

John 14:15-27 N.T. 311 (NRSV)

¹⁵“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. ¹⁷This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

¹⁸“I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. ¹⁹In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. ²⁰On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.” ²²Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?” ²³Jesus answered him, “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. ²⁴Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

²⁵“I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. ²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

John 14:15-27 N.T. Page 311
“Breath of Heaven”

Opening Prayer: Please bow with me in prayer. Heavenly Father, in a world full of people, we so often feel alone. Hold us close, fill us with your radiant Spirit, and whisper your Word of life to into our hearts today. In Jesus’ Name we pray.
Amen.

Introduction:

Have you ever been lonely? Have you ever been blue? Those two questions are just as pressing today **as they were when** country-western singer Patsy Cline asked them back in 1961. In fact, if anything those questions have become even more pressing. **Fifty years ago** in America, **one person in ten** lived alone. **Today** that number is more like one person in four.¹ And even people who don’t live alone can still be lonely. **In fact, polls indicated** that some 36% of Americans say that their lonely.² There may be other people in their lives, but those people are all just passing acquaintances. **A lonely person** has no one to talk too, no one to laugh with, and no one to cry with either. In the face of loneliness, hopes whither and fade, while fears prosper and grow. To be lonely is to feel empty inside. Lonely people crave intimacy; they long for a few close friends. **Social media sites** like and “Snap Chat,” and “Instagram,” and “Facebook” are booming. **Yet, loneliness** has still reached epidemic proportions. Have you ever been lonely? For tens of millions of people, it’s not just that they’re lonely now and then; it’s that they’re lonely each and every day. Not only are they lonely, they can’t even remember a time when they weren’t lonely. Loneliness has become the hallmark of their lives. **Yes, to be lonely is to be blue.**

PAUSE

¹ <http://www.probe.org/content/view/742/72/>

² <http://www.efmoody.com/miscellaneous/loneliness.html>

Move I.

Nothing's worse than being all alone. Cut off from family and friends, your mind slowly descends into the pit of despair. **A week from tomorrow is Memorial Day.** On that one day each year, we remember those people who have endured great suffering to protect the freedoms we enjoy. **We remember the dead. We remember the maimed. And we remember the prisoner of war.**

I have read some of the accounts of prisoners of war and of the loneliness and fear that became their daily lives. **Nothing could be more lonely** than to be held behind enemy lines thousands of miles from home and you're not even sure if you're family and friends know that you're still alive. **I know that was a reality** that John Hodgson who was part of the church I served in Beaver Falls. **During WW II**, flak hit his bomber forcing him to bail out behind enemy lines. He was a POW and all the U.S. military knew was that he was missing-in-action. For more than two years, his family didn't know if he was alive or dead and John never received any news from home. John didn't talk about the whole experience very much, but when he did, his eyes usually filled with tears. He felt so all alone.

Another prisoner of war, Jamie White, wrote a poem that speaks of the stark reality of being a MIA POW. His poem is "*I Am An MIA.*"³ Please listen as I read Jamie White's poem.

I feel as if I'm forgotten
So alone and without love
I'm living on the strength of God
To make it through each passing day.
How many days has it been?
Months or years have passed
Yet, I wait to be free.

³ <http://members.aol.com/usaheroes/memorial.htm>

I long to see my family
And those I left behind.
Will they still remember me?
Has time erased the love?

My captors taunt me daily
And tell me I will die.
Then they laugh and walk away
Calling me an American fool
Lord, I pray for your strength
Just to make it through

Does anyone know I am alive?
Does anyone still care?
I am listed as a statistic
A number on a sheet
I am classified as “killed in action”
Yet, I am a prisoner of war.

I could be your son, your husband
Or your father, uncle, aunt, sister
Or perhaps your brother.
Who am I?
I am an American who served my country
I am an MIA.

Jamie Whites’ poem captures the raw emotion of being alive when your family and friends all fear you may be dead. **You feel forgotten. You feel unloved. You feel** that you’re utterly and **hopelessly alone. Yes, nothing’s worse than being all alone.**

End I.

Move II.

But Jesus assures us that we'll never be alone. Jesus promises never to leave us, and never to forsake us, even if we're missing in action. That's the great promise that allows the prisoner of war to find the strength to make it through each passing day.

Today is Pentecost. Today is the day in the Christian year when we remember the coming of God's Holy Spirit. No one who places his or her faith and trust in Jesus Christ will ever be alone again.

Our Bible lesson today is from that portion of John's Gospel **known as Jesus' farewell address**. In his address, Jesus is preparing his followers for their role as the founding evangelists of the Church. Jesus and his followers have grown very close. They have spent a great deal of time together over the course of the last three years. In the passage we read today Jesus reassures his followers in **John 14:18-19 (NRSV)** saying, **“I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live.”** As Jesus spoke those words to his followers, I'm pretty sure they didn't fully realize what Jesus was saying. They didn't realized that in just a few short days **Jesus was going to be crucified** on a cross, **and that after three days** God would raise him from the dead, **and then shortly thereafter** Jesus would ascend into heaven. **But as we read Jesus' words** today, we have the benefit of 20/20 hindsight. We know that the world can't see Jesus. **Ever since Jesus ascended into heaven**, no one has seen Jesus with the eyes in their head. But many millions have seen Jesus, just as we see him today, **with the eyes** of our hearts. We find great comfort in knowing that because Jesus lives, we also will live. I often quote **Jesus' promise** there in verse 18 at funerals to reassure mourners of the hope of new life we share in Christ Jesus. We're not orphans; we're brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. We're sons and daughters of God most high.

More than a decade ago, while my oldest son Tim was deployed with his Army Reserve's unit in Iraq, the pastor of my home church asked me to pray at our community's **Veterans' Day service**. While I felt honored, I also felt an awesome sense of responsibility. I would be praying not just for my family, but also for the dozens of families in our community who's loved ones were also serving in harm's way. **In such times**, it would be easy to slip in unabashed patriotism and pray **O Lord, bless our nation and curse our enemies**. **But such a prayer** wouldn't be true to our calling as disciples of Jesus Christ. **So, after praying** for safety for the troops, and praying for comfort for their families, and praying for wisdom for our nation's leaders to search for the way of peace, **I then went on to pray for "our enemies,"** saying,

Now Eternal Father, we remember that your son Jesus taught us to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us. But we confess that it isn't easy to love our enemies. Nevertheless, today we also pray for Al-Qaeda and the Taliban; and we pray for the Iraqi insurgents and the radical Islamist. May your Holy Spirit work in their lives and likewise draw them in the way that leads to peace.

Oh, if only all people would love the Lord their God with all of their heart, and soul, and strength. If only they would see Jesus with the eyes of their hearts and cry out "**My Lord and my God.**"⁴

The ways of this world lead to nothing but isolation, and fear, and loneliness. **But Jesus is constantly reassuring us that we're never alone.**

End II.

⁴ John 20:28

Move III.

So, the Holy Spirit comes and makes a home with us. Ever since that first day of Pentecost, no one who has ever looked at Jesus with their eyes of their heart has ever been alone again. **The fullness of God** is constantly right there by their side. God's presence today is a spiritual presence.

Our worship space is alive today with the color of the Holy Spirit, red. Today is a high-holy day in the life of Christ's Church. Today is the day that we remember that God is with us, yesterday, today, and forever. **Pentecost**, unlike Christmas and Easter, has managed to escape the clutches of commercialism. The world takes no note of this day, **but we who are** the members of the Church of Jesus Christ do. **God came to be** with humankind for a season at Christmas, **but God came** to be with humankind forever at Pentecost.

That our God is one God in three persons is a mind-boggling reality. The mind in our head can't grasp the trinity, but the mind in our heart does. **When we think of** the Holy Spirit, we think of wind and fire. **We think of the dove descending** from heaven at Jesus' baptism. We think of the Holy Spirit working within the lives of all of us who have been baptized and are part of Christ Church universal and triumphant.

In John 14:23 (NRSV) Jesus says, **“Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.”** When that verse says, **“and we will come,”** that verse is not limiting the coming to just one person of the trinity. At Pentecost, the fullness of God came and made a home with all of those who loved Jesus. **The fullness of God** is still coming and making a home with believers today. When God comes, all of God comes.

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Back in the early 90s, Amy Grant and Chris Eaton wrote a song that's normally associated with Christmas. Many know the song as "**Mary's Song**," but the words of the chorus are just as fitting at Pentecost as they are at Christmas. Listen as Amy Grant sings the chorus of "*Breath of Heaven*:"

{Play "*Breath of Heaven (Mary's Song) Super Short.mp3*" [0:33]}

Breath of Heaven
hold me together,
be forever near me,
Breath of Heaven.

Breath of Heaven.

There are times when it feels like our world is spinning out of control all around us. Even in a crowd, we can feel detached and all alone. **So, the Holy Spirit does come and makes a home with us.**

End III.

Conclusion: Social media supposedly has us more connected than ever, and yet loneliness still has reach epidemic proportions. **Yes, nothing's worse than being all alone.** It's like as if your MIA, and no one knows if your alive or dead. **But Jesus is constantly reassuring us that we're never alone.** Jesus promises never to leave us, and never to forsake us, even if we're missing in action. **So, the Holy Spirit does come and makes a home with us.** The fullness of God comes and lightens our darkness, and fills us with God's holiness. "*Breath of Heaven*" hold us together, be forever near us, Breath of Heaven.

Closing Prayer: Let's pray. Breathe of Heaven, lighten our darkness, be forever near us, and hold us together. May we be for the whole world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood. **Amen!**

10:30 Closing Hymn: "*Spirit Song*" Red Hymnal No. 347

Both Verses

Sending Forth: Are you lonely? Are you blue? Then let the breath of God come down upon you. Go forth, as the holiness of God pours down over you and flows on out into the world all around you. **Amen!**