

May 27, 2012 Pentecost John 17:6-19

- My great grandfather died right after I became interested in being a pastor. I could have told him during our last visit at the Leader Nursing Home in Camp Hill, but I didn't realize in 11th grade how important that might be to him or later to me.
- Memorial Day has always been an important day for “goodbyes” and to remember those who have gone before.
- “Goodbyes” are important. They leave a lasting impression.
- We say “goodbye” in many different ways to family members, friends, coworkers, neighbors.
- What's the connection between saying goodbye and a relationship staying intact?
- Could it be the power of blessing?
- Can goodbye also mean, I will be with you in spirit? I care about you. Though I am not with you in body, I am pulling for you and hoping the best for you in my absence.
- Knowing the blessing of family and church family makes us stronger and helps us.
- Jesus blesses his followers before his death, after his death, and right before he returns to his Father. He says good bye, “I am leaving, but the Spirit will come and never leave you.”
- Pentecost reminds us that Jesus is with us in spirit and will never abandon us. He is with us.
- We are not alone—we are beloved.
- For Jesus, goodbye is a spoken blessing of “Hello, forever.”
- Baptism is a reminder of Jesus' farewell blessing and forever presence with us. Being anointed with the Holy Spirit is an eternal blessing. The presence of God's Spirit which never leaves us.
- Communion is a blessing each week
 - In it we bless each other with the blessing Christ has blessed us.
 - Communion is Christ being present to us.
 - Wherever we go, we take his presence with us. In every challenge, in every disappointment, in every moment of uncertainty and doubt.
- John makes clear that this presence is not passive but active. The Spirit advocates on our behalf. So Jesus' blessing is a promise of presence and support. “I will be with you. I will help you. You will not be alone. You are not alone.”

- One last detail. A blessing is only as strong as the relationship in which it is given. Otherwise it is only a faithless broken promise. So Jesus' blessing is a powerful, life changing blessing.
- Our relationship with Christ does not depend on us, but the faithfulness of God. The Word of God with water in Baptism and with bread and wine in Holy Communion assure us of his faithful presence. All we need is to receive it. To accept the Word of God on our behalf.
 - If we wish to bless as Jesus blessed, then our relationships must be strong.
 - As we move **beyond** our *own* convenience to care and show support for our children, our spouses, our friends, our neighbors, our coworkers, and co volunteers, we are people of blessing.
 - Sometimes this means we must take the initiative. We must take the first step. Yes, that makes us vulnerable, but we serve a Lord who defined “vulnerable” as *strength* not *weakness*—as *courage*, not *without options*.
 - In strong, caring relationships we have the power to bless just as our Lord has blessed us.
 - If a relationship is not strong and we wish it to be strong, then we simply need to invest the energy which will pay strong dividends for the rest of our lives. Let us not wait for the other to bless us, let us be the first to act. This is true in marriages, and friendships, and neighbors.
 - Let us surprise our enemies with a blessing. Even if they do not receive our blessing, we are blessed because all the universe was created to bless—not just to wait for a blessing. When was the last time you saw a tree that charged for its oxygen output or shade?
 - Any who will not or cannot bless are out of sync with God's design. Unfortunately those who withhold blessing will know very little blessing.
 - It is our job as the people of God to bless everyone as we are able so that the cycle of blessing may begin. After all, someone began the cycle of blessing for us.
 - The Spirit came at Pentecost so that we might know the blessing of God's presence and share that blessing.
- So let us go and bless family members, neighbors, and enemies. In doing so, we will be blessed, we will fulfill our purpose on this planet. Amen.