

When The Comforter Comes.

Text: John 14:23-31

Suggested Hymns:

125, 127, 131, 294, 129

- 1) When the Comforter comes
- 2) When the Comforter comes today
- 3) He shows us our relationship with God
- 4) He brings us blessed peace

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is John 14:23-31, ²³ *Jesus answered and said to 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. ²⁴ "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me. ²⁵ "These things I have spoken to you while being present with you.*

²⁶ *"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 things that I said to you. ²⁷ "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. ²⁸ "You have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming back to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father is greater than I.*

²⁹ *"And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe. ³⁰ "I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me. ³¹ "But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Something has happened to Pentecost. We celebrate one Pentecost after another without even a ripple of reaction. Somehow this day for which those early believers waited by divine command seems to have lost its ring of conviction.

What happened the first time the Holy Spirit came does not happen any more. Why? What is the matter? You cannot wave it aside as something that could happen only once when Peter, promising *“you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit,”* adds, ³⁹ *“For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”*¹ Surely we need the mighty, renewing power of that first Pentecost today.

Can we see men and women in our own neighbourhood, our own block, nice, friendly people, go on without Christ, unmindful that they are headed for hell without the forgiveness of the Lamb of God? Should we not be concerned with them as witnesses for the Lord, ambassadors of the King? Something of Pentecost seems to be missing in our lives.

Can we talk about the social issues that stir up so much hatred without realising that the loving Master has solutions to these problems between races and classes, management and labour, rich and poor? Are we, with the indwelling Holy Spirit, to ignore our responsibility in these everyday issues? Doesn't Pentecost have something to say about all these things?

Let us go back to Jerusalem on this day and catch again the vision, feel again the power, renew the loyalty that can kindle flames of power and peace in our lives and the lives of those around us. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. When The Comforter Comes

When the Comforter came that First Pentecost that early band of Christians — only 120 — had spent only a few years at the Lord's feet. But much of what the Master had said, like some of the seed in the parable, fell on hard ground. They could not understand. What He told them often sounded foolish or contradictory.

Even after His resurrection Christ was compelled to label them fools, slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken, all that He had foretold. On the very eve of His ascension how far they were from grasping the full truth of His whole ministry — His suffering and death, His coming forth from the tomb, His kingdom that was not of this world!

How could they be His witnesses and ambassadors while misunderstanding and uncertainty clouded their minds, while doubt and fear clouded their hearts

and souls? They were a confused little band of sheep without a shepherd, wandering aimlessly through the crowded streets of Jerusalem.

With Christ gone, the scribes and Pharisees considered them no threat to their hypocritical Judaism. The Roman Caesar would have laughed at the suggestion that this little group would undermine his mighty, pagan empire with the teachings of the crucified Nazarene.

Then came Pentecost. The promise Christ had made, *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 things that I said to you*, was fulfilled.

You have just heard the account read before — the rushing wind, the tongues of fire, *And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*² Suddenly these first followers saw the whole grand plan of salvation in all its glory. The lowly birth at Bethlehem, the humble company with tax-collectors and sinners, the anguish of the Garden, the sham of the courtrooms, the shame of the cross, the victory of the open grave — they were all parts of one divine plan.

They were no longer foolishness and stumbling blocks. Now it all fitted into one whole — all the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah, the perfect New Testament fulfilment in Jesus Christ, Son of man and Son of God.

So much had made no sense at the time, so much had been forgotten, but now it all came rushing back as the Holy Spirit filled their hearts. You catch the full impact of it all just by watching Simon Peter. Wavering, curious Simon, who did not want to go up to Jerusalem, was now *“the rock,”* speaking with complete conviction, a firm faith, about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Before that blessed day ended, 3,000 had been added to that little band of believers, 3,000 men and women had experienced the divine presence of the Comforter, *“teaching them all things, and bringing all things to their remembrance.”* Read the stirring account of that first Pentecost for yourself in Acts 2, and you will be thrilled with the power present when the Holy Spirit was fully come.

2. When The Comforter Comes Today

There has been no rushing, mighty wind, no cloven tongues as of fire, no sudden gift to speak in foreign languages since that first Pentecost, but there has been and always will be the power of the Holy Spirit to open blind eyes to see, and hearts to believe what these first disciples and apostles wrote by divine inspiration.

The four Gospel accounts of the life of Jesus Christ give us what the Master promised, ***“He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.”*** We have nothing new. It is the same Old Testament Jesus quoted adding, ***“Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”***³ It is the same Heaven-born truth which fell from His holy lips and through which He promised, ***“If you [continue] in My word, you are My disciples indeed.”***³² ***“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”***⁴

It is the same, old story of man’s sin — ***“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”*** It is the same, old story of man’s only Saviour from sin — ***“The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.”***⁵ The same Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who convinced the household of Cornelius and the household of the Philippian jailer of their sins, led them to repentance, and showed them their Redeemer, blesses that message of the Word with power today.

Rabbi Slostowski, a professor of the Talmud in the rabbinical seminary at Tel Aviv, Palestine, hated the Lord Jesus Christ. So great was his resentment that he sharply criticised a young Jewish convert reading a Hebrew New Testament. The young man replied by giving him the copy. That night the rabbi, alone in his room, stayed up until 3 o’clock in the morning reading about the Nazarene, who claimed to be the Messiah. The Holy Spirit guided him into all truth, and later he confessed, ***“I have already found more than 200 passages of the New Testament which prove beyond a doubt that Jesus is truly the Messiah.”***⁶

Wherever the Word of God is proclaimed, men and women learn that if they die in their sins they are damned to hell, but if they come penitently to the cross of Christ there is forgiveness, life, and salvation for everyone who believes.

As they search the Scriptures, the whole, glorious story of God’s love becomes clearer and clearer. Questions and doubts vanish one by one. New certainty and security grow day by day.

3. The Holy Spirit Shows Us Our Relationship with God

When the Comforter comes, and His work in hearts is begun, He shows us what our relationship with God really must be. Jesus put it this way in promising the Holy Spirit, ***“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. ²⁴ “He who does not love Me does not keep My words.***

It is just at this point that we need to pray on this festive day⁷

*Holy Ghost, with light divine
Shine upon this heart of mine,*

for we seem to forget that we are the redeemed children of God and what that means.

So often we talk about wanting to show our love to God by keeping His commandments, but the words never quite seem to ring true. There is nothing vague about our love for wife or children. We know what these loved ones need and want. We find 100 different ways to show them how much we care.

Often devoted parents do more for their children than is good for them. Should we love our God less? Should His will and promises leave us cold, unmoved, unconcerned, if we truly love Him? Does keeping His commandments rob us of certain joys, keep us from certain blessings, deprive us of real happiness? Just the opposite.

How good we feel deep down inside when we can say, like Paul, ⁷ ***I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.***⁸ It always warms our hearts to know we have walked and are walking in the paths of His righteousness. Except for the old, sinful flesh, we rejoice to do His will. And how good it is to meditate on the words of our text, ***“We will come to him and make Our home with him.***

To have God the Father and God the Son dwell with us and in us through the Holy Spirit gives solid security. ***If God is for us, who can be against us?***⁹ What comforting safety is wrapped up in the simple words of assurance, ***neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.***¹⁰ All the forces of hell can not take the Triune God away from us or us away from His protecting arms.

Some people know what all this means from personal experience. Once their home was torn by strife, once they may have been a staggering alcoholic, once their mouth was filled with vile curses and slander, once their life was controlled by lust, once they had no time for good or for God, but now it is all different. Now they have been washed and purified.

Yes, we all know what it means ***“when the Comforter comes,”*** when God dwells in you, with you, and you seek to keep His Word.

Let us pray this Pentecost Day,¹¹

*Holy Spirit, with power divine
Cleanse this guilty heart of mine;
In Thy mercy pity me,
From sin’s bondage set me free.*

We also know, too, the full grace of God’s gift and the full truth of His promise, ***“the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.”***¹² Our hearts are filled with the love to keep His Word and be blessed. For this we pray.

4. He Brings Us Blessed Peace

The blessing is stated very simply in our text, ***“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*** These parting words of Christ on His way to Gethsemane and Calvary promise every child of God the Victor’s spoils from Golgotha, the basic blessing for all happiness and success. The Comforter will bring peace, not the kind of peace the world offers but the peace of God.

The peace the world offers is external, insecure, and often of short duration. We talk about peace on earth among the nations, but how much comforting security do we find in this peace?

We like to delude ourselves with the idea that money in the bank brings sound and solid peace into human lives, but we know that some of the wealthiest people in the world have less peace than the servants who wait on them.

We say that true peace can only be present with those who have health, are reasonably successful, and know they are needed by loved ones. Helen Keller, had none of these blessings, but she had peace. Surely such ingredients help

make our lives happy and pleasant. Yet they are not enough. The peace the world gives is not sufficiently lasting.

We need first of all peace with God. The Comforter brings just that peace. He leads us out to Calvary, where that peace was won. There we see the battle rage and hear at last the Victor's triumphant shout, "*It is finished!*"

There we have, ¹³

*Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled.*

There through the Lord Jesus Christ we become God's children again, and in Him we are at peace with our heavenly Father.

The devil himself cannot destroy this peace nor separate us from our Father. With Paul in Romans 8:38-39 we exult, ³⁸ ***For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.***

This peace changes men and women. It makes them new creatures because it purifies the source of evil: the human heart. What it did for crude, cursing fishermen, what it did for cheating, lying tax-collectors, what it did for a woman of the streets — all born again through the Holy Spirit — it does for you and me today so that we can have perfect peace, so that we can walk life's pathways unafraid.

Will you look to the Comforter for this blessing from Jesus who said, "***Let not your heart be troubled ... My peace I give to you***"?

If this promised peace of our Lord Jesus Christ is not the mighty, steadying force it ought to be in our lives, it is not the holy Comforter's fault. We deprive ourselves because we do not grow in knowledge and in grace.

In our day we hear much about graduation. Young men and women are talking about graduating from school or university, finishing their education. Many, too, think of themselves as graduate Christians. Such people do not know Christianity. They do not understand the full meaning of Pentecost. They misinterpret the words "***when the Comforter comes.***"

The Holy Spirit comes to dwell in our hearts with the Father and the Son, not so that we may sit back and say, *“I have it,”* but He comes that we may grow. We are led by the Holy Spirit to increase in wisdom and stature spiritually, to grow in favour with God and man. We only graduate from school to put into practice what we have learned so that we may serve and provide. Only then do we find peace and share that peace with others.

The aged can have the peace that burned in the apostle’s heart in that Roman dungeon from which he wrote to the Philippians, ***“Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice!”***

Sufferers can have the quiet calm of that Christian cross-bearer who has gone through many major operations, fought a valiant battle, and says quietly, *“Someday the Lord will tell me why.”*

If you have lost a loved one, you can feel the same assurance a young husband had who stood at the casket of his beautiful young wife and through tear-dimmed eyes told sympathisers, *“Jesus loved her more.”*

Young people can resist temptations as Joseph did, who exclaimed, ***“How, then, can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”***¹⁴ You can have the burning desire to share such peace with other people in your daily life, or maybe as a pastor or missionary.

This is the peace of God in Christ that is ours when the Comforter comes. These are the blessings that must come according to the Saviour’s promise of the Comforter. Rejoice that the Comforter comes. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Acts 2:39

² Acts 2:4

³ Luke 4:21

⁴ John 8:31-32

⁵ 1 John 1:7

⁶ For Christ and Country, W. A. M., p. 99

⁷ Hymn 131

⁸ 2 Timothy 4:7

⁹ Romans 8:31

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- ¹⁰ John 10:29
 - ¹¹ Hymn 131 v3
 - ¹² John 6:37
 - ¹³ Hymn 33
 - ¹⁴ Gen. 39:9