

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
www.lutheranlccf.org
Pentecost Sunday, May 19, 2013

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

Hymns: 224, 226:1, 228:1-5, 234, 231.

Lessons: Joel 2:28-32, Acts 2:1-21, John 14:1-24.

Sermon Text: John 14:25-27

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

The dove is a symbol used in the Scriptures for the Holy Ghost. That was especially evident at Jesus' baptism, when *"As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him."* (Matthew 3:16)

Today we remember

THE SPECIAL COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ON PENTECOST

- 1. Who the Holy Spirit, the Holy Ghost is.**
- 2. Jesus' promise to send the Holy Spirit.**
- 3. The fulfillment of that promise on Pentecost.**
- 4. The fulfillment of that promise for us.**

Jesus is gathered with his disciples on the same night in which he was betrayed, the evening we call Maundy Thursday. At this point in his teaching, Christ now tells his disciples *"the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."* He has been speaking about many things to them, much of which is recorded in John chapters 13 through 17. This would become a very stressful night, leading to Jesus' trials and execution. And of course, when stress comes after hearing important things, we tend to forget the important things we just heard. How could they remember everything? They wouldn't remember and understand everything then. But the Father, in Jesus name, would send the Holy Spirit to teach them everything and remind them of all Jesus had said. The sending of the Spirit from God on Pentecost had the special purpose of beginning that teaching.

Jesus, having now promised the "Counselor", also called the "Comforter" here in the King James Version of the Bible to his disciples, tells them also what special work the Spirit would do for them.

He had spoken many things to them during his ministry, and especially in recent days. And they had not grasped the importance and significance of all those things. So that same Comforter, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father would send in Jesus' name, would serve as their teacher, giving them the understanding of all things which they still had in their memory, and recalling to their minds such things as they had forgotten.

That promise comforted and encouraged the apostles, and that promise also serves for our comfort. With such a promise to back them up in their teaching, the apostles could not fail in their proclamation of the great truths of God.

Well, I think you have a pretty good idea about who the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God is. We confess our faith in him in the creeds. The Apostles' Creed is quite brief about the Holy Spirit. The Nicene Creed is much more expressive, telling us this about him as we confess our faith in him: "I believe in the Holy Ghost, The Lord and Giver of Life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, Who spake by the Prophets."

Luther's explanation of the third article of the Apostles' Creed concentrates on the Holy Ghost and his work when he asks *"What does this mean?"* I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church

on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church he daily and fully forgives all sins to me and all believers. On the Last Day he will raise me and all the dead and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.”

And, of course, Luther ends his explanation with the exclamation: “This is most certainly true.”

Of course, we accept without reservation that the Holy Spirit is true God, the third person of the Triune God, something we will address in more detail next Sunday, Trinity Sunday.

2.

Jesus promises to send the Holy Ghost to his followers.

There are many references to the Holy Ghost in the Bible. Nave’s Topical Bible finds 191 references in the Old Testament with 255 references in the New Testament. Of course, it is possible that careful study might find even more. The first reference is in Genesis 1:2: *“Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters”* and the last reference is in the fifth last verse of the Bible in Revelation.

Nave wisely includes references to God’s prophets, apostles, and evangelists, including Moses, through whom God told mankind very much, telling the Jews and us “this is what the Lord says”. Our Old Testament lesson from Joel tells us *“I will pour out my Spirit on all people,”* (Joel 2:28) words that Peter tells us were fulfilled on that first Pentecost.

Our sermon text is just one of many references to Jesus promising that the Father will send the Holy Spirit. On one occasion, as we read in John 7:37-39 (New International Version) *“On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, ‘If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.’ By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.”*

Shortly before our sermon text, Jesus told his disciples: *“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 14:16-17) Again we read: *“When the Counselor 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.”* (John 15:26) And John also records Jesus telling them: *“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”* (John 16:12-13)

Before he ascended into heaven, Jesus told his followers: *“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 24:49) We also find him saying: *“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”* (Acts 1:4-5) Then, just before he ascended into heaven he assured them: *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”* (Acts 1:8)

3.

In our Epistle lesson, the most familiar lesson from Pentecost, you heard of the most spectacular fulfillment of the coming of the Holy Ghost. On that day, he came first with the *“sound like the blowing of a violent wind [which] came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.”* (Acts 2:2) Then *“They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.”* (Acts 2:3) And third *“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”* (Acts 2:4)

Then, after the Holy Spirit moved Peter – and the others – to proclaim the mighty works of God, and many consciences were pricked we read: *“When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call.’ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, ‘Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.’ Those*

who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles." (Acts 2:37-43)

In those verses you hear perhaps the greatest work of the Holy Spirit: delivering the Word of God to mankind and working faith in their hearts and converting them to faith in Jesus Christ!

4.

These are the kinds of things that the Holy Spirit brings about, even for people today. So what is the fulfillment of Jesus' words for us today? What has the Holy Ghost done for you? The promises of Jesus also are for our comfort and encouragement.

Remember especially Luther's explanation: "the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith." That describes the entire process of bringing you to faith in your only Savior, Jesus Christ. We are also assured that the Holy Spirit "daily and fully forgives all sins to me and all believers." What marvelous comfort from the Counselor, the Comforter! And we confess that when our lifetime on earth is up "On the Last Day he will raise me and all the dead and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ."

All that the Holy Ghost does for you. And he does it through God's mighty power, power that is revealed in his Holy Word, the verbally inspired Old and New Testaments. *"All Scripture is God-breathed* [King James Version: *"given by inspiration of God"*] *and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."* (2 Timothy 3:16-17) And we read about those scriptures in 2 Peter 1:21 (King James Version) *"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."*

In the same way that the Holy Spirit backed up and supported and comforted the apostles, we may rely without the slightest hesitation and doubt upon the words that were written by the prophets, the apostles and evangelists, knowing that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Father and the Son, directed and inspired them. We are speaking, of course, of all the words of the Old and New Testaments.

And in conclusion today we pray with the hymn writer:

1. O Holy Spirit, enter in
And in our hearts Thy work begin,
Thy temple deign to make us;
Sun of the soul, Thou Light Divine,
Around and in us brightly shine,
To joy and gladness wake us.
That we, In Thee
Truly living, To Thee giving
Prayer unceasing,
May in love be still increasing.

2. Give to thy Word impressive power
That in our hearts, from this good hour,
As fire it may be glowing;
That we confess the Father, Son,
And Thee, the Spirit, Three in One,
Thy glory ever showing.
Stay Thou, Sway now
Our souls ever That they never
May forsake Thee,
But by faith their Refuge make Thee.

Yes, come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord! Amen.