

Sermon for The Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Date: August 18, 2019

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

Old Testament: Jeremiah 31:31-34

Epistle Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Gospel Reading: John 14:15-31



Sermon Title: The Apostles' Creed – The Third Article

Introit: Psalm 103:2-6; Antiphon: Psalm 103:1

Hymns:

LSB 496 – Holy Spirit Light Divine

LSB 498 – Come, Holy Ghost, Creator Blest (v.1,2,6,7)

LSB 497 – Come Holy Ghost, God and Lord

Distribution:

LSB 720 – We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight

LSB 920 – Forth in the Peace of Christ We Go

Liturgy:

Divine Service: Special (with excerpts from Divine Service III)



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
KAUS 1480 AM Sun. 9:00am



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Grace to you, and peace, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Remember when we were celebrating Christmas, the birth of Jesus. I suppose one of the greatest blessings of Christmas is that our heavenly Father sent His Son to save us, and also has sent the Holy Spirit to sustain and hold us in the saving faith that knows Jesus has done all that is necessary to ensure our safe passage home to Heaven.



There are other ties of the Holy Spirit to Christmas. C. S. Lewis was an author who put a Christian message in all of his writings. In his book, *“The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe”* he described the Father as “the Great Father across the waters.” He described the Jesus as “Aslan the Great Lion.” The Holy Spirit was something different. The Holy Spirit he described as “Santa Claus.” Have you ever thought of comparing the Holy Spirit to Santa Claus?



There are some similarities:

- Santa, in his reindeer pulled sleigh, is able to canvas the entire globe nearly unlimited by time.
- The Holy Spirit does just a little better. He is present everywhere at all times.
- Santa of course delivers gifts. It has been calculated that he visits homes at approximately 22,000 per second, bounding up and down chimneys, including breaks to eat cookies. Truly a miraculous accomplishment were it true.
- The Holy Spirit doesn't climb chimneys, but He is the One who gives us the gifts of the Spirit.¹ Those gifts of God like peace, love, joy, support, assurance, and faith. In giving these gifts He does a bit better than 22,000 homes per second. The Holy Spirit is present everywhere at every time, all the time.

Is the Holy Spirit God's spiritual Santa Claus? No, but there is a little bit fun thinking that way. Then we need to come back to reality. To the reality of an understanding that Christmas is not just about baby Jesus. Christmas is about God coming to give us the gift of salvation, after we abandoned Him. That same Savior has promised to send us the Counselor,² the Holy Spirit, who lives with us and in us; who sustains and keeps us; who empowers and leads us; who teaches and strengthens us.

1 Galatians 5:22-23

2 John 16:7

That is why, just as we do not close our hearts to baby Jesus at Christmas, we should also not close our hearts to the Holy Spirit who comes to give us, and keep us in, the one true Christian faith.

In this series of messages we're looking deeper into the Apostles' Creed. What does the Apostles Creed teach us about the Holy Spirit? What do we confess to believe in that creed? Not too much. Just, "I believe in the Holy Spirit." That's it. That's all that there is. However, look at what follows in this third article of the creed. We also confess, "[I believe in] the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting."

What is the Holy Spirit's job? To keep the Church, Christ's bride, and all its members strong in the faith, and engaged in living out that faith before others. He does that through Word and Sacrament: through the Bible, Holy Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. He does that through the forgiveness of our sins when we confess or apologize for them. Through that forgiveness we are restored to our heavenly Father and made holy and perfect in His sight.

That is why we are here today. It is why we gather in church every week. Our presence is our public statement, or public confession, that we need these things and desire to have them in our lives. That is what Jesus promised to give us when He prayed for us.³

What a great gift to be able to confess all of these things with such confidence and assurance, because our God cannot lie, and does not abandon His children. In that confidence we can join St. Paul when he says, "God's kindness made me what I am, and that kindness was not wasted on me."⁴



The rest of the world doesn't want you to know those truths. They want you to look somewhere else for safety and security. They want to leach your joy and happiness out of you. They want to lead you down paths that end in destruction. Trial and troubles always come in life, but it is through the Holy Spirit that we are revived, restored, and remade once again in the image and likeness of God.⁵ That is something that Santa's Ho Ho Ho's cannot give. In fact all the money in the world cannot buy those answers, nor can it buy the comfort those truths offer.

3 John 17:1-26

4 1 Corinthians 15:10

5 Genesis 1:27

Just this past week we saw one of the most wealthy men in the world, who bought everything he ever wanted, including his own island with slaves to pleasure him, die worthless, useless and despised by all. All the money in the world cannot buy the answers, nor can it buy the comfort the truths of Scripture and the Sacraments bring. The world never will. The world will always drag you down in the way of Judas.⁶

The Apostles' Creed doesn't appear to say much at first glance. Such few words, but Words, though few, of such great power! When you say, "I believe in the Holy Spirit" that is your answer to every enemy. That is your answer to all that could defeat you. That is your answer to victory in Christ Jesus our Lord, and the eternal perfect salvation that comes through such faith. In those few words, "I believe in the Holy Spirit" we are saying that God can, and does, carry us through even the worst of time.



Have you ever seen a sports team that is trailing far behind? The scores are not even close, but then there is that one big play, and it starts the momentum that give the players their second wind.⁷

They start to run faster and jump higher. They are filled with energy again. Energy that, as we have often seen, provides that big come-back to help them on to victory.

That is what the Holy Spirit does for us. If you can think of life in this world as the game, we are defeated. The enemy has a score so high we could never beat him, but then the Holy Spirit comes and gives us that "second wind." The Holy Spirit's presence is that one great play that causes us to be revived, renewed, and restored. Through His work in us through the Holy Word of God, and the Holy Sacraments He has given to us, so that you become young again like an eagle.⁸

Is the Holy Spirit God's spiritual Santa Claus? By no mean! Santa's Ho Ho Ho's can't even come close when, through Word and Sacrament, the Spirit takes our lows and turns them into songs of joy. The Holy Spirit is that person of God, the third person of the Trinity, who now dwell, not just with you but within you. He has made your body His temple.⁹ It is He that will carry you all of your life in that saving faith



6 Matthew 27:5

7 There's an intentional play on words here. The ancient Greek for spirit is the same word as breath or wind.

8 Psalm 103:5

9 1 Corinthians 6:19

in Jesus who saves. Faith that brings you face to face with your heavenly Father in peace and joy.

May God make this so in all of us.

Amen.