

The Spirit And The World.

Text: Wis 1:7, Psa 68:3, 1

1) The Pentecost claim

Suggested Hymns:

2) The foundation of this claim

134, 128, 131, 129, 132

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 based on the Introit for today, which is based on Wisdom of Solomon 1:7, And Psalm 68:3 & 1, *The Spirit of the Lord fills the world. Alleluia! Let the righteous be glad; Let them rejoice before God; Yes, let them rejoice exceedingly. Hallelujah, hallelujah! Let God arise, Let His enemies be scattered; Let those also who hate Him flee before Him.* (NKJV)

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

Dear friends in Christ,

Today is Pentecost Sunday when we remember the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit on that first Pentecost Sunday. Today we consider the Pentecost claim and the foundation of that claim of the Holy Spirit filling the world. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Pentecost Claim

The Spirit Of The Lord Fills The World

Anyone who says there is a spirit or a voice within himself which he knows and hears, although others do not, and which reveals the true purpose for mankind and for the world, is truly a person filled with the Holy Spirit.

Any group of people who make this claim, that it is the Holy spirit which unites its members are the true people of God.

The ancient song we heard earlier in our Worship Service, in the Introit, after making our confession of sin and hearing the Word of forgiveness, makes this wonderful claim.

It asserts that the Holy Spirit within us, who has brought us together, fills the world. We have no tanks or bombs with which to make a way for the Holy Spirit

in the world. Yet this is the claim we make, that the Spirit of the Lord fills the world.

We sang before,¹

Holy Spirit, all divine,
Dwell within this heart of mine.

Another hymnist writes,²

Creator Spirit, by whose aid
The earth's foundations first were laid.

Here we are saying that the Holy Spirit is greater than any private spirit or folk-spirit or national spirit or party spirit. It is the very Spirit of God, who is at the beginning of all things and at the end of all things.

In the Gospel for today Jesus Christ says that this was the very purpose of His coming and His going, to give the Holy Spirit to His disciples. They are not merely to follow Him in His flesh and to sit at His feet. They are to take up life by the Holy Spirit, whom the Father would send in His name.

The Holy Spirit teaches them all things and brings to light all that Jesus had taught them. The very deeds which Jesus did they would do too, and greater deeds than these.³

St. Paul echoes these words when he says to members of the church, that the very Spirit which was in Jesus now dwells in them. This Spirit raised Jesus from the dead and has power to give life to all mortal bodies.⁴ *Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.*⁵ Our life together by the Holy Spirit is a clue to God's purpose for the future, to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth.⁶

On Pentecost we affirm something not merely about our ourselves, but about the whole creation. We assert not only something which happened many years ago in one corner of the world, but also something which must happen throughout the world today. *"The Spirit of the Lord fills the world. Alleluia!"*

"Alleluia" literally means, "All of you, praise the Lord!" God, who is at work among us, fills the world. We heard in the Epistle lesson today, *"But this*

is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ... I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh.”⁷

So let those whom He has made righteous — who are “right” by faith in Him — be joyful. ***“Let the righteous be joyful; let them exult before God; let them be jubilant with joy! Alleluia! Alleluia!”***

This may seem to be a strange jubilation, by a people who have often been small, have often been persecuted, and is often ignored in the world. Even amid uncertainty and pain the call for this joy goes up.

The nature of this joy is distinct and separable from comfort or pleasure. There may be joy where there is little comfort or pleasure, just as there may be comfort and pleasure where there is little joy.

It is also distinct from courage. The world has seen much courage in the face of disappointment and danger. It tells us to put on a brave front. But what is the world to make of this joy?

Sadly, the reason for the wonderful joy in our text is not apparent to everybody. ***“The Spirit of the Lord fills the world”*** — this is not a mere theoretical affirmation offered for the world’s inspection. The Holy Spirit is not discovered or received in that way.

It is an utterance in the face of difficulties, and in spite of appearances to the contrary. It exults the walls pressing in on every side and threatening to crush human lives, which seem inescapably real. The walls have been breached, and in its jubilation it rides above them.

In a word, it is a song. It is the new song of the redeemed in heaven and earth. It was the song of Israel in the wilderness, the song of the Psalms, the song of disciples in prison and of martyrs in the arena — and it becomes the song of all those people whose life and world have been opened by Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit He imparts.

We do not sing our own songs today — and we never really bring our own songs to church. It is the song of the church, the new song, which is sung here; and we are invited to join in that song.

That is our claim and that is our joy as we heard the entrance hymn of the church in the Introit for today. ***The Spirit of the Lord fills the world. Alleluia!***

2. The Foundation Of This Claim That The Spirit Of The Lord Fills The World

Let us first remind ourselves of the Third article of the Apostles' Creed as we learn in *Luther's Small Catechism*.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. What does this mean?

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.

In this Christian church day after day He fully forgives my sins and the sins of all believers.

On the last day He will raise me and all the dead and give me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true.

Anyone who claims to have the Holy Spirit must be able to say how this Spirit is really God's and not self-chosen. To do this, we must go back to the Person through whom the Holy Spirit comes, to Jesus Christ.

Luther once called the obedience, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ a "**body**" of the Spirit. They were this because Jesus Christ "**emptied Himself**" and so became a vehicle for the Holy Spirit. He made Himself of no reputation. He sought no name, no fame, no power or position for Himself. He was obedient all the way to death. He was one with the Father in His obedience.

Therefore Jesus is given the name that is above every name. And therein lies the basis of this claim to the true and ultimate Spirit - Jesus made no claim for Himself and sought nothing for Himself. He sought the kingdom of God and His righteousness and so was the instrument of the true Spirit.⁸

Sometimes there is suspicion that appealing to the Holy Spirit, and invoking the name of the Holy Spirit, is a means of enshrining our own judgments above

those of other people or groups. Even within the church there is a fear of “mad prophets” who claim the Spirit for private judgments.

But we must make no such claims for ourselves — except insofar as we have shared the death and resurrection with Jesus Christ. Grace and forgiveness in Jesus Christ has put an end to all selfish pretensions and claims. With the forgiveness of sins we receive a new spirit. We take up a new life with Christ and so thus share His Spirit.

We sing as people who have died with Christ to sin and self, and who now only live for Him. We sing in His name and by His Spirit.

When we cry in the words of the Introit, “*Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered,*” we are not asking or asserting favouritism. We are not asking God to save us as we are, while He destroys others. Rather we are affirming the ultimacy of the Holy Spirit in the world and calling for that to become manifest.

The very first enemies to be scattered are our own old sinful selves. The very first hatred to flee before Him must be our own. Such enmity and hatred toward God cling to us. They are as “natural” as our preference to live for ourselves and not for God. Yet in our Baptism God viewed us as people for whom Jesus Christ died to end all that, as people who have already died to sin, and who now live for Jesus.

Daily, by faith, we view ourselves in this way and pray in this way. Daily we confess all within us which is opposed to Christ and consign it to death. Daily and richly the forgiveness of sins raises us up, as Christ was raised by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and enables us to cry again the greatest cry of the human heart, “*Abba! Father!*” It is by that Spirit that we pray, “*Let His enemies be scattered; let those who hate Him flee before Him!*” — including all false claims, selfish ambitions, and phoney pretensions within ourselves!

We do not assert our spirit, because the Holy Spirit has stilled the voice of every private claim within us and has affirmed Himself in us.

We have obedience with joy. Such is the “inner witness of the Spirit.” But His work is not merely “inner,” He seeks also to be “outer.” He found a “body” in the obedience of Jesus Christ; and on the basis of what was accomplished in the body of Jesus Christ, He seeks a body in us.

Luther said that *“The Spirit cannot dwell among us, otherwise than in physical things, as the Word, water, Christ’s body, and in the saints on earth.”* That was His reply to anyone who seeks a “spiritual experience” without offering his body for the use of the Holy Spirit in the world.

When Jesus promised the Holy Spirit in the Gospel, He spoke of the deeds His disciples would do. They would be united with Him in their obedience as branches to a vine, bearing rich fruit — or they could do nothing.⁹

Exactly in “doing the truth” the assurance of the Holy Spirit would come to them — and in no other way. We read in John 7:17, ¹⁷ *“If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.* And in John 3:21, ²¹ *“But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”*

We are naturally inclined to say, first I must know and then I will do; first I must see and then I will serve. Jesus turns this around, first we must do and then we will know; first we must serve and then we will see.

For in such activity is the Holy Spirit, and in such living by the Spirit is the peace and certainty of the Holy Spirit. The more we think of it, the more we shall see that in matters of faith and of the Spirit this is how it has to be.

We do not claim the *Spirit who fills the world*, or rejoice in it, without seeking embodiments of that Spirit in the world — and first of all in our own body and life. The question of morality is an important one, *What is forbidden and why?* But that question is transformed when we see our bodies as instruments of the Holy Spirit.

Then our question becomes a vastly different one, namely, *what is expected?* St. Paul was teaching more than morals, when he reminded the Christians at Corinth who were forgetting it.

We read in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, ¹⁹ *Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?* ²⁰ *For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.*

The way of holiness is not merely one of self-cleansing and self-control — a swept and garnished house may be occupied by seven other demons worse than the first. The way of holiness is to use one's body for God's purposes; not conservation but consecration. In problems of immorality and moral struggle, one celebration of Holy Communion is worth a thousand words by a counsellor.

Secondly, we must also seek, or allow, the embodiment of the Holy Spirit in the church. It is the function of the Holy Spirit, we say with Luther in his explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed, *to gather and unite the church*. We must not grieve the Holy Spirit in this His purpose, but be used by Him. We do not pick and choose the members of the church, but willingly receive those whom the Holy Spirit joins to us.

We must not seek to shape the church to our own pattern, nor ever despair of the church when it does not fulfil our expectations. The church is His creation and His preservation. It is an embodiment, not an “embottlement” of the Holy Spirit.

People who are saved by grace through faith, are forever feeling their own spiritual pulse; and members who know the church is the workmanship of the Holy Spirit are forever taking the church's spiritual temperature.

The unity of the church created by the Holy Spirit is not a mere “togetherness,” and its community is much more than company. Its unity is based on the new freedom of each person from himself to serve the others. By that very token this is a freedom of each person to be himself — that is, to be that self which God created and redeemed. We live as brothers and sisters, bearing one another's burdens — not as cogs in a machine, fitted, and turned by human engineering.

Finally, we seek embodiments of the Holy Spirit in the world. The church lives not for itself but for the world. Christ loved the world and gave Himself for it. In the same way, and by the same Holy Spirit, we must learn to love the world too. The whole world is to be our mission field.

By the same Holy Spirit we seek the rule of God in our daily work. We do justice as the world counts justice, but also show love in every dealing because, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, that is what is due to every person.

We not only show kindness to the needy and the deprived, but also serve the civic community while we ourselves comprise the body of Christ.

Like Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit is from God, who proceeds from the Father and the Son and with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified.

Yes, *The Spirit of the Lord fills the world* - in our hearts, in the church and in the world. Amen!

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

¹ Hymn 131 v5

² TLH 236

³ John 14:12

⁴ Romans 8:11

⁵ Romans 8:23

⁶ Ephesians 1:10

⁷ Acts 2:16-17, Joel 2:28

⁸ Philippians 2:6-11

⁹ John 15