

Sermon for A Year with the Catechism The Third Article of the Apostles Creed

Date: December 12, 2021

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

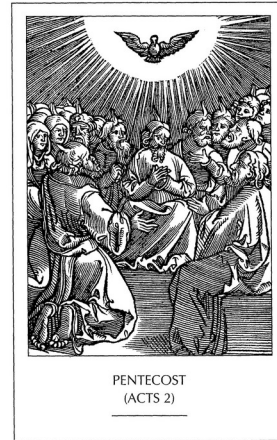
Old Testament: Jeremiah 31:31-34

Epistle Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Gospel Reading: John 14:15-31

Sermon Text: John 14:15-31

Sermon Title: YwtC: The Apostles' Creed: Article Three



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

Hymns:

LSB 496 – Holy Spirit, Light Divine
LSB 497 – Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord
LSB 781 – We Give Thee but Thine Own
LSB 499 – Come, Holy Ghost, Creator Blest

Liturgy:

Divine Service III, p. 184

Songs:

Little Drummer Boy - Pentatonix
When God the Spirit Came
Do You Hear What I Hear
By Our Love

Liturgy:

Creative Worship



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Text: John 14:15–31

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?” Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me.

“These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. 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. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe. I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.

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Pronunciation for difficult words are contained in { }

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

The third article of the Apostles Creed is as follows:

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

What does this mean?

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength 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 richly forgives all my sins and the sins of 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. This is most certainly true.

The celebration of Christmas, and the arrival of the Christ Child; the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ. I suppose one of the greatest blessings of Christmas is that our heavenly Father sent His Son to save us, and has also 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 between the Holy Spirit and 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 sleigh pulled by reindeer 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, and eating cookies. Truly a miraculous accomplishment. The Holy Spirit doesn't climb chimneys, but He is the One who gives us the gifts of the Spirit. Those gifts of God

like 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, always.

Is the Holy Spirit God's spiritual Santa Claus? No, but there is a little bit of fun in imagining. 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 Jesus coming to save us after we abandoned Him. That same Savior has promised to send us the Counselor,¹ 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.

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

So what does the Apostles' Creed teach us about the Holy Spirit? What do we confess to believe in this creed? Not too much actually. 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. 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.

In more academic theological writings the Holy Spirit is sometimes referred to as the "shy member of the Trinity." That is because He does not use a big thundering voice from Heaven.² He does not come to be tortured and die for our crimes against the Father.³ The Holy Spirit comes in a still small voice. What is the Holy Spirit's job? It is to keep the Church, Christ's bride, and all its members, strong in the faith and in living out that faith before others.

He does that through God's Holy Word and Sacraments, through the Bible, Holy Baptism, and Holy Communion. He does that through the forgiveness of our sins when we confess them. Through that forgiveness we are restored to our heavenly Father.

That is why we are here today, or why we gather in church every week. Our presence is our public confession that we need these things from the Holy Spirit, and desire to have them in our lives. To reject or dismiss the teaching of God's

1 John 16:7

2 Exodus 20:18-19

3 Matthew 27

Word, to reject or dismiss the Sacraments, or even to reject or dismiss prayer is to reject the Holy Spirit, and Jesus' words of promise. Jesus' promise was:

“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.⁴”

I have told you this while I'm still with you. However, the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you everything. He will remind you of everything that I have ever told you.⁵”

This is most certainly true. 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.⁶”

The rest of the world does not want you to know those truths. The rest of the world want you to look somewhere else for safety and security. The rest of the world wants to leach joy and happiness out of you. The rest of the world 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, even remade once again in the image and likeness of God.⁷ That is a gift that Santa's, “Ho Ho Ho's” can not give. That is something the secular Christmas cannot provide. In fact all the money in the world cannot buy those answers,⁸ nor can it buy the comfort those truths bring.

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 in 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 God can, and does, carry us through even the worst of times.

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

4 John 14:16-17

5 John 14:25-26

6 1 Corinthians 15:10

7 Genesis 1:27

8 Acts 8:18-24

the players their second wind. 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 win the game.

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. The Holy Spirit’s presence is that one big play that gives us a second wind,⁹ that causes us to be revived, renewed and restored by His work in us through the Holy Word of God, and the Holy Sacraments that Jesus has given to us, so that you become young again like an eagle.¹⁰

Is the Holy Spirit God’s spiritual Santa Claus? By no means! Santa’s, “Ho Ho Ho’s” can’t come close when through Word and Sacrament the Spirit takes our lows and turns them into songs of joy.¹¹

Santa Claus may be a fun. The Holy Spirit is much more than that. The Holy Spirit is that person of God, the third person of the Trinity who now dwells, not just with you, but within you. He has made your body His temple.¹² It is He that will carry you all of your life in that saving faith in Christ that brings you face to face with your heavenly Father.

May God make this so in all of us, in Jesus’ name.

Amen.

Proclaim God’s Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God’s love and
Serve all people



9 There is a purposeful play on words here. The Greek word for ‘Spirit’ is also the word for ‘wind’ or ‘breath.’

10 Psalm 103:5

11 Isaiah 61:3

12 1 Corinthians 6:19