

Sermon for The Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Date: July 15, 2018

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Isaiah 55:1-11

Epistle Reading: 1 Corinthians 2:10-16

Gospel Reading: John 14:15-21



Sermon Title: Good News: The Spirit Holds You

Introit: Psalm 51:5-10; Antiphon: Psalm 51:11

Hymns:

LSB 973 – Thy Word Is a Lamp

LSB 650 – Holy Spirit Ever Dwelling

LSB 893 – Sing to the Lord of Harvest (v.1,3)

LSB 643 – Sent Forth by God's Blessings

Distribution:

LSB 763 – When Peace Like a River

LSB 629 – What Is This Bread

Liturgy:

Divine Service IV, p.203



Pastor James Groleau
St. John's Lutheran Church
1200 13th Avenue NW
Austin, MN 55912
Office: (507) 433-2642
Shepherd@JamesPlace.net
StJohnsAustinLCMS.org
FaceBook.com/StJohnsAustin
Twitter.com@StJohnsAustinMN
FaceBook.com/Shepherd.James.Groleau



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Grace to you in Jesus' Holy name. Amen.

This is the fourth message in a series of ten sermons that I have put together. This fourth message is called, "Good News: The Spirit Holds You." We've learned some things about our God over the last few weeks. We've been learning about our heavenly Father's love. We've learned about His Son's willingness to sacrifice Himself to save us from our sin. That's two persons in the Triune God-head but what about the third? Who is He?

He is called the Holy Spirit, (or Holy Ghost if you've got a bit more life experience.) He is sometimes called the "shy member of the Trinity" because the Holy Spirit is not so "in your face" like the Father and the Son. The Father is remembered in events that have thunder, smoke, earthquakes, and lightning. The Father is authority and power. The Son is remembered as the great Healer, Defender, and Savior. The One who died and rose for our salvation. What about the Holy Spirit? What does He do? What's His "thing?" That's what today's sermon is about.

Things started out with the Father at the forefront, from our perspective. Then Messiah came, and the Gospels record the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of the Son Jesus. For that time the Son was at the forefront, from our perspective. I say from our perspective because the Trinity is always fully at work to save and protect us, but from our perspective, from our point of view, one person of the Trinity can appear to be more active at one time or another. The day of Pentecost was when the Holy Spirit, from our perspective, came to the forefront.

What happened on the day of Pentecost? That day is the official birthday of the Holy Christian Church. I've attended churches where they have a birthday cake for their fellowship time with "Happy Birthday Christian Church" written on the cake in yummy frosting.

Is that all that happened on the first day of Pentecost? The Christian Church got its start. I'm under the impression that if you told a mother, "Oh all you did was give birth to a child that's no big deal" she might offer some level of disagreement with you about the "no big deal" part. Birth is a big deal, and the birth of the Christian Church was a big deal.

Listen to what Scripture says:

Acts 2:1-4 When Pentecost, the fiftieth day after Passover, came, all the believers were together in one place. Suddenly, a sound like a violently rushing wind came from the sky and filled the whole house where they were staying. Tongues that looked like fire appeared to them. The tongues arranged themselves so that one came to rest on each believer. All the believers were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them the ability to speak.

John 14:16-17 [*Jesus said,*] I will ask the Father, and he will give you another helper who will be with you forever. That helper is the Spirit of Truth. The world cannot accept him, because it doesn't see or know him. You know him, because he lives with you and will be in you.

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the God-head. He is the one that grows true faith in you. He is the one who dwells not just with you, but within you.

1 Corinthians 6:19 Don't you know that your body is a temple that belongs to the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit, whom you received from God, lives in you.

When I perform Baptisms here I use Martin Luther's rite, or order, of Holy Baptism. I use it because I like a lot of things that are in it, but perhaps one of the most peculiar is the exorcism. Yes, I did say exorcism. When we Baptize people in this church one of the first things I say to that individual is:

Depart unclean spirits, and make room for the Holy Spirit, in the name of the Father, and of the Son † and the Holy Spirit.

With that blessing we are kicking evil spirits out of the sinner because God Himself is about to take up residence in one He will call His own child. We often think of spiritual possession as a bad thing, yet everyone of you here is possessed. In you dwells a Spirit, the Holy Spirit, who leads, directs, and guides you in the way of peace.¹ When a person is Baptized here at this font a miracle happens. There is no bright light. There is no earthquake. There is no thunder or lightening. Yet as the water is poured, and God's Holy Word is spoken, the greatest miracles in anyone's life occurs. God, the Sovereign Most High, reaches down and touches you. Adopts you as His own, calls you His own child. Then the Holy Spirit moves in, lives in, dwells in, and fills, you.

You see the Holy Spirit is called the shy member of the Trinity not because He is timid, but because He is quiet, but the miracles are just as impressive. Perhaps even more impressive because these miracles change you into what God wants you to be. A perfect, holy, righteous, sanctified,² child of God.

Why is all of this necessary? Why does the Holy Spirit need to live and dwell in you? Listen to what the Bible says:

Ephesians 2:1-2 You were once dead because of your failures and sins. You followed the ways of this present world and its spiritual ruler. This ruler continues to work in people who refuse to obey God.

Romans 8:7-8 The corrupt nature has a hostile attitude toward God. It refuses to place itself under the authority of God's standards because it can't. Those who are under the control of the corrupt nature can't please God, but if God's Spirit lives in you, you are under the control of your spiritual nature, not your corrupt nature.

1 Corinthians 2:12,14 Now, we did not receive the spirit that belongs to the world. Instead, we received the Spirit who comes from God, so that we could know the things which God has freely given us. A person who is not spiritual doesn't accept the teachings of God's Spirit. He thinks they are nonsense. He can't understand them because a person must be spiritual to evaluate them.

You see our sinful nature, that nature that we are born into, that nature we have from the moment we are conceived, is utterly at odds with God. Children are not born innocent and then later learn to sin. You start out a seditious to the Throne. You start out an enemy of God, and you get worse from there. Scripture teaches us that you are dead to God. How does a dead person bring themselves back to life? They can't. For them to live again something, or someone, must act on them from the outside. That one who acts is the Holy Spirit, who enlivens you, instills holy life in you, makes you alive again. Alive not just in a physical way. That's part of it, that's what the resurrection on the Last Day is all about, but you are alive, in God's eyes, right now.

1 Luke 1:67,79

2 Sanctified means to be made holy or to be 'holy-ified.'

You were born dead to God. You were born eternally separated from God, yet by the power of the Holy Spirit you are alive again. Eternally joined together with God, and no longer separated from, but forever with, the God who saved you.

How does the Holy Spirit bring you to faith?

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 We always have to thank God for you, brothers and sisters. You are loved by the Lord and we thank God that in the beginning he chose you to be saved through sanctification of the Spirit, and faith in the truth. With this in mind he called you by the Good News which we told you so that you would obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 10:17 Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message that is heard is what Christ spoke.

Revelation 22:17 The Spirit and the Bride [*the Church*] say, "Come!"

The Holy Spirit instills in a person saving faith through God's Word. That thing that you hear here in God's house each week, and that you read yourselves in your daily devotions. The Holy Spirit uses the Good News of Jesus Christ to convert people from eternal death to eternal life. The Holy Spirit calls and guides the sinful to become sinless through grace, faith, and God's Holy Word.

How can you know for certain, that you are saved? How do you know that the Holy Spirit has done His work in you? If you have been ignoring the Holy Spirit's direction, when should you start listening?

Isaiah 55:6 Seek the Lord while he may be found. Call on him while he is near.

2 Corinthians 6:2 God says, "At the right time I heard you. On the day of salvation I helped you." Listen, now is God's acceptable time! Now is the day of salvation!

It is a sad truth, but still very true. Good people go to Hell everyday. Being good does not buy your entrance into Heaven, being faithful does. Faith comes by hearing God's Word, and trusting in Him for your salvation. That is the Holy Spirit's call to you, and His work in you. Don't shut out His voice in your heart.

Scripture says:

Ephesians 2:8-10 God saved you through faith as an act of kindness. You had nothing to do with it. Being saved is a gift from God. It is not the result of anything you've done, so no one can brag about it. God has made us what we are. He has created us in Christ Jesus to live lives filled with good works that he has prepared for us to do.

Acts 2:37-39 When the people heard this [*that they had crucified the Holy Messiah of God*] they were deeply upset. They asked Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" Peter answered them, "All of you must turn to God, and change the way you think and act, and each of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven. Then you will receive the Holy Spirit as a gift. This promise belongs to you, and to your children, and to everyone who is far away. It belongs to everyone who worships the Lord our God."

John 6:47 [*Jesus said,*] I can guarantee this truth: Every believer has eternal life.

The faith given to you by the Holy Spirit saves you. That faith is not faith in you, or anything you have done, it is faith given to you by God, to believe that God has saved you. That is the quiet work of the Holy Spirit in your life. The Holy Spirit gives you the results of faith as well. Those being: joy, peace, and strength to resist sin, and to resist the devil. He also provides the strength to live a Christian life filled with good works³ that are the result of that faith.

Does the Holy Spirit want to provide these gifts to everyone? The Bible says:

Ezekiel 33:11 Tell them, ‘As I live, declares the Almighty Lord, I don’t want wicked people to die. Rather, I want them to turn from their ways and live. Change the way you think and act! Turn from your wicked ways! Do you want to die,...?’

1 Timothy 2:4 God wants all people to be saved, and to learn the truth.

God, vowing by His own very self, openly declares that He wants all people to change the way they think and act, and not resist the salvation Jesus has won, saving them from their sins. Many people, in stubborn unbelief, and stubborn unrepentance, push the Good News of salvation away. God the Holy Spirit calls all people, possesses all people. However, that Spiritual possession is not done by force. Those who believe, and are saved, are saved by God’s will and God’s desire. Those who die outside of the faith do so because they denied God and God’s gifts. In their condemnation they have no excuse.⁴

What can you do to feed and strengthen your faith? Use the gifts God has given us. Use His Holy Word. Through those words the Holy Spirit fortifies your faith. Use the Sacraments that Jesus gave us. Remember your Baptism through which you were possessed by God and called His own. Come to the Lord’s Table in humble faith, and humble repentance, and receive the very power of God which saves you.

This is the quiet work of the Holy Spirit to carry you safely home.

In Jesus’ name.

Amen.

3 Ephesians 2:10

4 Romans 1:20-22