

“All this I have spoken while still with you.²⁶ But 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.²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (NIV84)

Theme: Christ gives greater gifts than man.

1. He sends his Holy Spirit
2. He gives us peace.

What are some of the better gifts you have ever received? I'm sure a few things pop up in your mind you think of some of the things you have been given. Some of these gifts we receive directly from the giver; others are sent in the mail. And if we really like the gift, it seems that it is all we can think about for awhile.

But no matter how great the gifts someone has given you are, they pale in comparison to the gifts that Christ has given you. For Christ gives greater gifts than man. He sends us his Holy Spirit and he gives us peace.

Our text for today takes place on Maundy Thursday. In mere moments Jesus would be arrested. After a few hours of trial and questioning, Jesus would be beaten, flogged, and sentenced to death. Then he would be nailed to a cross and murdered. Jesus knew that time was running out to teach his disciples. But their learning was just beginning. He had spent the last three years teaching them the truth of God's Word. But as we read the gospels it seems as if what Jesus said went in one ear and out the other. We are sometimes astonished at what the disciples didn't understand. They were thick-headed individuals who often couldn't grasp the basic truths of the Christian faith.

Now it is true that what would tie everything together had yet to take place. Jesus had yet to die on the cross. He had yet to rise from the dead. But that doesn't let the disciples off the hook. Their thinking was much like that of the world. Although they sat at Jesus feet for years, they were not able to grasp the truth what Jesus was telling

them. They not only didn't understand what he was saying, they also forgot what he said.

Sound familiar? We too forget God's Word. Think back to all the stories you read and heard about in Sunday School or Lutheran Elementary School. How many do you remember? For many of them, you may remember a name or two, or have a vague idea of what happened, but you can't really remember the story. Or what Christian doctrine? Almost every year when the confirmands are examined, we are reminded about how little we remember about God and his Word. Luther's small catechism contains the basics that every Christian ought to know. It is just the beginning of what the Bible teaches. And yet, when the confirmands are asked simple, basic questions there are many adults in the pews who can barely answer half of the questions. On other occasions, by the time we get home from worship, we can't even remember what the readings or the sermon was about. Or how many times do you realize that you have no idea what a certain book of the Bible is about. Or when a particular person lived? We also tend to forget about God's grace. We get so down on ourselves and all the horrible things we have done that we think that God can't possibly forgive us. We get so depressed and downtrodden over our sins that we completely forget about Christ and his work. Of course, it's not just the fact that we forget much of what's in the Bible. We don't understand some of what's in the Bible. It's not because God's Word is too confusing, or not clear enough. Rather, it because our weak, frail, human minds are so incapable of understanding all the wealth of Scripture. Our biggest problem we face when trying to understand Scripture is our own reason. Our reason balks at all the talk of miracles, prophesies and the like. We are skeptical by nature; if it doesn't make logical sense, we tend not to be able to understand it. And other parts we simply are unable to wrap our feeble minds around it. Sure, there are parts of the Bible that might always be a mystery to us, no matter how hard we study. We covered a situation like that in Bible Class this morning. But for the most part, the answer is right there in the Bible for us to find. We simply have to let Scripture interpret Scripture. But instead of searching the rest of Scripture when we don't understand something,

we simply give up. And we stop reading the Bible because it's too confusing in our minds.

10 days after Jesus ascended into heaven he sent his disciples what he promised on Maundy Thursday. The disciples were in the temple in Jerusalem. It was a Jewish festival. People from all over the world were there celebrating. Then they heard the sound of wind but didn't feel anything. God sent his Holy Spirit. He came upon the disciples. Tongues of fire appeared over their heads. They were suddenly able to speak in languages they had never learned before. And the foreigners were surprised to see the disciples share the gospel in their own language.

It was on this day of Pentecost when the disciples began to fully grasp the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit worked faith into their hearts and minds. He opened up the Word to them. They now understood what Jesus said. He caused them to remember everything that Savior said and did and how it all connected together. And later on the Holy Spirit led some of those Apostles to write down the Word. And it is through this gospel that Christ still sends the Holy Spirit to us.

It is this same Holy Spirit as the one he sent the disciples that Jesus has sent to us. He does this only through the gospel. And through the gospel the Holy Spirit teaches us. **He makes us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.** For it is through the gospel in Word and the two sacraments—baptism and communion, that the Holy Spirit brings us to faith and keeps us in the one true faith. There is no other way.

Everything we know about Christ and his grace is found only in the gospel. Without it we can't understand anything. Without the work of the Holy Spirit we cannot believe. For by nature we want nothing to do with God or his Word. The gospel was foolishness to us. But then the Holy Spirit worked faith into our hearts through the gospel. Whether it was by the Word or baptism—we created faith in our hearts. As Paul tells us, **no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.** The Holy Spirit not only creates faith in our hearts, he also increases our faith through the means of grace. Through the Word he reminds us of the riches of his grace. Therefore we make use of the means of grace. We turn to the gospel when we can't remember a portion of God's word or can't understand something. For just as he

did with the disciples, through the gospel the Holy Spirit will lead you to remember, understand, and believe.

The same gift of the Holy Spirit that God gave the disciples on Pentecost is the same gift he gives to us through the gospel. But that isn't the only gift that Christ has given us. He has also given us peace.

And we need some peace in this world. For it is not always the most peaceful place to live. It is a place of hate and crime. Of pain and turmoil. People seem to hate others for no reason at all. And if they do have a reason, it's not a good one. There are wars and rumors of wars. They are earthquakes, tsunamis, and tornadoes. Christians are persecuted because of their faith. We are attacked everyday simply for what we believe in.

We also don't have peace because of our sin. We know that by nature we are enemies of God. We hate him and want nothing to do with him. We deserve nothing but his wrath and punishment. And unless something changes or something happens, we'll end up in hell forever. God demands that we be perfect, and we cannot ever be perfect in this life. It seems as if we are out of hope. And our souls have no peace.

So the world tries to come up with their own solution. They think they know how to save themselves. "We are on our way to hell, so let's do something about it. Strive to live a good life—be the best person you can be. God will take you to heaven if you are sincere and try your best. You're a good guy—you are always nice to others. You are better than most people, certainly God must take that into account." The world thinks that it can earn it's own way to heaven. That what they do can somehow contribute to eternal life. But in the end this does not give peace to our souls. For you will always wonder if you have done enough. Or if you have done the right things to please God to make him save you.

The world also fails in attempting to bring peace into this world. They think that true peace is lack of conflict. No more fighting, wars, etc. They strive for peace through diplomacy and legislation. But try as they might, they will never succeed. Because of sin there will always be lack of peace. And even if there were no wars, there would still not be true peace. Because true peace comes only through faith in Christ.

He is the one alone who gives us true peace. True peace is not lack of war. It's not peace in the Middle East. It's not knowing that the mistake you made at work has been covered over. True peace is knowing that Christ has saved you. You know that you can't save yourself. And that your sins condemn you. But true peace is knowing and believing that through his death and resurrection Jesus has paid the price for your sins. And you are going to live him forever. It is peace knowing that you don't have to do anything to receive this free gift. You no longer have to wonder if what you did is correct. You don't have to work and work in order to please God so that he could save you. For Jesus has done it all for you. You have nothing to be afraid of. You have nothing to strive for. Through Christ and him alone, your sins are forgiven and you eternal life. This peace, the world cannot give. It cannot gain this peace by themselves. And it's not theirs to give to someone else. This peace comes from Christ. And he alone gives it to us. It is a gift that we can't earn. It is a gift, after all, something that he freely gives to us out of his grace alone.

This is the peace that Jesus gave to his disciples. He gave it to them that Easter night when he appeared to them behind closed doors. And again a week later, especially to Thomas. But then once again on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit opened up their minds so that could know and understand the gospel. Everything that Christ did now made sense to them. They had peace. For the Holy Spirit led to them to believe without a shadow of a doubt that Jesus truly was the Messiah. He was their Savior. Their sins were forgiven. And they will live with him in heaven forever when he returns again. And the Holy Spirit gives us this same gift of peace. He gives it to us through the gospel. Through the means of grace—the gospel in Word and sacrament, he gives us the forgiveness of sins. He brings us to faith. He gives us a new life, and salvation—eternal life in heaven. So when you don't have peace in your lives, turn to the Gospel. When you can't remember that Christ death and life means eternal life for you, turn to the Word. And the Holy Spirit will once again give you the gift of peace as he reminds you of the blood of Christ, shed for you.

Think back again to some of those great birthday and Christmas gifts you were given. They pale in comparison to the gifts of Christ, don't they? No matter what has been given to you, the Holy Spirit is worth much more and is more precious than any gift given by man. Since the Holy Spirit comes to us through the gospel we make use of the means of grace; we treasure it as the precious gem it really is. Then we are reminded of the peace Christ won for us and the peace that awaits us in heaven. Amen.