

Sermon 23.05.07

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John 14: 15-21

If you love me and obey the command I give you, I will ask the One who sent me to give you another Paraclete, another Helper to be with you always - the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept since the world neither sees her nor recognizes her; but you can recognize the Spirit because she remains with you and will be within you.

I won't leave you orphaned; I will come back to you. A little while now and the world will see me no more; but you'll see me; because I live, and you will live as well. On that day you'll know that I am in God, and you are in me, and I am in you. Those who obey the commandments are the ones who love me, and those who love me will be loved by Abba God. I, too, will love them and will reveal myself to them.

SERMON

“Loosen your grip on the yoke,” the instructor told her, as the clouds outside the window grew more ominous by the minute.

Cameron Trimble, pilot and faith leader was early in her aviation instrument certification training when she learned that lesson.¹ (IMAGE)

‘If you tighten your grip on the yoke, you reduce the aerodynamics of your aircraft’, (IMAGE) preached the instructor, telling her: “You, as the pilot, actually make the flight less safe, steady, and stable. So, remember: When the going gets rough, fly loose on the yoke.”

When the going gets rough, fly loose on the yoke. Don’t hold on quite so tightly. (IMAGE)

Somehow, that image resonated with me as I imagined what it was like for the disciples, both in hearing this instruction from Jesus as life became more and more turbulent and unpredictable, and then after his death and resurrection as they were living into a new way of life.

During that flight, Trimble looked out the window and couldn’t see anything, she had no sense of the horizon, whether her wings were level, or their distance from the ground. They were in true “instrument conditions,” relying on the flight deck panel to indicate that they were safe.

“These machines are made to fly, ” her instructor told her.

They are designed to maintain steady, stable flight.”

IMAGE - What keeps us steady during times of disorientation and turbulence?

There’s another helper coming - that’s what Jesus tells his disciples.
Don’t lose heart when the turbulence comes.

When you’re so knocked off balance by my death - remember, there’s more.

I’ve been your helper, your advocate - Jesus implies when he says ‘I will ask the One who sent me to give you another Paraclete, another Helper to be with you always’

Jesus is preparing his followers for what is to come.

¹ Trimble, Cameron. “In times of turbulence, fly loose” *Oneing* Vol 11, No. 1. A Publication of the Center for Action and Contemplation. Pages 33-37.

Another Helper will be with you always.

(IMAGE) “I won’t leave you orphaned; I will come back to you... On that day you’ll know that I am in God, and you are in me, and I am in you.”

As Trimble continued that flight, storm clouds brewing in front of her, the wind came up suddenly, tossing them all over the place. (IMAGE) Every instinct in her said to grip the yoke tightly to control the plane. But she kept only her fingers on the yoke, offering small corrections to ensure they maintained a wings-level attitude. Within ten minutes, they broke through the clouds, transitioning safely to the other side.

When you hit turbulence, fly loose. (IMAGE)

Trimble uses the metaphor of how we grip the controls in looking at our world today. What a turbulent time - wind tossing us around. It’s hard to know which way is up. In just the past few years, we’ve experienced economic meltdown, climate countdown, racial throwdown, political break-down, and religious letdown. We are living through the breakdown and breaking open of much that has defined modern life.²

Not so different from the life of those early disciples. I can only imagine they felt like they weren’t going to make it through that turbulence.

Trimble reminds us - In the face of such extraordinary transition, when anxiety of the unknown grips us tightly, it’s natural to grasp for solutions to our problems.

In this way, we tightly grip the yoke of our families, communities, churches - trying to regain control of people and systems that have changed in ways that are at times unrecognizable.

Somewhere inside of us, we know that no amount of control will create the conditions needed to traverse these rough winds of change.

Yesterday, in the life-cycle workshop with Tom Beers, we learned about the natural change that happens in all churches - the growth and decline, and ways to stay vibrant and alive.

² IBID.

Knowing who we are, why we're here and what we believe - rooted in Christ - having that clear vision as a community - that's what guides us through the turbulence.

We have work to do - and an important step in re-visioning who we are in this world that looks very different from even 4 years ago - is to celebrate what we're doing well. To celebrate the ways that the Spirit is moving in us and through us. Celebrate the ways we are an authentic, Christ-centered community together. Celebrate the love and the ways we live it out.

As we continue to figure out what it means to be a church that is alive and vibrant - we need to look to one another and to the Spirit to guide us. Not to look back, holding onto nostalgia, but to be clear about what's here and who we are called to be.

When you hit turbulence, fly loose.

Jesus knew what was coming for the disciples, and I believe knows what's here for us now.

Don't lose heart when the turbulence comes. When you're so knocked off balance by my death - he told his followers - remember, there's more.

(IMAGE)

I won't leave you orphaned; I will come back to you...On that day you'll know that I am in God, and you are in me, and I am in you.

What a promise.

What steady words.

Jesus gives flying instructions.

Follow my command to love (IMAGE - BLANK CLOUDS)

Be on the lookout for another helper - one the world doesn't recognize. But you'll know her, you'll know this Spirit - because she'll be in you.

Your task? Our task?

Love. Trust this Spirit to guide.

As that pilot instructor told Trimble years ago: If you tighten your grip on the yoke, you reduce the aerodynamics of your aircraft.

The Spirit blows where she wills. The Spirit is untameable. She guides.

Parenting, too, feels like flying in the dark - in rough winds, sometimes.

Rebekah, Ankit, Nathan and Allison, Sally and Mark -

Just a few minutes ago in the presence of this rag-tag bunch, collectively known as University Mennonite -

You offered Annie, Vera and Eliana to the strong and tender care of God. And we, your church community, committed to share in your child's nurture and well-being.

We committed to helping you navigate the storms and to be present when the skies are clear.

Jesus tells us that the world won't recognize the Spirit - but she remains with us and is in us.

The Spirit is here, in our midst.

We are to hold the yoke loosely -
To Follow that command to love
To be on the lookout for the movement of Spirit.

As we move through all the new life that awaits us -

May we loosen our grip on the yoke, opening ourselves to the Spirit.

Opening our lives to love.