

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
www.lutheranlccf.org
Pentecost Sunday, May 31, 2020

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 225, 226:1, 231, 236, 234.

Lessons: Genesis 1:1-2, Acts 2:1-24, John 14: 12-21.

Sermon Text: John 15:26-27

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltrittter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

One Bible scholar has counted 32 different English names for the Holy Spirit, using the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, published in 1946. This was not a popular English translation among conservative Lutherans, but has been widely used by many American churches.

Today, Pentecost, is called the Festival of the Holy Spirit. The reason for that is obvious from our Epistle lesson. Today we look at

THE WORK OF THE HOLY GHOST

- 1. He will testify about Jesus.**
- 2. Jesus' followers must then testify about Jesus.**

The most common words used in Scripture for the Holy Ghost are Counselor, the Helper, Advocate, The Holy Ghost, The Holy Spirit and just "Spirit".

Although Jesus has ascended into heaven, he does not leave his followers alone and helpless to do his work. The work that was left to us – that is, to you, – is preaching the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins to all nations and making disciples of people from all nations, including from your own neighborhoods. That work is to be done by proclaiming, teaching, preaching the Gospel and the sacrament of Baptism, which are means of grace, the means by which God shares and spreads his kingdom and delivers his undeserved love and mercy to mankind. He told the disciples that he would ask the Father to give them another helper, another Counselor – the Holy Spirit – in addition to himself. The Holy Spirit would be with them forever, and be especially beneficial as long as they are on earth. The Greek word for "Counselor" here literally means someone called to a person's side to help, so "helper" or "comforter" are also appropriate translations. This particular word means one who pleads another's cause before a judge, counsel for defense, an advocate.

Jesus was the only Helper the disciples needed. But he had told them he was going where they could not yet follow. That meant that he would bodily, physically ascend into heaven, which he did 40 days after he rose from the dead. So he and the Father would give them another Helper, namely, the Holy Spirit. The Spirit would always help them as they went about their work for Jesus and expressed their love for Jesus.

And how do the disciples, and all followers of Jesus, including us, express our love for Jesus? We want to do – and do – what Jesus wants us to do. We want to follow Jesus, and that means following truth. While we are reaching out to tell people about Jesus and to make disciples of them, we must be ***"teaching them to obey everything [Jesus has] commanded."*** Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV)

In our sermon text, Jesus is repeating what he said earlier in this chapter, as you heard in our Gospel lesson. ***"If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you."*** John 14:15-17 (NIV)

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth, just as Jesus is the Truth, and the Way, and the Life. The Spirit, who is God with the Father and the Son, keeps us connected with Jesus.

Jesus promised to send the Counselor to help his disciples. Earlier he said the Father would send the Spirit. This time he said he would send the Spirit of truth. The words reinforce the oneness of the Father and the Son. They witness to the three persons who are one God.

Through the Spirit, who would come from the Father and the Son, the disciples would learn about Jesus as they had never learned before. The Spirit would testify to them about Jesus, calling to mind and giving meaning to all that Jesus had done and said among them. Then they, the men Jesus had chosen as his apostles, would testify about Jesus. Now at the time Jesus spoke the words in our text, this was only the apostles because he was in the upper room with them where he instituted the Sacrament of the Altar for their comfort – assuring them of the forgiveness of their sins.

Luke records this event and these words of Jesus were given not only to the eleven apostles, but to all that were with them: ***“Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, ‘This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.’”*** Luke 24:45-49 (NIV)

We have in our sermon text the comforting promise of Christ concerning the Holy Spirit and his testimony. The Comforter, the Helper, the Guide, whom he has promised them, will come to them with power. Christ will send him from the Father, his Father, for he is the very Son of God. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of Truth.

This happened visibly on Pentecost. The teaching of the eternal Gospel and revealing of truth and the glory of God to the hearts of the believers is his principal work. He is sent by the Son, but proceeds also from the Father. There is the most wonderful intimacy between the three persons of the Godhead.

When Jesus says that he will send this Spirit of Truth, we understand that he is speaking of the mission of the Spirit. Jesus sends him for a mighty work and purpose.

Beginning on the day Jesus called his disciples to follow him, he was preparing them for that work.

On Pentecost, as you heard in our Epistle lesson, the Holy Spirit appeared with the sound of a mighty wind, and tongues like as of fire resting on their heads, and the gift of speaking in languages they had never learned so that people from other nations could hear the marvelous news about Jesus.

That special out pouring on Pentecost was a miraculous and unique event and signaled what has been called by some people ‘the beginning of the Christian church’ as the disciples testified to the truth of the Savior.

On that Pentecost day people from many nations and many languages heard the preaching of the Gospel. We have a great example of the kind of message the followers of Jesus gave to the people from all nations gathered on the first Pentecost day in Peter’s sermon, which begins in our epistle lesson and continues for about 26 verses, almost to the end of the chapter. You heard just part of that sermon in our Epistle lesson.

That is one way the Holy Spirit testifies about Jesus. We have an even more permanent way in the Bible. Scripture itself assures us that ***“Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”*** 2 Peter 1:21 (NKJV) We have learned that ***“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.”*** 2 Timothy 3:16 (ESV)

On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit spoke directly through the followers of Jesus.

The process up to this day is essentially the same, though less spectacular. Through the witness of the Apostles, that is, through the inspired Word of God, the Spirit comes to us and shows us Jesus. Then we witness to others, and the sequence repeats. So God has preserved and extended his church through the ages through the work of the Holy Spirit causing the Holy Scriptures to be written down for our learning.

After the revelation of Christ, after the open preaching of the Gospel before the world, there is no longer any excuse for unbelief.

Christ earned and offered full atonement, complete forgiveness, for all sins. In rejecting him people also reject his atonement. Because of this, their sins are bound on them with their full damnation. When people hate Jesus they also hate the Father, and in this way they load upon themselves a still greater measure of guilt. Jesus

told his disciples: ***“He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.”*** Luke 10:16 (NIV)

We must beware of rejecting any part of God’s Word.

Unbelieving people of the world despise and reject the love of God, the grace of God in Christ. They really hate God who offers them mercy and peace. Jesus had not only preached about the Father again and again, but he had revealed him also through his miracles.

Many had rejected and still reject this revelation in their unbelief. Seeing the Father in the person of the Son, they had hated Christ and thus also the Father, with whom he is one. There is no excuse for the world, but there is some measure of comfort for the disciples in the fact that the world's hatred has been prophesied. King David wrote in Psalm 69: ***“Those who hate me without reason outnumber the hairs of my head; many are my enemies without cause, those who seek to destroy me.”*** Psalm 69:4 (NIV) The boldness of the wicked world in praising and taking pride in sin and persecuting believers in Christ is growing even stronger. Truly, they hate Christ and all who believe in him without a just cause. Sometimes their hatred is hidden behind hypocrisy, but it is still there.

The world hated Christ, and today hates Christians.

That is why Jesus now says that the disciples will have the Holy Spirit with them and that he and they will both testify. The hatred of the world against the disciples will go on because they will go on with the testimony of Jesus. They now have the Spirit at their side.

Jesus does not tell us how successful our testimony will be. Nothing is said about this, but we are still to do the work of the Lord and find comfort in the power of the Holy Ghost and the Word of God.

“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” Hebrews 4:12 (NIV) We pray for the Word of God to do its work on the hearts of men.

Down to this day the Spirit uses the Word which he had the holy writers record and the church which he has built and maintained. The testimony of the Spirit and of the disciples goes out to the world. The disciples – and we – are the Spirit's instruments.

So when we testify, we are telling the truth – the truth about Jesus, God the Father and God the Holy Ghost. Think of a courtroom where someone promises to tell “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God” as we often see in old movies and television programs.

And because the Word of God is true, we take comfort that we are doing the Lord’s work, not just what we want to do.

So the message of the Counselor is really the message of eternal life.

Believe in the Lord Jesus and be saved.

Lord, let us always testify truly! Amen.