

## The Holy Spirit, Lord And Giver Of Life.

Text: 1 Cor 12:2-4

1) The Person of the Holy Spirit

Suggested Hymns:

2) The Work of the Holy Spirit

134, 133, 132, 293, 122

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 1 Corinthians 12:2-4, <sup>2</sup> *You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led.* <sup>3</sup> *Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.* <sup>4</sup> *There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.* (NKJV)

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

Dear friends in Christ,

Today we are continuing our series on the Nicene Creed. Part 11 focuses on the words, *I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who together with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified.*

When we say, *"I believe in the Holy Spirit"* we are thereby confessing Him also to be true God, coequal with the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is placed on the same level with the Father and the Son, therefore He is not the mere power or energy of God, but a distinct Person, *who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who together with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified.*

Let us consider the Person of the Holy Spirit and the Work of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### 1. The Person Of The Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit is true God because the Scriptures ascribe to Him divine names, divine attributes, divine works, and divine honour and glory.

We read in Acts 5:3-4, <sup>3</sup> *But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land*

*for yourself? <sup>4</sup> “While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.”*

This text shows that the Holy Spirit is true God. You cannot lie to a power or an energy, but you can lie to a person. The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity. This is understood from Matthew 28:19, <sup>19</sup> *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”*

The Holy Spirit, being true God, is omnipresent (present everywhere), omniscient (all-knowing), and eternal.

## **2. The Work Of The Holy Spirit**

Without the Holy Spirit people are spiritually blind and spiritually dead and at enmity against God. His mind is set on earthly things.

Perhaps you may remember the story of the millionaire who wanted to be buried in his big limousine when he died. In due course he passed away, and his orders were carried out.

An over-large grave was dug; the car was lowered in; the deceased man was seated behind the steering wheel. As the service concluded and the grave-diggers began to shovel the dirt around the car, one said to another, *“That’s really living!”*

The irony of the grave-digger’s remark strikes home: Living for things that money can buy, cannot ward off death. Yet each of us would like to live more abundantly.

Some people think that another hundred dollars a week would help. So would a bigger house in a nicer neighbourhood. Life would really be worth living if that promotion was mine. Then the children could be graduated from the right school and marry into the right family. Think of the doors that would open into the better, more abundant life! So they think!

This is where the Holy Spirit is needed. The work of the Holy Spirit is called conversion, regeneration, or new birth. It is the Holy Spirit who brings us to faith in Christ. Our text says that *no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit*. The Holy Spirit produces faith in us through the word of God.

We read in Romans 10:17, <sup>17</sup> *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

The Christian knows that our Lord cautioned that a person's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses. And yet Jesus came that we might *"have life and have it more abundantly."*<sup>1</sup>

Jesus own life did not seem particularly abundant. A Man without a bank account, He paid His taxes with a coin from the mouth of a fish. A Man without a home, He travelled from town to town, depending on the hospitality of friends. A Man without a family, He associated with notoriously undesirable characters.

A Preacher without a parish, He was unpopular with the religious leaders of His time. He gathered a few fishermen, a tax man, and other unlikely people into a travelling discussion group. These men doubted Him, misunderstood Him, tried to talk Him out of His life's plan, and finally one of them even betrayed Him. The others deserted Him, leaving Him to die the death of a common criminal on a cross on a hill called Golgotha.

By our standards this was the death of a failure. But something happened that changed all that. God raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus had said all along that He was the Son of God. Now it had to be true. *"I am the Resurrection and the Life"* Jesus had said.<sup>2</sup> No matter how it looked to the world, this Man had really been living. And this Man's life, death, and resurrection are shared by us. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the *"Lord and Giver of Life,"* this Man Jesus becomes our advocate.

Even those early disciples needed the Holy Spirit. Jesus had told them to wait for this coming of new power into their lives. When Pentecost came and the Holy Spirit filled their lives, these cowards turned into fearless missionaries.

We need the same Holy Spirit, or Christ is only a part of the past, a Man who lived long ago, a good Man, a martyr, but no more than that. Luther said it this way: *"I believe that I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, and sanctified and kept me in the true faith.*

*In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it united with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.”*

The Holy Spirit brings Christ to us, to our time, to our place, into our believing hearts. This is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus spoke of Him as “the Comforter” and “Helper.” Not the palliative comfort which involves no more than a drying of tears and the speaking of hopeful words. This is something much more powerful. This is a sustaining comfort and help which upholds us in any and all circumstances.

This power held up Stephen, who saw heaven opened while he was being executed as we read in Acts 7:55-56, <sup>55</sup> *But [Stephen], being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God,* <sup>56</sup> *and said, “Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!”*

The power of the Holy Spirit helped Paul, who sang in prison after being unjustly beaten and jailed in Philippi.<sup>3</sup> The Holy Spirit helped Onesimus to return to his slave-master after his escape.<sup>4</sup> This Holy Spirit is our direct attachment to God, promised by Christ, operating in our lives through the Word and sacraments.

The Holy Spirit enters our lives in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. This is our rebirth *“by water and the Spirit.”* The Lord and Giver of Life makes us new people, re-created into the image of God’s Son. In this sacrament we enter into fellowship with the family of God, the communion of saints, living in a covenant relationship with our Father.

Luther summarised this meaning as a *“gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Spirit.”* He supported his words with a quotation from the third chapter of Titus: *“<sup>5</sup> not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup> that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”*

The Holy Spirit sustains this new life in us by the spoken Word and the Sacrament of the Altar. God maintains His miracle in our lives through His continued presence. We have the words about the Word, His Son Jesus Christ. Men were inspired to record the intervention of God in history. His visitations were set down in the Scriptures by men whom God chose. By faith we confess that all of their words are the words of God Himself.

When we confess that these are the words of God, we also confess that these are the words of life. As our Lord said, *“They testify of Me.”*<sup>5</sup> This means that we get much more than just knowledge from these words of Scripture. Note that Satan himself has more knowledge than any of us, but that fallen archangel and his associates *“believe and tremble,”* as recorded in James 2:19.

We get the power for a new kind of life. Of course we cannot get that power without using that Word. A miracle drug in the medicine chest will not cure anything. We have to open the bottle and use it according to directions in order to revitalise our life in the flesh.

A Bible on the shelf is just as useless. We have to open it and use it according to directions in order to revitalise our life in the Holy Spirit. In the same way, just putting in time in church is not much help either. We must listen to the read and preached Word with open ears and open hearts. God does not run His world by timecard or time-clock but by quality and piecework.

The Sacrament of the Altar, too, must be used according to God’s intention. This is a living testimony of fellowship with the family of God. God not only erases our past errors and faults through the forgiveness of sins, but He gives us new power to live the new life to show forth the Lord’s death “till He comes.”

If we ever feel that this sacrament is unnecessary, Luther suggests that *we check to see whether we are still living and then look around to see whether we are still in the world. If we are to live in Christ and die to the world, we need it often.*

But the witness of the Holy Spirit in our lives does not stop with our participation in the sacraments and our regular use of the Word. St. Paul tells us that our flesh must be crucified with all the old affections and lusts. He lists them in Galatians 5:19-21, <sup>19</sup> *Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,* <sup>20</sup> *idolatry, sorcery, hatred,*

*contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,* <sup>21</sup> *envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like.*

Nobody can hear that list without recognising some particular enemy within himself which Satan threatens to use from without to destroy him. But St. Paul says that Christians just can't give in to these things.

Why do we, who call ourselves Christians, give in to them daily? Why are the lives of God's children so similar to the lives of the children of the world? Why do we spend so much time and effort pursuing the same status symbols that they pursue? Do we live carelessly because forgiveness is so easy?

Since we are saved by faith, do we forget the importance of good works, the fruits of faith? James is quite blunt about this attitude. He says, "*Faith without works is dead.*"<sup>6</sup> The Formula of Concord says that if our good works are not showing, our faith is not there. This is an essential part of our witness to the world. If we, who confess Christ, don't live as energetic, sacrificing, loving people, our words about Christ fall on deaf ears.

Living for Christ takes power, the power of the Holy Spirit operating in our daily lives. There is a word for it — sanctification. Scripture says in 1 Peter 2:9 that you are to show *the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.* We are to "*consider one another in order to stir up love and good works.*"<sup>7</sup> We are to be the "*salt of the earth*"<sup>8</sup> and the "*light of the world.*"<sup>9</sup>

In other words, God expects us to be different. St. Paul lists the fruits of the Holy Spirit as "*love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,* <sup>23</sup> *gentleness, and self-control.*"<sup>10</sup> God demands this kind of life not as the price of our salvation but as the token of our redemption, our witness to one another and to the world.

The Holy Spirit motivates us through the love of Christ to live these changed lives. He makes it possible for us to think of others instead of continuing in the self-centred pursuits of our old lives.

It is important for each of us, therefore, to take God where He can be found and where He gives us His Spirit: in the sacraments, in the Word, and in the living witness of His children.

God has spared no effort to rescue us from the peril of living without Him. He will spare no effort to help us live the abundant life with Him, beginning now and lasting through eternity. Scripture reminds us in John 17:3, <sup>3</sup> ***“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”*** God gave us His Holy Spirit that we might live sanctified lives for Him in this world now, and heavenly lives with Him hereafter. That is what really living is! 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> John 10:10

<sup>2</sup> John 11:25

<sup>3</sup> Acts 16:23-25

<sup>4</sup> Philemon 8-16

<sup>5</sup> John 5:39

<sup>6</sup> James 2:26

<sup>7</sup> Hebrews 10:24

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 5:13

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 5:14

<sup>10</sup> Galatians 5:22-23