

“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.²⁷ And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning. (NIV84)

Theme: The Results of the Holy Spirit in us:

1. He gives us faith and knowledge about Christ
2. He leads us to tell others about Christ.

Today is the last of the three major festivals of the Church year. You may consider the Day of Pentecost the forgotten festival, because it is a festival that gets the least attention. You know the other two: Christmas and Easter. Easter, of course, is when we celebrate Christ’s victory over death by his resurrection and proof that the shedding of his blood on the cross paid for our sins. Some look at Christmas as the Father’s festival, for the Father sent his son into the world as one of us so that we may be saved. Today is the Holy Spirit’s festival. It’s obvious to us that both Christmas and Easter had to happen in order for us to be saved. Christ had to come down to this earth to save us, and if he didn’t rise from the dead than we are still in our sins and our faith is futile. While the events of day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2 are not necessary for our salvation, the Holy Spirit is. For without the work of the Holy Spirit we cannot receive the gifts Christ has won for us.

Jesus spoke the words of our text to his disciples in the Upper Room on Maundy Thursday. In a matter of hours Jesus would be betrayed, arrested, tried, beaten, flogged, and crucified—all because the people hated him. Jesus warned the disciples that they would be hated to—if they hated Jesus they were also going to hate his followers. And the disciples would also face persecution, just as Jesus did. So Jesus comforted and encouraged them by promising them his Holy Spirit. After he was gone, he would send his Holy Spirit, whom he calls here the Counselor. This word refers to an advocate, one is called to help someone else.

Jesus did make a handful of appearances to his disciples after his resurrection; but 40 days after Easter he ascended into heaven and left his disciples on earth by themselves. But before he did he told his

disciples, **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.**

Jesus may have gone up into heaven, but he wasn’t going to leave his disciples alone. He was going to send them the Holy Spirit. They would not be alone because God would be with them. He would come upon them in power, and at times give the apostles the very words they were to speak.

The disciples stayed in Jerusalem for 10 days. Then on the day of Pentecost, a Jewish festival during which they celebrated the wheat harvest, the disciples went to the temple. They were all in a room when suddenly they heard the sound of rushing wind, which signified the coming of the Holy Spirit. Tongues of fire appeared above their heads but didn’t burn anything. Fire often indicates the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the tongues were a visible manifestation of a gift that the Holy Spirit gave his disciples that day.

The disciples were untrained, ordinary men. And yet when the Holy Spirit came upon them that day, they were suddenly able to speak on other languages. People from all over the world had traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost when they heard the disciples speaking in their native tongues! This is what God had promised them—not the speaking in tongues, but the Holy Spirit who came upon them with power that day.

Like the disciples, we too cannot see Christ. We celebrated his ascension last week and he is still sitting on his throne in heaven. At times it may seem as if Christ isn’t there, as if he isn’t really with us, that he doesn’t really watch over us and guard us and protect us; at times it may seem as if we are all alone. It may seem as if this life is just a series of random events; and our hard work is the only thing that can help us.

We also face persecution of some sorts, just like Jesus and the disciples. Sure, we may not face death, imprisonment, or banishment like the disciples did. But we face family members disowning us, friends mocking us, the people of society calling us unloving, intolerant, or ignorant. And there may come a time when our own government fines us for obeying God’s Word, or someone tries to force us to go against his will. And it may seem at those times as if

we are all alone. But the truth is, Christ' hasn't left us alone. The same Holy Spirit he gave to his disciples, is the same Holy Spirit he gives to us.

But the Holy Spirit isn't going to come to us suddenly as he did the disciples on the day of Pentecost. Don't expect to hear the sound of rushing wind or to see tongues of fire on top of each other's heads. The Holy Spirit works silently, behind the scenes, so to speak. The Holy Spirit works through the means of grace—that is the gospel in Word and Sacrament. It is through the gospel that the Holy Spirit gives faith. Through the gospel he brings us to faith, he strengthens us and keeps us in the one true faith. Through baptism he has adopted us as he own, washes away our sins, and clothes us in the righteousness of Christ. And through the Lord's Supper he also strengthens our faith as we receive the forgiveness of sins through Christ's body and blood.

The Lord has not left you alone. He has sent his Holy Spirit. He comes to you through the gospel which can be read every hour of every day if you so desire. He is there every time you partake of the Lord's Supper. You are not alone, the Lord is always with you through the gospel!

When you read the gospels it is clear that the disciples often failed to understand why Jesus did what he did and what he meant when he taught the people. It wasn't until after he rose from the dead that they began to understand why Jesus did what he did and what he teachings meant. But their knowledge and faith was still lacking. That is why Jesus also promised them, **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.** It wasn't until the Holy Spirit came upon them on the day of Pentecost that they really began to understand the Scriptures and how they were fulfilled in Christ. This fulfills the words of Jesus in our text when he says that the Holy Spirit will testify about him.

We too lack an understanding of God's Word by nature. When we were born we knew nothing of God, his son, or what he had done to save us. And we didn't really care to know. And there are many others who read and know God's Word, but they reject it as false because the message of the gospel is foolishness to us by nature. That is where the Holy Spirit comes in. It is only through the Holy Spirit

that we are able to understand God's Word. Only through him that we believe. As Paul says 1 Corinthians, **no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.** So the Holy Spirit, working through the gospel, brings us to faith in something that is foolish. And through that same means he increases our knowledge in his Word and our love for our Savior.

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit gave the disciple the gift of speaking in tongues. This gift enabled them to spread the gospel—to fulfill the great commission of making disciples of all nations by speaking the gospel in the country's native language. This enabled them to do what Jesus said they would do after the Holy Spirit came, **you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.** And that is exactly what the apostles did—they traveled throughout the known world, sharing the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Today we don't expect or anticipate the Holy Spirit giving us the gift of speaking in tongues. Everything he wants us to know has already been written down in his Holy Bible. We already have his complete revelation and so he doesn't need to reveal anything else to us by giving us the gift of speaking in tongues.

Now that the Holy Spirit has brought us to faith and led us to understand God's Word, we share that Word with others. That is the privilege of each and every one of us. We get the opportunity to tell others about their Savior—about the one who gave up his life to suffer and die for us that we may live with him forever. And we take comfort in the fact that it is our job simply to spread the Word, it is not our job to convince someone to believe or to bring them to faith. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. He is the one who convicts, who brings to faith. We simply tell someone about Christ so that the Holy Spirit can do his work through his gospel.

But honestly, we must admit that we often fail to do just that—we don't allow the Holy Spirit to do his work. And why is that? We make a whole host of excuses, none of which are any good. We get scared, we don't want to be persecuted, we don't want friends and family to make fun of us, we don't want co-workers to look at us weird, we don't think that sharing the gospel with a certain person is ever going to work. We make excuses and keep our mouths shut; and as a result the Holy Spirit is never able to do his work and many fail to hear the life-saving gospel.

So why spread the gospel? So the Holy Spirit can work through that gospel and bring someone to faith. For someone can only be saved through faith, and they can only believe if they hear the gospel, and they can only hear the gospel if someone shares it with them. And since we love all people and we want all people to be saved, then we do everything we can to share the gospel with others, so that the Holy Spirit may work through that gospel and thus save another.

There are three major festivals in the Christian Church Year: Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. To state the obvious, Pentecost gets the least publicity. Society doesn't celebrate it; we don't have any special services or celebrations on this day. But that doesn't make the Holy Spirit's work any less important. If God never sent his Son then our Savior never came to this earth. If Jesus never suffered and died in our place only to rise from the dead that we are still in our sins and death has not been defeated. And if the Holy Spirit didn't work through the gospel, then we wouldn't receive any gifts that the Lord has given us. All three are equally important for our salvation. So today we rejoice in the work of the Holy Spirit, for he has brought us to faith through the gospel and has led us to understand the Scriptures. And so we do all we can to help spread the gospel that he may do the same for others. Amen.