

O Comforter of Priceless Worth

Text: John 14:23-31

Hymn: "O God, O Lord of Heaven and Earth" (LSB 834)

*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all I have said to you.
John 14:26*

Today we celebrate Pentecost. As Christians, we believe in the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But sometimes we can be a little afraid of the Holy Spirit. After all, we don't know much about Him. We know a lot more (we think) about the Son and the Father. The Holy Spirit is even sometimes called the Unknown Member of the Holy Spirit. On one of Paul's journeys, the apostle came to Ephesus, found some believers there, and said, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They replied, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit" (Acts 19:1-3).

At the same time, you watch television or youtube videos and you see people, supposedly under the influence of the Holy Spirit, scream and wave their hands and pass out. And you wonder, Could this happen to me?!

I. Who the Holy Spirit Is

But we dare not ignore the Holy Spirit. And there is no reason to fear Him, since He's been sent to us by our dear Savior. Three thousand people on the first Pentecost did not fear Him (Acts 2:41). And neither should we.

The work of the Spirit is described for us by Jesus: "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (v 26). What about the Holy Spirit as the Third Member of the Trinity? We are told that He's sent from the Father in the Son's name. In the Nicene Creed, we confess that He "proceeds from the Father and the

Son.” Next week, we will confess that “the Father is not made nor created nor begotten by anyone,” that “the Son is neither made nor created, but begotten of the Father alone” and that “the Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son, neither made nor created nor begotten, but proceeding” (Athanasian Creed, verses 20-22). And that’s all we know, because that’s all the Bible tells us.

II. How He Comes to Us

But we hear people say, “I want more of the Holy Spirit. How do I get the Holy Spirit?” The Holy Spirit does not come to you as you’re walking down the street and suddenly falls on you and you begin to scream and wave your hands. God is a God of order. He works through means. So, for example, when you get sick and are made well, is it a miracle of God? No. Many times it is God working through the means of doctors and nurses and medicine. How does God raise children? Directly Himself? No, He uses the means of fathers and mothers to raise children.

So, how do we get the Holy Spirit? We get the Holy Spirit through the means of the preached Word and Baptism. I’m not going to talk about Baptism today, although each of our confirmands could tell you, without hesitation, that Baptism is not just plain water but it is the water included in God’s command and combined with God’s Word. As St. Paul says in Titus, chapter three, baptism is “a washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5).

But I do want to talk about the preached Word, by which I mean the Word of God both when it is spoken to you by a pastor, a parent, a teacher, a friend and when it’s printed out for you in the pages of a book. By the means of the Word, spoken or written, the Holy Spirit comes to us. Martin Luther said, “Whenever a man reads the

Word of God, the Holy Spirit is speaking to him.” And, “wherever the Word of God is, there the Holy Spirit must necessarily be.” The Holy Spirit comes to us through the Word of God. He comes to us.

III. What His Work Is

Now Jesus tells us more about the Holy Spirit in John 15: “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*” (John 15:26). In chapter 16, Jesus tells us, “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. *He will glorify Me, for He will take what is mine and declare it to you*” (John 16:13-14).

The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. He has been sent to us and He comes to us through the Word, not with a new revelation but simply speaking to us through the words of Jesus that are spoken by the authority of the Father. The Holy Spirit comes for one main reason: To point us over and over again to Jesus Christ. To glorify Him. To tell us the truth about Him so that we know our salvation.

The Holy Spirit is the Teacher of the Church. And He shows us our Savior. He helps us to understand. He creates faith in our hearts, so that we believe in Jesus Christ as the One who died and rose again for us. And He teaches us what Jesus wants us to know and to remember.

IV. How We Get in His Way

So, we know a little about the Holy Spirit as a member of the Trinity and how He comes to us and what His work is. So we have to ask one other question: How do we

get in His way? We get in His way when we don't hear the Word of God. We get in His way when we don't come to church every week. We get in His way when we don't pay attention to the Word. We get in His way when we don't listen carefully when the Word is read and preached and taught. We get in His way when we let the things of the world crowd His Word out. We get in His way when we don't see to it that our children are in confirmation and learn their work or in Sunday School to hear the Word again. We get in His way when we set priorities that don't include the Word. Remember Mary and Martha? Mary sat at Jesus' feet to hear His Word. But Martha was preoccupied with fixing lunch, setting a different priority (Luke 10:38-42).

We get in the Spirit's way when we do not hear and cling to the Word. Because that's what the Holy Spirit wants to give you—the Word. The Holy Spirit wants to speak to you and tell you that you have a Savior, who loves you and died for you and rose again for you. He wants to speak to you to convict you of your sin, of setting wrong priorities and not listening, but He also wants to speak to you and remind you that all your sins are forgiven. He wants to speak to you and remind you that death has no hold on you. You have the gift of eternal life, won for you by Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit wants to speak to you and keep you strong in your faith. The Holy Spirit wants to work in you love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22). The Holy Spirit wants to remind you that God will keep all His promises and Jesus will come again to take you to Himself.

Afraid of the Holy Spirit? Not a chance. That's why Jesus calls Him the Helper, the Counselor, the Advocate, the Paraclete. And that means the One who walks by our

side. Afraid of the Holy Spirit? No. Because we need Him to walk by our side now and always. Amen.

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