

## The Holy Spirit Gives Us Life.

Text: John 14:23-31

1) The Holy Spirit brings us to faith

Suggested Hymns:

2) The Holy Spirit keeps us in faith

127, 133, 131, 286, 134

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, <sup>23</sup> *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. <sup>24</sup> "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. <sup>25</sup> "These things I have spoken to you while being present with you.*

<sup>26</sup> *"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. <sup>27</sup> "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. <sup>28</sup> "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.*

<sup>29</sup> *"And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe. <sup>30</sup> "I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me. <sup>31</sup> "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,

In His farewell address, Christ bequeathed the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. The word "Comforter" doesn't exhaust full meaning of original word. The word Jesus used is "Paraclete." It comes from the root meaning "called to one's aid," thus to entreat, to implore, help and assist.

The ancient Greeks used it legally to denote “advocate,” one who intercedes on behalf of another. Paraclete is thus intercessor, defender, and mediator. In broadest sense it signifies helper, or best friend.

On this festival day we celebrate the grace of God in the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the “Gospel power,” that is, the “grace power” of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. As we confess in the words of the Nicene Creed, He is *“the Lord and Giver of Life.”*

The Holy Spirit, of course, is not an abstract power like the law of gravity or the energy of an atom. The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the God-head who testifies that by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ He brings us to a new life with God the Father.

Let us consider on this Pentecost Sunday how the Holy Spirit gives us life. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. The Holy Spirit Brings Us to Faith**

In the Epistle today we have a good example of the work of the Holy Spirit. The important point of the Holy Spirit’s coming and of the demonstration of His gifts to men is not that the disciples spoke in a variety of languages. The important point is that people of many nations each in his own language heard the mighty works of God.

It is interesting to notice the difference in response between the believers and the non-believers. On the one hand, the non-believers did not see or hear God anywhere among them. They saw nothing more than what appeared to be a public display of drunkenness.

The believers, on the other hand, were amazed. They were at a loss to explain how all this happened, but they knew what was happening. For they recognised and heard in the words of the Spirit-moved disciples the magnificent works of God.

The Epistle complements the Gospel lesson. In the Gospel lesson we have Jesus’ promise to the disciples that the Holy Spirit would come. In the Epistle reading we have Luke’s record of the fulfilment of that promise. Both readings emphasise that the Holy Spirit enables us to believe, and with understanding to proclaim to others God’s gift of life.

This emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit is basic for our understanding of Judas' question (not Judas Iscariot, but Thaddaeus)<sup>1</sup> as to why Jesus did not make Himself known to the world.

It is also basic for our understanding of the universal quest of man. Only by the Holy Spirit's bringing us to faith in Christ can we live and love at all. The quest of man is not a matter simply of finding a life principle, but of having life over death.

Any principle or philosophy of life that does not deal realistically with the facts of life, such as pervasive evil and death, is a deception. In other words, God through the Law judges us for our short-sightedness and illusions when we think that a principle in itself can eliminate death or analyse it away.

Death is not an abstraction either. Death is one's being entirely separated from God. It is to be under His judgment and devouring wrath. It is to be subject to our own sinfulness, whereby we have become an enemy to God and He to us. To be separated from Him who is Life is to die — as St. Paul says, to be dead in our trespasses and sins.<sup>2</sup> Not to have life means also that we cannot see, hear, know, or understand the "things" of God. Therefore the unbelievers, and we also according to our sinful flesh, do not know either Jesus or the Father; and the Holy Spirit is a complete riddle.

### **Judas' Question**

Judas had difficulty understanding why Jesus would reveal Himself to the disciples but not to the world. He asked in the verse before our text, "***Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?***"

On the surface it might appear that Jesus did not answer Judas' question. Actually Jesus had been "answering" his question all along. Before, Jesus had said that whoever believed in Him would do the works that He did, and also greater works than these, because He would go to the Father.

By saying in reply to Judas, "***If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word,***" Jesus pointed to the effect of His having revealed Himself to an individual. To love Jesus and to keep His Word are the fruits that testify that Jesus had already made Himself known to this person. Believing in Jesus, the person loves Him, and he does Jesus' works, and he dwells with the Father. And Jesus and the Father will continue to dwell with him.

Jesus' response to Judas about His not manifesting Himself to the world refers to what the unbelievers, rather than Jesus, do not do. In their not believing, the unbelievers have not seen Jesus, and they do not know Him. Consequently they do not love Him. If they do not love Him, they cannot keep His words. They have neither recognised nor listened to the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

If they were present at the first Pentecost, they heard only a babbling of tongues, a demonstration of nothing meaningful. By their unbelief the unbelievers do not receive the Word and work of Jesus Christ among them.

### **The Holy Spirit Testifies That We Are Redeemed**

Jesus' work on earth was to do what the Father commanded Him, which was to give people life by reuniting them with the Father. In our text Jesus does not go into the details of His redemptive work, but He does make references to it. In verse thirty, for instance, we have His words that the ruler of this world would come. The ruler of this world, is Satan, the power of evil and death, but he would have no final power over Jesus.

Satan would appear to take over, but his apparent victory would be deceptive. By focusing all the power of evil and death on Jesus, the power of unbelief in reality would work itself out to its own death.

We might note how necessary the daily witness of the Holy Spirit is to us. Were it not that the Holy Spirit testifies to us through the Word and the sacraments that Jesus' death was in fact death's own death and that Jesus' resurrection is the irrevocable victory over all other powers, we would easily succumb to our fears and self-justifying doubts. Then we would never "see" Jesus despite all His manifestations to us.

Proclaiming the Gospel to us, the Holy Spirit brings us to faith in the Gospel. By our believing in Christ we have been united through faith in Jesus' death; therefore we have died to sin.<sup>3</sup> Believing in Christ, who is the Resurrection and the Life, we have been united in His resurrection. We have risen to a new life. Through Him we have become one with the Father.

The Holy Spirit "rebirths" us through the Word and the Sacrament of Baptism. The Holy Spirit is not an added power like a supercharger. He is our personal Witness, our power to believe in Christ. He is God graciously bringing

us to believe. As the Witness to Jesus, the Holy Spirit is our Helper, Encourager, Mediator, and Counsellor. When Jesus said He would not leave us desolate, or orphaned,<sup>4</sup> He made a promise that was fulfilled in the Holy Spirit's coming and in His bringing us to believe.

## **2. The Holy Spirit Keeps Us In Faith**

Jesus' statement that the Holy Spirit would teach us "all things" is at once an understatement as well as an overstatement. The phrase "all things" is deceptive in its simplicity. By the Holy Spirit's bringing us to faith in Jesus Christ, we have the essential "thing," the gift of life itself. In having come to a new life through Christ, we also in effect have "all things."

The Holy Spirit, moreover, teaches us "all things" by bringing to our remembrance all that Jesus has said. The point here is not only that we are to believe, but also that we are to have the understanding, that comes from our keeping God's Word.

The Holy Spirit is not a data processor. He is not a computer that feeds us information as we think we need it. The Holy Spirit brings Jesus' Word to our remembrance by teaching and explaining to us the Gospel and the nature of the Christian life.

The Holy Spirit gives us an understanding of the depth of Jesus' love to other people and the extent of His ministry in all areas of society. We not only remember that Jesus said, "*If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word,*" but also how Jesus Himself loved and how we are to keep His Word.

In a sense we really do not "remember" what Jesus said about life and love unless in His name we love our fellowmen.

### **Living With Love For Others**

To keep Jesus' Word means that we responsibly concern ourselves with the welfare of individuals and of society at large. We ask the Holy Spirit to give us insight into the needs and conditions of other people, so that with the abilities and opportunities God gives us we properly minister to all people.

Furthermore, to keep Jesus' Word means that we do not keep it only among select people. By witnessing to Jesus, the Holy Spirit shows us how to keep God's Word among those people whom we may not at first care to select, and on

occasions when we may least feel like it — even at times in our own home. But herein we see just what the Holy Spirit does when He enlightens us and opens our understanding.

The Holy Spirit enables us to live in love toward our fellowman, a love that wants them to be saved too. In our relationship with others we forgive as we have been forgiven. We love our spouse, our children, our neighbour, those estranged from us by forgiving them, and by patiently attempting to renew them in their new life in Christ Jesus.

To the unbeliever we live as one ready to pronounce the words of God's forgiveness to him, so that, restored to life, he also will know that Jesus has been manifested to him.

In this connection we might recall the petition, *“Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful, and kindle in them the fire of Your love.”*

### **The Holy Spirit Continues To Proclaim The Word**

The concept of “remembrance” in the text also includes our reading and studying God's Word, Holy Scripture. If we forfeit the Word, we cut ourselves off from the Holy Spirit's witness to us. If we do not read, study, and hear God's Word, then the Holy Spirit can no longer teach or enlighten us through the Word and we will not understand it in its uttermost depth.

Any Christian can thus cut himself off from the Holy Spirit's witness and finally die spiritually. One then becomes like an old tulip bulb that is never dug up. The plant ceases to bloom, it becomes all leaves, and it dies.

It is tragic for us individually and for the church if we become dull in our thinking and in our attitudes. Not to refresh ourselves in the Word, and at the Lord's Table, is in effect to depend on a withering head knowledge as an equivalent to faith in Christ.

The Holy Spirit does not develop in us a knowledge and judgment that are fixed and rigid. Through the Gospel the Holy Spirit daily restores and renews us in faith, hope, and love. He repeatedly gives us new insights. He keeps us open to the newness of life. He enlightens and reshapes our attitudes and knowledge, our vision and understanding. He leads us to a fullness of life and joy in Jesus Christ.

Clearly it is not possible for us to live and to love of our own accord. To live means to have the power of life over death. To love means to have an attitude, a desire, a steadfastness that lie beyond the power and will of our selfishness.

The Holy Spirit by witnessing to us of Christ's death, leads us to die to our sins and to rise again through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Daily the Holy Spirit recreates us through the Good News. Through this Word of forgiveness and life He revitalises and strengthens us so that, living unto Christ, we love Him and keep His Word.

We realise that the Holy Spirit has always been testifying to us. He will continue to witness to us and to be with us. Jesus fulfilled His promise to send Him. In His coming the Holy Spirit has poured out upon us the gifts of the Gospel. He is our Comforter, Helper and Counsellor. He is our Encourager. Through the Word He gives us life, and He daily unfolds before us the fullness of life and joy in Jesus Christ.

When Jesus says, ***Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid***, He promises understanding, fulfilment, and peace through the Holy Spirit. For this we thank and praise God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Let us conclude with the words of the Introit: *"The Spirit of the Lord has filled the world: Hallelujah! Let the righteous be glad. Let them rejoice before God. Yes, let them rejoice exceedingly. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!"* Amen.

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

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<sup>1</sup> Mat 10:3

<sup>2</sup> Eph. 2:1

<sup>3</sup> Rom 6:1-5

<sup>4</sup> John 14:18