

The Festival of Holy Pentecost

May 31, 2009

The Great Comforter

John 15:26-27; 16:4b-11

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

It is very easy for preachers, new and old, to find something else to preach on. There is so much going on in the world that the temptation to preach on politics, social life, money, sports, you name it, is overwhelming and powerful. It would be easy to preach about the love of our parents on their respective holidays and say nothing of sin, redemption, and Jesus. And the devil would eat it up. He would love it if we heard about all of those things, for it means that we wouldn't hear about the one thing that we need the most. The One who redeemed us from our sins, Jesus.

The world would love it, too. For the world could then embrace the Church. To hear about all of those other things wouldn't bring the world to its knees. To hear about how loving mom and dad are would not convict us of our sins. It wouldn't show us that we need Christ. Just before our Lord spoke the words in our Gospel lesson for this Festival of Pentecost He said this:

**If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.**

Even some in the church say that we need to be more like the world so that we can bring people in. Let them hear what they want and we can fill the pews each and every week. If we only sang happier songs, if we only took out the confession of sins, because who really wants to admit that we are bad, if we preached that Christ wasn't the only way to heaven, our pews and seats would be packed.

On this day of Pentecost it is easy for us to put the ONE THING NEEDFUL on the back burner. To only focus our eyes on wind, flames, and supposedly drunk disciples without ever mentioning Jesus. To hear about speaking in tongues, performing miracles, or even seeing the future. Yes the Spirit has given those gifts, at times. But here in our Gospel Jesus speaks of why He sends the Holy Spirit.

**But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about ME. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.**

Even on this Pentecost Sunday, fifty day after Easter, tens days after our Lord's ascension into Heaven the Holy Spirit directs our eyes right back to Jesus. **He will bear witness about ME.** It means that the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the WHOLE CHRISTIAN CHURCH and KEEPS it with JESUS CHRIST in the one true faith. He speaks of Jesus. Why do we need Jesus?

It is the work of the Great Comforter to show us why we need Jesus.

**And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see Me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.**

The Spirit convicts us of sin. Because we don't believe in Jesus. He convicts us of righteousness because Jesus has gone to the Father for you. He convicts us of judgment, because the devil has been judged so that we can go free. That is the Spirit's work today. That is the message of the Church.

You're a sinner. We commit sins because we don't believe in Jesus. We don't trust Him. We don't love Him as we should. You think He's holding out on you. We think He is not giving us enough stuff so that we can be happy. You think you are smarter than Jesus, that you know

better than He does, that you even love yourself more than He loves you. That is why we sin. But Jesus still loves us.

The Law of God isn't just a bunch of rules. Something to break us down. To teach us who the boss is. For example what about slander and gossip? Why should we not do it? Because it only hurts people. Nothing good comes out of it. It may even hurt the gossiper more than the one gossiped about. How many times have you gossiped and regretted it? But how often have you regretted telling the truth? Spoken well of others? Even your enemies and regretted it? The Law is good. But we have broken it. We have acted foolishly. We have not trusted in God. We are sinners. Repent.

But the Holy Spirit convicts us of righteousness. Because Jesus has gone to the Father. You are made righteous! Jesus has taken on our flesh, made Himself a sacrifice for our sins, defeated death, Hell, and Satan, and has gone to Heaven to the Father for you. Heaven is opened to all believers. Jesus has done all these things because He loves you. Yes, we are sinners. But Jesus came for sinners. Died for sinners. Rose for sinners. That we are sinners drives us to the Gospel, for forgiveness and life. The point is that in Christ we are righteous. That in this world you will have tribulation. But take heart; Christ has overcome the world. That He is our advocate and Mediator. That you are forgiven because of His Work. You belong to Jesus.

By the Spirit's declaration He gives you what belongs to Christ: Jesus' righteousness, Jesus' holiness, Jesus' perfection, His love, grace, blessedness. And Christ takes what is yours: our sin, our guilt, our shame, our wretchedness, or mortality. He gives us access to the Father, to heaven. It's not a fair trade. It's mercy, given to us in Baptism, His Word, His Supper. Mercy without end. The Holy Spirit seeks to convict you, to convince you, that these gifts belong to you. That you are beloved by our heavenly Father.

But what would happen if the Holy Spirit only convicted us of our sins. Period. If we only heard about how loving we should be, but aren't. That we are never good enough. That the Ten Commandments were set

up everywhere, in our court houses, in our homes, in our workplaces, in our liquor stores and in our Walmarts. We would never escape the Law. The only thing we would know is that we are sinners.

Period.

And you know who would love it? The devil. Satan. Why? Because the Law always accuses. The Devil even used the Word to accuse and condemn in Scripture. He loves it because it shows us how rotten we are and that we really don't deserve Christ's gifts.

But He loves it for another reason too. The Devil twists the Law and the Gospel. He'll agree and say, 'Yeah, you are a sinner. You've got that right.' But then He goes on and says, 'Give it all you've got. You have just gotta try harder to keep the commandments.' By this Satan leads us into despair because we couldn't do it, or Satan leads us to self-righteousness in thinking I'm so much better than everybody else.

The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, but not like the devil. He doesn't use the Law as a promise to be obtained or a goal to be reached. It simply states the fact: I am a sinner. I do not fear, love, and trust in God above all things. I deserve to live eternally in hell. But the Holy Spirit's work doesn't stop there.

So the Spirit convicts us. "I'm a sinner." But we also say, "I'm baptized into Christ. I'm a child of paradise. Satan can no longer harm me. Christ has made me righteous." The Spirit's work always leads to Jesus and His work on the cross.

The judgment has been made. You are a sinner. But Jesus in the Word, Baptism, and Lord's Supper gives you His righteousness. You're innocent. You go free for the Lord took your place. So also, the devil is judged. He can bring no charge against you. For you belong to Jesus. For Satan has been bound and chained. Satan has nothing left. He is judged, the deed is done. And you are a child of the light. Innocent.

And so the Holy Spirit continues His Work: to convict us of our sins, of righteousness, and judgment. The Great Comforter does them because the One who sent Him loves us.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.