the revealed Truth.

Righteousness is obedience to that Truth. Judgment’s basis is no longer political expediency but objective Truth. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth becomes our guide to growth in relationship to God.

To know God as life-giving Spirit is not to know some other God; it is to know God as Father and God as Son ever more perfectly in a spiritual way.

At the Last Supper, Jesus explained to his followers the meaning of his Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension, and prepared them to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

“It is expedient for you that I go away” says Jesus. Our worldly attachments are strong, and there is always the temptation to regard our religion as just another aspect of those worldly attachments – to use religion to serve the world and our worldly interests. But Jesus departs from us, and we must continue our relationship with him on a spiritual plane or lose the meaning of his historical, incarnate reality in the midst of worldly busyness. In this sense, our worldly tribulations may be for our good. The harsh discipline of disappointment, confusion, and sorrow in this world teaches us to seek our treasure beyond this world, and our sorrow may indeed be turned into joy.

*Let your light so shine before men,
that they may see your good works,
and glorify your Father which is in
heaven.*