

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE APOSTLES WILL BEAR WITNESS ABOUT THE CHRIST

I. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth Bears Witness

II. The Apostles Bear Witness

John 15:26-27

SUNDAY, JUNE 9, 2019 | PENTECOST

THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE DAY OF PENTECOST

YEAR C

Old Testament Genesis 11:1–9

Psalm Psalm 51

New Testament Acts 2:1–21

Gospel John 15:26, 27

NON-COMMUNION

GRANTS PASS

The Entrance Hymn or Introit – ELH 33 We Now Implore God the Holy Ghost

Chief Hymn – ELH 20 Holy Ghost Dispel Our Sadness

Closing Hymn – ELH 25 O Holy Spirit, Grant us Grace

MEDFORD

Psalm 51b, p. 87

Opening Hymn - CW 190 We Now Implore God the Holy Ghost

Hymn of the Day – **ELH 20 Holy Ghost Dispel Our Sadness**

Closing Hymn - CW 185 O Holy Spirit, Grant Us Grace

Faith & Our Savior Lutheran Churches

Medford & Grants Pass, Oregon

Edward L. Bryant, Pastor

Revision of Pentecost 2013, St. Timothy – Lombard

John 15:26–27 (CSB)

²⁶ “When the Counselor comes, the one I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father—he will testify about me. ²⁷ You also will testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.

Dear fellow redeemed, to whom the Helper (The Paraclete), the Spirit of Truth, comes: The celebration of the ascension of Christ into heaven is ten days past. His visible, local, presence, (one place at a time) was exchanged for an invisible omnipresence, by which He continues to work powerfully in every age and in every place, including here and now and wherever His word and sacraments are found.

So also here in our text for today: Jesus says that in order to keep them from falling away He would reveal what He would do beyond His death and resurrection and ascension. Jesus is looking ahead to His ascension and beyond to His working in every age of the world, including our own. How does He describe it? In the “latter days,” this time between Jesus’ ascension and His return on the last day, Jesus says...

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It is by the witness of the Holy Spirit and the apostles that the church has been created and has endured. We who were born spiritually dead have been given spiritual life and faith – how? By the witness of the Holy Spirit. We have been called together here as a Christian congregation. All believers have been called to become the church of God.

We cannot see the Holy Spirit, but we can see the effect of His witness in spiritual life and faith. Jesus put it this way in John 3:5–8 (CSB) **⁵ Jesus answered, “Truly I tell you, unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not be amazed that I told you that you must be born again. ⁸ The wind blows where it pleases, and you hear its sound, but you don’t know where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”**

The Holy Spirit shows Himself in the creation of faith, the creation of believers, and the creation of the church in every age.

The reality of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord is made known through the Holy Spirit: **the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father—he will testify about me.**

Why “witness”? What effect does witnessing have on us? That word “witness” is very interesting. A witness is “one who relates what he knows.” It isn’t persuasion, or manipulation, or oratory, or drama, it is simply passing on what we know to be true. “Just the facts, please.”

If I tell you what I have seen, what I have observed, and what I know to be true about someone, what happens? In some measure don’t you get to know them also? So by the witness of the Holy Spirit we get to know Christ.

Unfortunately people often look for something else. Some expect some sort of “experience.” They call it spiritual, but it is really emotional, and they confuse a physiological reaction with the work of the Holy Spirit. But we can “gin up” feelings: --Someone did a whole study on just what the popular singer Adele does to create an emotional reaction. --You can

probably predict the “crying moments” in the movies, like when Old Yeller dies. --Motivational speakers are experts at, well, motivating and stirring people up to action.

That makes merely witnessing about Christ and the cross seem pretty lame, doesn't it? Take witnessing like we see in the Apostles' Creed – a very early form of witness in the church. We get to know Jesus as God with the Father and the Holy Spirit. There is the witness about His being born of a virgin and dying on the cross and rising again, and witness about the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting. This is the witness, the good news, the gospel about what God has to save us from an eternity of darkness and despair. Remember- the gospel is not mere information, but, according to Romans 1:16, **the power of God unto salvation.**

Unfortunately, with this approach Christ often fails to win the approval of those for whom He suffered, died, and rose again. (Irony there) From time to time people I have been able to talk with people who don't attend church because (as they put it) “This isn't quite what I'm looking for.” Really? Isn't the word of God enough? Isn't the promise of forgiveness, life, and salvation enough? Isn't the presence of Christ in word and sacrament enough?

But that is not what people want, and so, sadly, they reject the witness of the Holy Spirit in favor of the medium that plays to the “felt needs” of people who don't know what they need – the Savior who is the subject of this witness. Our salvation doesn't depend upon a feeling here (in the chest) but a Savior there (on the cross).

II. The Apostles Bear Witness

But the fact that the witness of the Holy Spirit comes in words of witness and in the word with the water of baptism and the word, bread, body, wine, and blood of the Holy Supper means that His spiritual power really is also rooted in the mundane and the earthly. Two things are bound together, spiritual power and the mundane and earthly witness.

But the gospel in word and sacrament is a divine power, as Paul says, 1 Corinthians 1:21–25 (CSB) **21 For since, in God's wisdom, the world did not know God through wisdom, God was pleased to save those who believe through the foolishness of what is preached.** **22 For the Jews ask for signs and the Greeks seek wisdom,** **23 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles.** **24 Yet to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God,** **25 because God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.**

Now it's a GOOD thing that the power of the gospel doesn't depend on our ability to inspire or generate some emotion. Think about it. Often, we can't help but respond with joy to the message of the gospel. The great festivals of the church can be a high point in any of our lives.

Still, many just don't feel the presence of God. The good news is that He is here whether we feel like it or not; faith isn't feeling.

Everybody I've seen who was sick and dying felt horrible. What if spiritual life depends upon being conscious, and then having the right emotional state besides?! Even people who don't suffer from depression have days in which they are just blue. No, they don't feel like they are the object of God's love – but we are.

The apostles were witnesses. They tell what they saw, and what they saw was the love of God played out in time and place. Their witness is good news for you: Your guilt has been taken away. You are purchased at the price of God's Son; you are precious. Your savior didn't

come to you in spiritual ecstasy, but in His childbirth, in His daily life, in His blood, suffering, death, burial, and finally going the way you too will go, in resurrection.

The means of grace are very physical for physical people looking forward to a physical resurrection. With mundane and earthly things like the witness to physical realities they bring forth spiritual life. As John says, 1 John 1:1–3 (CSB) **¹ What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have observed and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—² that life was revealed, and we have seen it and we testify and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us—³ what we have seen and heard we also declare to you, so that you may also have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.**

Now He comes to you in the word, in washing, and in Holy Communion. The ascended Christ has reached out to us through the witness of the Holy Spirit and the witness of the apostles, as Paul put it, 1 Corinthians 2:12–13 (CSB) **¹² Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who comes from God, so that we may understand what has been freely given to us by God. ¹³ We also speak these things, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual things to spiritual people.**

Through this seemingly humble witness, the ascended Christ is with us, and remains with us. He awakens faith and spiritual life and preserves us in it – not because we have the right reactions and feel the right feelings, but because He is our Savior.

AMEN.

παράκλητος^a, ου m: (a title for the Holy Spirit) one who helps, by consoling, encouraging, or mediating on behalf of—‘Helper, Encourager, Mediator.’¹

¹ Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Vol. 1: Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: Based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.) (141). New York: United Bible Societies.