

## SERMON FOR SUNDAY, MAY 31 AND WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3, 2020

Pentecost A 2020 John 16:5-11 “The Holy Spirit’s Comfort 4U”

Dear fellow redeemed by grace through faith created by the Holy Spirit of God, today is the great Festival of Pentecost. The 50th day after Easter, the day Jesus’s promise to send the Holy Spirit, was fulfilled.

That fact is beyond dispute within the Holy Christian Church. Which is significant because there seems to be very little that is beyond dispute in the Christian Church these days!

But while ***the existence*** of the Holy Spirit is believed by all Christians, yet the work of the Holy Spirit – what the Holy Spirit purpose is and what He does – is a matter of dispute.

Entire denominations have been built around their particular understanding of the purpose and work of the Holy Spirit, and even within denominations – including our own – there are groups whose desire it is to focus more on the work of the Holy Spirit, and what He is doing in the church in these modern times.

The problem is that a misunderstanding of the Spirit’s role, and so most of the time the focus tends to be on individual gifts, abilities and experiences. In other words, what the Holy Spirit is ***doing to me, in me and through me, rather than for me.***

And so, today the incarnate Word of God, Jesus Himself – tells us of the work of God accomplished by the Holy Spirit.

He said: **And when He [the Holy Spirit] has come, 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.**

That is the work of the Holy Spirit, both then and now. If you want evidence of the Spirit’s work, that’s what you should look for.

So, what does Jesus mean? Well first, we heard that the Holy Spirit **convicts the world concerning sin**. Now, when Jesus told us that He would send the Holy Spirit, He called Him the Counselor, or the Comforter.

But notice how Jesus now says how this Holy Comforter does His comforting – He starts out by making you uncomfortable! He uses the Law to convict you of your sin.

And notice that the word there is **sin** – singular; ***not sins***, in the plural. The work of the Holy Spirit is to convict you of the sin that is the source of every sin – and that is the sin against the commandment from which all others flow. The First Commandment: **“You shall have no other gods.”**

For the truth is that you and I and everyone in the world do have other, false gods.

The Holy Spirit, in order to give us His true and lasting comfort, must first make us realize the deadly seriousness of this sin. Every time you sin, you are following not the true God, but another, false god. A god of your own making.

How so? When you let your thoughts and desires determine your action instead of God’s Word, you are your own, false god.

When you allow money or your vocation/job shape to give value to your life instead of God, mammon becomes your false god.

When you look for happiness in the things you own, they are your gods. If there is someone in your life you think you could not live without, he (or she) is your false god.

In other words, anything or anyone we rely on or look to for what we need – that is a god. And we have many.

If you doubt that, just consider – what happens when the things of this world and life are taken away from us? If you lose all your money, if you get cut off from your family, if you lose your job or have your possessions stolen.

How we then fret and complain, worry and whimper! Why? Because we've lost our gods, that's why. We've lost what we were relying on, and looking to for our comfort and needs.

It's been 10 long weeks since the Presidential order to stay at home forced us into a temporary exile. In that 10 weeks, many of our false gods have been shown to be powerless to help us when push came to shove.

I'm not saying that God sent this Pandemic, but I am saying that God can use the collateral damage to our worldly goods as an opening for the Holy Spirit to convict us of our sin against the 1<sup>st</sup> commandment.

The Spirit enables us to see that these gods are really no gods at all. They are only mirages of comfort – that we chase after, but which then disappear and do not deliver what we see or think!

And so the Holy Comforter begins His comfort by leading us to confession and repentance.

For there is only One who can deliver what we need. Only One who can truly comfort, and that is Christ. I declare to you today that you have more than enough God in the one, true God.

He is strong. He is faithful. He has given you His promise. He is all that you need. And so, to comfort us, the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin. **PAUSE**

But once He does that, the Holy Spirit doesn't leave us there – condemned by our sin, condemned by the Law! That is just the first step.

Next, He convicts us concerning righteousness, because Jesus has gone to the Father and we will see Him no longer. Now, the word "convict" is used there again for continuity, but that word can also be translated as "convince," or "bring to light."

And so, after the Holy Spirit "brings to light" our sin, He then "brings to light" our righteousness – not that we have any right-ness within ourselves! Rather, He points us to the perfect righteousness that is ours in Jesus Christ.

First, He directs our eyes to honestly look at ourselves, and then He directs our eyes to see Jesus. Not our physical eyes – for we can see Him no longer! No, He directs our eyes of faith to know and believe all that our Lord Jesus has done for us.

His birth for us. His perfect life for us. His death for us. His resurrection for us. His ascension for us.

Once the Holy Spirit makes us see the filth of the sin that lives in us, He then removes that sin from us. The work of the Holy Spirit is to call to mind and to deliver the forgiveness won for you in the death and resurrection of your Savior.

And so, He washes you clean in the water of Holy Baptism. He strips you of your filthy, stinking, sinful rags, and dresses you in the white robe of Jesus' perfect obedience and righteousness.

He takes your hard, stony, false-god-loving heart, and gives you a new heart, a new life, that you might be a new creation.

The Spirit does so by joining you so closely to Jesus that when the Father looks at us, He sees not us and our sin, but the perfection and love of His Son.

And as the Father tenderly calls us His children, we are enabled to respond, ***Our Father, who art in heaven.***

We sinners and enemies of God are adopted and taken into the very family of God! Not through anything that we can do, but purely by grace – by what God does for us.

And what a comfort that is! And the Holy Spirit wants us to be so comforted. And so that we may have this comfort, the Holy Spirit convicts us of righteousness. **PAUSE**

Only then does the Spirit begins His third task. Once He has led us to repentance, and then shown us the forgiveness of sin that is ours in Christ, **He then convicts concerning judgment, for the ruler of this world is judged.**

And here also is the sweet comfort of the Comforter, to convince our hearts that no matter what we see happening in this world, no matter the struggle or the pain in your life, that the ruler, or prince, of this world – the devil – has been utterly defeated.

And nothing, can ever change the fact that Satan's neck rests UNDER the foot of our risen, ascended Savior Jesus Christ!

Satan can kick and scream and threaten and tempt and make all kinds of trouble in our lives – but He does so as a crushed foe. Crushed by the cross. He has lost. The judgment has already been rendered and the verdict passed.

As we confess in the Creed, Jesus descended into hell, into the devil's own house, to proclaim His victory and strip the foe of his power! And so let Satan send your way whatever He will – He is powerless over you, and nothing can change that – ever.

For in Christ, you are victorious over Satan also! And it is important that you know that.

We don't want to belittle Satan and his work, but neither do we want to give him more credit than he's due! And so to comfort us, the Holy Spirit convicts of judgment.

And that, according to the Word of our Savior, is the work of the Holy Spirit. And it is all that we need! **PAUSE**

The past 10 weeks have been a trial for we Americans who are so used to taking going to church for granted. Much of what we had assumed to be normal has been overturned and now we are facing what the media likes to call a "new normal."

While many things have changed, the promises of our God haven't. We may be poorer materially, but as I said before, the Spirit can use tough times to make us richer spiritually.

The church isn't **reopening today, it never closed**. Sporting events got shut down. Businesses were shut down. People were furloughed or fired. Cabins up north didn't get opened. Science has been shown to be limited.

But one thing didn't change, the Triune God's love for you. A love which warns us against false gods and false comforts. A God who feeds you and guides you and loves you with a love that never diminishes.

God isn't an "Indian giver." He gave his Son on the Cross to atone for the sins of the world and He gave you His Spirit in Baptism and no Pandemic or any other thing in heaven or on earth can change those facts.

The work of the Spirit is – in all things – to lead us away from the world and ourselves and to Christ. And that is also the bottom line that we heard at the end of our reading from Acts today.

For after the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Church, the believers did not revel in the gifts that had been given to them. That was not their focus.

Rather, Peter stood up to preach. For this outpouring of the Holy Spirit had one purpose, that everyone who calls upon the Name of the LORD shall be saved.

And that is what the Holy Spirit desires – that all call upon the Name of the LORD Jesus – in repentance and faith – and so be saved. That is the work of the Holy Spirit, without whom not one of us would be saved.

And so if you are looking for evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in your life, don't look for extraordinary gifts, or experiences.

Rather, come here each week, for in Christ's Church you call on the Name of the LORD. If you're convicted of your sin, it is the work of the Holy Spirit in you.

Are you here seeking forgiveness and the food of immortality, the very body and blood of your Savior? Then it is the work of the Holy Spirit enabling to hunger and thirst for a righteousness that is not yours.

For His work is testifying to and drawing you to Christ. Setting the eyes of your heart and mind on Christ.

It is He who brought you to this Church. It is He that keeps you in this Church.

And it is He who will finally take you from this Church on earth, the Church Militant, to the Church Triumphant in Heaven.

So as we celebrate the Festival of Pentecost, this is what we celebrate! Not just an historical event, but the Lord's work now . . . His work in us, and in His Church, and in the world today.

His work of forgiveness, life, and salvation. His work which not only makes a difference in our lives here and now, but which will continue for eternity.

***So come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful, and kindle in them the fire of your love. Alleluia! Amen***