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[0:00] Jesus said, the Father will send us another helper.! From today's Gospel lesson, do we need another helper?

! In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. So this is Pentecost Sunday. It's the third most important holy day in the church year after Easter and Christmas. And it's about the helper, the counselor, that Jesus claims the Father will send us. But for many of us, the Holy Spirit is a mysterious being.

We don't quite know what he is or what we do with him. So I'm going to back in to the Holy Spirit parking space today by highlighting how, I'll use a modern term, how I became woke to the Holy Spirit.

Actually, I'm going to share how I became aware of each person in the Holy Trinity in order to better understand that helper that Jesus promises each one of us.

[1:20] So would you like to come along? Let's take a walk together. Reflect on your own faith as I share what it has meant to me. So first is woke to the Father.

Father, I started out in the Roman Catholic Church, and so I knew God was my Father. My mother taught me my prayers, and she listened to my prayers every night until I got, as I claimed it, too old for this.

But I had an understanding of God as Father. So when I became an Episcopalian, it was pretty easy for a transition.

It looked like the same thing, except the priest had a wife attached to him. Everything else looked the same to me. And there's a scriptural basis for recognizing God as Father.

Luke 12, the disciples said to Jesus, Teach us to pray, as John teaches his disciples to pray. And Jesus said, When you pray, say, Our Father.

[2:29] That's the scriptural basis. Well, I settled into what we might call sacramental religion.

There in the incense and the bells and the genuflections and the holy water was a mystery. A deep mystery.

Jesus, it's said in sacramental religion, Jesus is found in the Eucharist. That's where we come alive as the Father gives us light.

And there are little things that help us along the way. Candles. Statues. Holy water.

Subdued light. Stained glass windows. They bring an attitude. An attitude of deep worship.

[3:35] What was the music I was used to in the sacramental church? Well, you can tell one thing. It was a robed choir and there was organ music. And it was stately.

There was not Jesus loves me, this I know, in those churches. It was immortal, invisible, God-only wise. It was holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.

Stately worship. The prayer stance. Prayer stance. Prayer stance. In that environment, you see, the community, I hate to use this word, but the community trumped the personal.

It's not that you couldn't have personal relationship with God, but the main thing was the Christian community gathered together on Sunday morning. Can you identify with sacramental religion?

Can you take comfort in this traditional, mysterious, transcendent approach to God? Many people can.

[4:51] I did. And I do. It could have been it for me. Traditional, intellectual, I can figure it out.

But, you know, when I thought about it, there was something kind of missing. The father, fully employed. The son, kind of underemployed.

The Holy Spirit, totally on unemployment insurance. So that's kind of where it was. Then, point two, I met those evangelicals whose hearts were strangely warmed.

What a thing. And I became woke to the son. The scriptural basis was John 3.16, which everybody memorizes.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

[5:52] A new approach to God greeted me, one that I had not known anything about. Whereas I had grown comfortable with sacramental religion, I now became a Christ-centered religionist.

I found Jesus in the Bible, rather than in the Eucharist. What I was taught in the extreme evangelical camp is, that's just a memorial.

The bread and wine is just a memorial of the Lord's Supper. Jesus is in the scriptures. And we played what I call baseball theology.

First base, God has a wonderful plan for your life. Second base, because you have sinned, you've lost the plan. Third base, God wants you in the plan and provides Jesus.

Home run, home base, accept Jesus as the Lord and Savior. There it is. Well, how about candles?

[6:57] No, no, no. We don't do candles. How about incense? Are you crazy? Anything that looks Catholic was kind of suspicious.

And then I found, as I grew older, the vestments changed on the part of the leaders. They went from cassock surplice or chasuble to jeans and an untucked plaid shirt.

Those are the vestments for a lot of pastors today. Okay. Got it. They're still vestments to me. The music in the evangelical front was Christ-centered.

Warm. What a friend we have in Jesus. On a hill far away stood an old wooden cross. How many of us memorized those wonderful songs?

Touched our heart. What's the prayer stance for an evangelical? All heads bowed, all eyes closed. How many times have we heard that?

[8:10] That's the prayer stance. I'm not putting my hands up because people might think I'm charismatic. The emphasis, you see, in this brand, which we would call evangelical religion, the emphasis is on the individual walk with Christ, isn't it?

Over against the communal. You know, it's really about Jesus and me. And if I don't like the crowd I'm worshiping with, I'll find another crowd. You see, I'm...

However, I love the evangelical approach. I love heartfelt emotional views toward God.

I got quite comfortable with it, in fact. Can you identify with the evangelical approach to God?

Heart-centered love for Jesus?

Well, that could have been it for me also. But I found something was still missing. Now, Jesus was fully employed.

[9:21] The Father was a bit underemployed. Holy Spirit, still in the unemployment line. Where do we go? Point three.

I met those cuddly charismatics. Give me a hug. Whoa! And I became woke to the Holy Spirit. The scriptural basis is Acts chapter 2, which John...

No. Jack read. Jack, congratulations. You got all those people's right when you read them. I studied. I studied. A lot of lay readers pray, don't have me read Acts chapter 2.

It was well done. So, the Holy Spirit came on to the disciples with tongues as a fire and sent them out into the world to preach the gospel.

The charismatic approach to God deals with miracles, doesn't it? It deals with gifts of the Spirit.

[10:35] It deals with power. God's power. We called ourselves Spirit-filled Christians. We're full of the Spirit.

The theology, as opposed to a sacramental approach, as to a strictly word approach, was power explosion. We just expected miraculous healings, prophetic words, and extraordinary circumstances in our lives which could only have been engineered by God.

Vestments? Candles? Who cares? We don't care what you want to wear. We want to care about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Music?

Emotional. How great is our God? Sing with me. Right? I don't mean for you to sing with me. That's part of the song. How great is our God? Prayer stands?

Hands raised. Hallelujah. We'll take it. Well, can you identify with the charismatic approach to God?

Full of excitement that the God of the universe wants to utilize your faith to touch the world?

[11:53] That is pretty good. And that might have been it for me, but something was still missing.

The Holy Spirit finally became fully employed.

The son became underemployed, and the father pretty much unemployed. What could I do? How could I worship God? I had to find theological balance. And I found it in contemporary Anglicanism.

In a church that is sacramental, it's liturgically respectful of God.

In a church that is evangelical, it's biblically, radically Christ-centered. In a church that is spirit-filled, the charisms, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are encouraged and welcomed.

[13:01] You see, I found it as I looked at what God was doing and what He is doing. Three streams comprising one river.

That's who we are at Church of the Holy Trinity. There's no need for us to condemn one or the other.

As a Catholic, I don't need to reproach evangelicals because they're too shallow in their faith. As an evangelical, I don't need to speak against charismatics because they're charismaniacs.

I don't need to do that. We are together, in our view of God, three streams of Jesus washing through our church.

God bringing us salvation, strengthening us for service. Jesus truly said, My Father will send another helper.

[14:09] It's only through the ministry of the Holy Spirit that we can begin to understand the balance of worship that God calls us to. Have you opened your heart and your mind to the Holy Spirit?

Because He is our helper, our comforter, our advocate, in fact, our energizer bunny. That's the Holy Spirit. Speaking of allowing His power to wash through us, we're going to have some washing here in a couple of minutes.

Baptisms. On this Pentecost Sunday, which is a principal Sunday for baptisms, we're glad that we can wash some people today through holy baptism.

And so I'm going to have them come forward in just a minute and we're going to welcome them. I say to you to be baptized, welcome to the Anglican Church.

A balanced approach to God. Let us pray. Lord God, we just want to love you. You show us how.

[15:22] Let us do it. We pray this, Father, in the name of Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen. Could I ask those to be baptized and their parents and godparents and sponsors to please come forward and they're up to the most?