

THE SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION DAY.

St. John vi. 26 to xvi. 5



HERE is a great deal told in a little space in this Gospel. This Sunday comes in a season which is like no other in the history of the Church. For ten days the Apostles were left without a guide. Their Master had gone away from them and they knew that they could not expect to see Him again until He should come at the end of the world. His absence was not like that which they had known from time to time in the Great Forty Days. Then they did not know when He might appear to them. He came and went in strange and wonderful ways, but they must have felt that He was likely at any moment to stand among them. It was as with children at home whose father or mother are always near even if not present and may come in at any moment. But now after the Ascension they were as children whose parents had gone away on a journey. They were left alone, waiting till the Promised One should come whom He had said He would send. And this Gospel for this Sunday tells Who that Promised Comforter should be. It was the One proceeding—that is, coming—from the Father. Now, there are two important things told here: One is that the Holy Comforter was to come from the Father. He must then be a Person, equal with the Father, God, the Holy Spirit. The other is that the Lord will send that Person, and so the Son must be God as well as the Father. If Jesus had been only a man, however good, He not only could not have spoken thus certainly of what the Father would do, but He would never have said that He would send the Holy Spirit. Again we are to notice that the Lord calls Him the Spirit of Truth—the Spirit who not only is truth-telling, but is the Truth itself—that is, the Spirit who knows what is Truth. When men tell the truth, they can only tell what they know of the truth, as far as they know it. But the Spirit of Truth must be One who knows all truth, and must be One with God the Father Who only knows truly all truth.

Now why does the Lord tell His disciples these things? Not because at the time they could understand Him aright, for they did not. No doubt they believed Him and thought it very grand and beautiful, that which he said, but it did not sink into their hearts, so that when He was taken from them to be crucified, they could bear up bravely and confidently. He tells them it was to come back to them by and bye, and so it did. Very likely they began to remember this during these ten days of waiting. But they did not clearly remember or understand it till the Holy Spirit came on WHITSUN-DAY. Then it was all clear to them.

He told them beforehand so that when the Holy Spirit brought to their remembrance that He had told them beforehand how it would be, they could feel sure that it was the Holy Spirit who was speaking to them. He told them that men would persecute them, even to killing them, and that their own countrymen would put them out of the synagogues, that is, excommunicate them—deny them all rights of membership in the Jewish Church. When these things happened as they did, and as we read in the Book of Acts they did, then the Apostles remembered that Jesus had told them it would be so. More than that he told them that men would do this because they who did it knew neither the Father nor Himself. So, being persecuted and turned out of the synagogues, would not shake their faith. It might be hard to bear, but not nearly so hard, when they knew by this word of their Master that they were right, and those who were persecuting them wrong.

The whole teaching of this Gospel is, then, the wonderful fulfilment of the promises of Jesus, made while He was living the human life on the earth. All happened as He said it would. And this makes it certain that we can trust all other things He said about Himself, and that we can trust the Apostles in all that they wrote about Him. When St. John wrote this Gospel he was an old man, had lived more than fifty years after the Crucifixion, and he had full experience of all this that it would come true. He had seen other Apostles killed by those who thought they were doing God service—St. Stephen, the first martyr, and his own brother James, and St. Peter who had been with him in such previous and happy experiences as the special friends of the Lord.

And now, as he wrote, the Holy Spirit was bringing to his mind the very words of the Lord Jesus just as if they had been spoken yesterday. He was the last living witness, and his whole life as an Apostle had only made him perfectly certain of his Master's truth. He could not be mistaken or deceived, and this is why the enemies of the Gospel truth have been so earnest in striving to prove that this fourth Gospel of his was not written by him. But when one reads such sayings, one cannot help feeling that Jesus must have said them and St. John have remembered and written them, and that it was by the very help of the Spirit of Eternal Truth that this was done.

—N.Y. Churchman.

COREAN women, especially those of the upper classes, are hardly ever seen out in the day-time, and there are no means of reaching them except by lady missionaries. In the Anglican Mission the services of a number of ladies have been secured, and their hospital work is said to have been more successful than that of the men.