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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
May 31, 2020
Pentecost Sunday

Scripture Lessons: Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:1-21

Hymns: 225:1-3; 232:1,2,4; 307; 309

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: John 16:5-11

“But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’⁶ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.⁷ 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 depart, I will send Him to you.⁸ And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:⁹ of sin, because they do not believe in Me;¹⁰ of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more;¹¹ of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Pentecost – Festival of the Holy Spirit --

It was a remarkable event to be sure. Jesus had promised that, along with the Father, He would send the Holy Spirit. And so on Pentecost the Spirit was poured out upon the disciples, upon the world! The words of our text reference that event even though they

were spoken the night before Jesus died, and not after His resurrection or in connection with Jesus' Ascension. There is certainly a great deal of material for preaching on the Pentecost event that happened 10 days after Jesus' ascension. There were the tongues of fire suddenly appearing over the heads of the Apostles! And the sound of the rushing mighty wind. There were pilgrims present in Jerusalem from many different countries for the big Pentecost festival. The Apostles all began to speak in these different languages of the world, and these people had the thrill of hearing the Word of God spoken to them in their mother tongues! The Apostles were declaring to the people the wonderful works of God! The final outcome of the day was that about 3000 people were baptized in Jesus' name. That all speaks very well of the power of the Holy Spirit and a magnificent outpouring of grace for the salvation of many, many souls.

What does that mean for us today, 2000 years later? That is what Jesus' words spoken 51 days earlier convey to us. There is a meaningful Pentecost message for us that we might know –

THEME: The Powerful Presence of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus would have us appreciate --

I. The Advantage of the Spirit's Presence.

Our text opens with a remarkable statement made by Jesus. Jesus knew it was time for Him to allow Himself to be captured, tortured, crucified, die and be buried. Jesus knew it was time for His visible presence on earth to be drawing to a close, and His active ministry with this special group of disciples to come to its conclusion. Jesus knew all this would be very upsetting for His disciples, and He was preparing the disciples for what they were going to experience in coming hours, days, weeks, and even years that lay ahead of them. These are some remarkable words which are now before us in our text with a great and important message for us as well.

John 16:5-7 “But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’⁶ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.⁷ 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 depart, I will send Him to you.

It may be as hard for us as it was for the disciples to imagine how it wouldn't be a greater advantage for Jesus to continue His visible presence on earth until the end of time. However, Jesus said the advantage was in His visible presence coming to an end, and the age of the Holy Spirit commencing. We are all familiar with some of the advantages of Jesus' departure and returning to His Father. It had much to do with His mission of saving a world full of sinners being fulfilled, of saving **us** from death and hell. It is good for us to be reminded with Jesus' ascension He is present with us everywhere, and that is important for us. It is wonderful to know that Jesus, also according to His human nature, is at the right hand of God making intercession for us.

But wait, there's more! As wonderful as those advantages are of Jesus going to the Father Jesus speaks to us of the advantages of the coming of the Holy Spirit, advantages God bestowed upon His Church on earth beginning with that outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Jesus used an interesting word for the Holy Spirit, one translators struggle with. Some, as we read in our text, use the word "Helper." Others choose the word "Comforter." These don't really cover everything that is included in the original so still others simply bring the Greek over to the English and call the Holy Spirit the Paraclete.

The disciples would be in need of comfort, and the Holy Spirit would provide that **comfort** for them by opening their understanding so they would comprehend the Scriptures. Then they would see the wonder of the salvation that Jesus brought into the world, fulfilling all the Old Testament prophecies.

The Spirit would also be a great **Helper** for the disciples as they began their ministry as witnesses of the truth of Jesus, granting them strength and boldness to speak the Word before the people. What a wonder it was that we read of already this morning when they boldly proclaimed the law and the gospel to the crowds gathered in Jerusalem. Without the promised coming of the Holy Spirit that wouldn't have happened.

But there is still another role of the Holy Spirit this word “Paraclete” includes, that is the function of advocate or intercessor. This isn’t a duplication of Jesus’ priestly office before the throne of God. Jesus’ intercedes for us by the merits of His sacrifice, without which we have no access before the throne of God. The Spirit takes our inadequate efforts at prayer and presents them in perfect form before God. Paul wrote of this in his epistle to the Romans: *“Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”* ²⁷ *Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”* (Romans 8:26-27)

Many people have expressed to me their feelings of inadequacy when they are trying to pray. I think we have all felt that. Sometimes, even with the sincerest intentions, we make requests of God that would not serve for the ultimate good and blessings of those concerned. We are spiritually short-sighted. And yet the Lord urges us to turn to Him in prayer and to cast all our cares upon Him because He cares for us, for each and every one of us. (1 Peter 5:7) With Jesus sending His Spirit we have this super advantage in prayer: the Spirit fixes our prayers and makes them perfect in expression, appealing to God beyond any human words, and AND perfectly in line with the will of God.

So we enjoy these glorious gracious advantages of the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit **comforts** us, even as He comforted the disciples. He comforts us with the gospel of a crucified and risen and ever-living Redeemer who gives us peace and the hope of everlasting life! He grants us His **help** as we struggle through this life in so many ways. When we are sick, when we are struggling with temptation, when we are struggling with doubts, when we are facing the end of our lives, the Spirit is with us bringing us His power.

All these are advantages of the coming of the Holy Spirit; advantages of which we would be deprived had Jesus remained, and the Holy Spirit had not been poured out on Pentecost! And remember the advantage of help with witnessing! We are not inspired by the Spirit as the Apostles were, but the Holy Spirit does

bring to mind the truth that needs to be told. When we share the gospel with another sinner, the Spirit grants us boldness, and then grants our words power to take root in the heart of another. Isn't that a wonder of grace! It should allay any fears and feelings of inadequacy because it is God the Holy Spirit who works through the Word we speak. And that brings us to the rest of what Jesus had to say regarding --

II. The Convincing Power of the Holy Spirit.

John 16:8-11 And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ⁹of sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; ¹¹of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.”

Jesus speaks to us of the power of the Holy Spirit to work in this sin darkened world. We look at this world and we think that minds and hearts can't be changed. Jesus promised otherwise. Jesus assured the disciples, and so also us, that the Holy Spirit is fully capable of changing hearts and minds. Again we struggle with Jesus' words because of the shortfalls in translation. We read “convict,” and we think of a courtroom and a judge declaring someone guilty. That is reinforced in our thinking with Jesus with saying the Spirit will convict the world of sin! And it really seems to make the case when Jesus ends with the concept of judgment! Let's think of this “convict” more in the sense of a strong held belief or understanding rather than a finding of guilt or innocence. We use the word “conviction” in that sense, and that is exactly what the Holy Spirit is accomplishing in the world. He *convinces* the world regarding the truth about sin and righteousness and judgment.

Because the world does not know God and refuses to look to Jesus for forgiveness, the unbelieving world will know the guilty conscience sin brings. The force and power of the law stands. It does convince mankind, in spite of their denials, that they are guilty before the Lord. Apart from faith in Jesus there is no escaping sin and its curse and condemnation.

The righteousness of Christ is real. It is the only real righteousness that avails before God. The fake, work righteousness of this world is a vain attempt at attaining that which the corruption of sin shall always deny man. We cannot reach the moral perfection that the false gods of Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism promise. As much as man may attempt to be good, **sin** remains a part of our nature that plagues all mankind day after day. What God declared of humanity remains true. *“They have all turned aside, They have together become corrupt; There is none who does good, No, not one.”*

(Psalm 14:3)

No true righteousness exists except that which is of Christ, who alone kept the law of God perfectly, and who, as the spotless Lamb of God, paid the price for sin once and for all. It is this righteousness that Jesus presents before the throne of God. It is this righteousness revealed in the gospel that the Holy Spirit lays before the world in and through us. Whether they believe it or not it is laid before the people of this world. It is as Paul wrote to the Corinthians: *“For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.¹⁶ To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life.”* (2 Corinthians 2:15-16)

Finally, the world is convinced regarding judgment because Christ is victorious. The ruler of this world, that old evil foe, he has been defeated. The false promises of the devil will disappear as a vapor, and all the world will stand before the Lord Jesus and every knee shall bow before Him, and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:10, 11)

Maybe this all seems kind of abstract until we bring back to our minds exactly what happened on that Pentecost Sunday when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the Apostles. We already read many of Peter’s bold words presenting the truth of God. But then what? We see all these things Jesus spoke of. The **convincing power of the Holy Spirit stands out!** We read in Acts chapter 2: *“Now when they heard this, (that is Peter’s sermon) they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’³⁸ Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of*

the Holy Spirit.’ ... ⁴¹ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.”

(Acts 2:37-38, 41)

We read that and think about how amazing that *was*, but we ought not think the Spirit’s power was limited to 2000 years ago! The Spirit hasn’t changed. Jesus’ promise hasn’t changed! The Spirit continues to work powerfully, convincing people, opening minds, and changing hearts.

This is how it happened that you know and believe that Jesus is the Christ your Savior. And when you share your faith, when you tell others of the love of Christ Jesus and the salvation we have in His name, the Holy Spirit abides with us and brings His power to bear.

“The Spirit by His heav’nly breath Creates new life within;
He quickens sinners from the death Of trespasses and sin.
All hail the day of Pentecost, The coming of the Holy Ghost!”

(The Lutheran Hymnal 232:2)

AMEN.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans15:13)