

## Cantate, A&D 2008

**John 16:5-15** But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' <sup>6</sup> But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. <sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. <sup>8</sup> And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: <sup>9</sup> concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; <sup>10</sup> concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; <sup>11</sup> concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. <sup>12</sup> "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. <sup>13</sup> When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. <sup>14</sup> He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. <sup>15</sup> All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

*In the Name of the Father and of the ✕ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

1 Innocent until proven guilty might get you quite a ways in an American courtroom, but it won't get you very far in the courtroom where the Lord is the judge. See, in this courtroom, God the Father sits as the judge of His creation, particularly of humanity. And God the Holy Spirit sits as the jury to convict or to acquit. But this is unlike any courtroom you've ever seen. The devil is the one bringing charges against you. His very name, Satan, means The Accuser. But he doesn't even need to present his case to the jury. The Holy Spirit knows the case against you.

2 That's what makes this different from a normal courtroom. You may be innocent until proven guilty in the American justice system, but not here. Here, you're guilty when you walk in. You come from a long line of guilty sinners, all descended from the first sinner, Adam. His guilt is your guilt. His sin is your sin. It's written deeper than your DNA and more permanently. It's inscribed more indelibly than if it were chiseled into your bones. It has corrupted your very nature. Sin is your condition and everyone in the courtroom knows this before you're even brought in.

3 What's worse, perhaps, not only is your nature sinful, but you are a sinner. You sin by doing what you shouldn't and not doing what you should. Your thoughts and desires are soiled with sin. And you can't hide these sins in your heart. The prosecution isn't lacking evidence. And the jury, the Holy Spirit, sees right into your heart. Every impure thought, every whispered word, every unholy action is visible to the One sent, as Jesus said in today's Gospel reading, to convict the world of sin. So repent of putting your trust and your hope for good in false gods. Repent of hiding sin in your heart, suspecting that what's unseen need not be confessed. Repent of impenitence, hard-heartedness, and pridefully presuming yourself innocent. The Holy Spirit, sent to convict the world of sin, sees your sin. Nothing is hidden from Him.

4 He sees your sin, and yet He does not convict you of sin. Jesus said, “concerning sin, [the Helper, the Holy Spirit convicts] because they do not believe in me.” You are not convicted. You have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ. He is your court-appointed Defender. Sure, you are guilty, but your guilt has been taken away and given to Him. You deserved a death sentence, but He was sentenced in your place. The One who speaks in your defense is the One who has taken away the consequences for your guilt. The death of Jesus on the cross takes away condemnation for those who have been given faith in Him.

5 You have been convicted, but not of sin. You have been convicted of righteousness. You are declared righteous. “Now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe” (Romans 3:22). It is to your advantage that the One who was crucified for you, who rose for you, also ascended for you. When He went away, he sent the Holy Spirit, the Helper. And the Holy Spirit has come to convict the world of sin and to convict you of righteousness. He has given to you the faith required of you, the faith in Jesus Christ, your Defender who died as payment for your sin. Through the waters of Holy Baptism, you have been given faith in Jesus. Through the preaching of the Gospel, through the hearing of the Word of God, you have been given faith in Jesus. So now there is no condemnation, no guilty verdict, no death sentence for you.

6 The mouths of the accuser and his legions of demons are silenced, choked out by the blood of Jesus, your Advocate. The Holy Spirit, sent to convict the world of its sin, sent to convict those with faith of the very righteousness of God, sent to deliver this very faith, is the one sent to convict the world concerning judgment, as well. “Concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” The tables of the divine courtroom are turned. You who walked in guilty are no longer guilty. Your Defender is He who was guilty in your place. And the Accuser, who sought to bring charges against you, he is the one judged.

7 You have not come into a courtroom today. You have come into a sanctuary, a holy place. You have come into the presence of the eternal, Triune God, not as one who need fear His judgment, but as one invited into His presence free from judgment. Here, the Helper whom Christ has sent, has gathered you. You are here as guests of the Lord, no longer as those accused. And here, the Lord lavishes gifts upon you. Here, you who bear His name, whom He has claimed as His own through the waters of Holy Baptism, here you hear the word that declares your sins forgiven. Here your faith is guarded by the proclamation of the very Word of God

from His appointed mouthpiece. Here you receive forgiveness. Here you receive salvation. Here you get a foretaste of the eternal life that is yours.

8 Here you see the Lord face to face in His holy Supper. Here you touch and handle things unseen, the very body and blood of Jesus Christ. In this blessed meal, the promised Helper, sent to you for your advantage, feeds you with salvation. The Spirit of truth comes glorifying Christ. He takes what belongs to Christ and delivers it to you. This meal, brief as it is, infrequent as it must seem even once a week, teaches you patience. As you eat the body of Jesus and drink His blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins, you taste a little bit of heaven. This meal gives you hope beyond your everyday reality. And hope this certain enables you to endure your days, whatever they bring. Hope this certain enables you patiently to endure until the day when He who ascended and sent the Holy Spirit to you comes Himself to gather you to Himself. Until that day, the Holy Spirit, the Helper, guides you in all truth, guarding the faith He has given to you. Until that day, the Holy Spirit, who because of Jesus has convicted you righteous, He is your Helper.

*In the Name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

*Soli Deo Gloria*  
Pastor Jeff Hemmer  
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