

Pentecost Sunday – June 9, 2019
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

John 15:26-27, 16:8-11 (NIV)

When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father--the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father--he will testify about me. 27) And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning. ... When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: (9) about sin, because people do not believe in me; (10) about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; (11) and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

Dear Friends,

Last week we joined together in praying, “Come.” We prayed, Come Lord Jesus to daily strengthen my faith and come, Lord Jesus to take me home on the last day. That prayer was a response to Jesus promise to “come soon.” In our Gospel lesson for today, Jesus shares another promise. He promised to send the Spirit of Truth to his disciples. In response to this promise we pray:

Theme: **Come, Spirit of Truth**

- 1. Testify to us about Christ**
- 2. Testify through us to the world**

Perhaps I should begin today by addressing the question, “who is the Spirit of Truth?” Jesus answers that question for us by telling us that he is the Advocate whom he will send and who goes out from the Father. We confess this truth in the words of the third part of the Nicene Creed. *“I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets.”*

We commonly speak of the Spirit of Truth as the Holy Spirit – the third person of the Holy Trinity. The Spirit of Truth - the Holy Spirit - is true God together with the Father who created us and the Son who redeemed us from our sins. Jesus promises: **When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father--the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father--he will testify about me.**

Jesus did not call the Holy Spirit by his proper name – rather he used a descriptive name. In Greek he called him the Paraclete – this word describes someone who gives assistance. Jesus promised to send a helper to comfort and aide his disciples while he was not physically present with them. The Holy Spirit keeps us safe until Jesus returns to take us to be with him. He does this by testifying of Christ – the one who took away the guilt of our sins and defeated death and the Devil for us.

He is the one who links us to Christ and his saving word while empowering us to live as Christ witnesses. He is the one who calls us to faith and who strengthens our faith through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. He is the one who is there for us day-by-day as we travel through this life in eager expectation of Jesus’ return.

When Jesus was with his disciples teaching them about all that was to happen, he said that the Holy Spirit “will testify about me.” In other words, while they had been learning about Jesus, the Holy Spirit would continue to teach them about Christ and his kingdom. And because he is “the Spirit of truth”, everything he teaches is true. He would remind them of Jesus’ words and he would even tell them what is yet to come.

And the Spirit did come to teach the Apostles, on the day of Pentecost and after. Sometimes the Spirit taught them through special visions. He also taught them when he inspired them to write down the words of the New Testament Scriptures. That is why we can accept all the Scriptures as true and without error. **“All Scripture is God-breathed.”** (2 Timothy 3:16) **“Men spoke of God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”** (2 Peter 1:21)

And that Spirit continues to testify to you and me through these same Holy Scriptures. After giving us a new birth in our baptism, he continues to teach us and deepen our understanding. He doesn't come as he did on the first Pentecost, with miraculous signs, wind and fire and tongues. He hasn't promised to do that. And we aren't told to expect that. He comes to us in the living and enduring word of God. Hopefully through that word you are gaining a greater understanding of God's saving work and a greater confidence in God's grace. Hopefully you are growing in appreciation for the victory Jesus won over Satan and what it means for your future. Hopefully through the word you are being enlightened about the nature of the true God and what it means to live as his disciple, in your home, in your marriage, in this world. In answer to the prayer, Come, Spirit of truth – testify to us about Christ -- Jesus has sent the Holy Spirit to testify to us.

There is much that we could say about the personal daily blessings that are ours through the Holy Spirit. But interestingly Jesus did not emphasize the personal impact the Holy Spirit would have on the lives of his disciples. He chose instead to emphasize the impact that the Spirit would have on the ministry of the disciples. He wanted them and us to understand that the Holy Spirit will advocate for us as we carry out his command to make disciples of all nations even as all our other needs are provided for us. So let's take a closer look at how the Holy Spirit helps us in our lives as witnesses for Christ in response to our prayer, Come Spirit of Truth – Testify through us to the world.

Jesus told his disciples that when the Spirit of Truth would come that they would also testify of him. Our Second lesson reported the fulfillment of Jesus' promises to his disciples. The Holy Spirit was poured out on them in an amazing fashion enabling them to declare the wonders of God in the native languages of visitors who had come to Jerusalem from around the world.

Jesus also explained what would happen when the Spirit of Truth would come. **When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: (9) about sin, because people do not believe in me; (10) about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; (11) and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.**

On the first Pentecost Sunday – the Holy Spirit worked through the witness of Peter and the other apostles to convince those who had not believed in Jesus of their sin. They proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus and pointed those who confessed their sins to believe in him and the righteousness and forgiveness that he offered them. About 3000 individuals were baptized and received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Through faith in Jesus they no longer had to fear the lies of Satan whom Christ had defeated.

Today we pray – Come Spirit of Truth and testify to the world through us so we might bring the Spirit's testimony to the world's ears. Christ entrusted his Church, believers, with the powerful testimony of law and gospel. The Church is to faithfully proclaim the convicting message of the law from the Bible, so that when sinners are crushed by it, it can also proclaim the comforting Good News that we have a Savior. That is the reason the Church remains in this world. That is our mission-- not to talk about saving the earth, but saving souls--- not to tell people what they want to hear but what they need to hear.

Of course, our Savior didn't call us to be witnesses because we're perfect. He didn't say “you must testify” because we are beyond hearing the Spirit's testimony for ourselves. We who are “in Christ” still live “in

the world” with all its temptations. We still sin. We still need the Spirit’s testimony in regard to sin, righteousness and judgment. That testimony crucifies our sinful flesh and destroys any false hope in our own righteousness. Then we rejoice even more in the Spirit’s testimony of the life-giving, good news that Christ is our Savior from sin.

Knowing that, we cannot be afraid to speak the Spirit’s warning to our world, whether it is spoken here from the pulpit, in our living room or in public when we are visiting with others. And we cannot be ashamed to speak of Jesus Christ. He is Salvation for the sinner; he is righteousness for the unrighteous; he is life for those who were condemned to die. And we cannot fail to hold to Jesus’ promise that the Spirit will be with us when we witness and will help us know what to say.

We weren’t with the disciples of Jesus when the Spirit was poured out on the first Pentecost. But Jesus has sent the Counselor to us as well. And like those first disciples, we are doubly blessed people. First we were called and enlightened by the testimony of the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit. We are then also sent out as his Church so that his testimony may be spoken in the world by us. On the day of Pentecost God equipped his New Testament Church with the fullness of the Spirit for its mission. When Jesus comes back, that mission will have come to its end. Today, we’re somewhere in between. But whatever the number of days that remain, now is the time to hear the testimony of the Spirit of Truth and to bear witness to it. Amen.