

St. John 15:26-27, St. John 16:12-14, Acts 2:38,39

Dear Friends in Christ,

A fellow by the name of Tim Downs wrote: "Watches, cars and Christians can all look chromed and shiny. But watches don't tick, cars don't go and Christians don't make a difference without insides. For a Christian, that's the Holy Spirit." A person cannot be a Christian without the working of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit had Paul write of us, "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked..." (Eph. 2:1-2a) Spiritually "dead in trespasses and sins." It has been said many, many times but cannot be said and stressed enough: That which is dead cannot make itself alive; it cannot make a decision for Jesus. And this, which the Holy Spirit had Paul write, can never be over stressed: "No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit." (I Cor. 12:3)

I'm not giving you something new, but it can easily slip to the background when the hurts and disappointments of life tear at our faith. On this Sunday of Pentecost we pray the Holy Spirit bless our understanding of . . .

HIM WHO MADE US ALIVE IN CHRIST

I. To Glorify Jesus.

We start with this most important truth: The chief work of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Jesus. Our reading from John 15 points to that when Jesus says, "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me." (v. 26)

Our reading from the 16th chapter of John's Gospel is crystal clear. Jesus says:

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. (vv. 12-14)

And the question: How does the Holy Spirit glorify Jesus? And the answer: by working faith in us. Question #156 of Luther's Small Catechism asks: "What is the special work of the Holy Spirit?" (Small Catechism, 2009 edition, p. 149) The answer: "The Holy Spirit sanctifies me (makes me holy) by bringing me to faith, so that I might have the blessings of redemption and lead a godly life . . ."

The emphasis is crucial: "Makes me holy" not, "I make me holy." Remember why? Well, it's what we heard from Scripture just a few moments ago: "...you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked..." Listen to this:

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.... For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Eph. 2:4-5, 8-9)

The Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus by opening our hearts and minds to hold Jesus as the complete payment for our sin. **By grace we have been saved** from God's judgment and wrath; **by grace we have been saved** and eternally embraced by God's love. **By grace we have been saved** and received the most astounding miracle: Faith to know Jesus. We are going to heaven when we die!!

II. Through Means.

And we are to understand that this faith wasn't given to us out of nowhere. To repeat, Jesus said, "When the Spirit of truth comes (the Holy Spirit), he will guide you into all truth...whatever he hears (from the Word Himself; from Jesus, the Word in the flesh) he will speak...He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you." (Jn. 16:13) As most of you well know, this is the blessing we have in the written and spoken Word. The Holy Spirit at work!

And He works through the Sacraments - the visible Word. Our text from Acts 2:38-39 reports:

And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off (the future generations), everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.

We cannot acquiesce to those who twist Scripture and belittle the Sacrament of Baptism with the thinking that to be filled with the Holy Spirit is an event that takes place after water Baptism in the name of the Triune God - the thinking that to be filled with the Holy Spirit is evidenced by speaking in tongues. Recall Acts 9 and the conversion of Paul. After he was blinded, he was sent to the home of a disciple named Ananias. And here is the sequence of events:

So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that (1) you receive your sight and (2) be filled with the Holy Spirit." (Next is the fulfillment and please note the "how" of the fulfillment) And immediately (1) something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and (2) was baptized... (Acts 9:17-18a)

The promise of the Holy Spirit who works and sustains faith - that is, the "filling" of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled when Paul was baptized with water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit! Again and again, "Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sin, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

To be Baptized with water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is to be baptized in the name of Jesus, is for the forgiveness of sin, and fills the person with the Holy Spirit. The problem isn't a lack of the Holy Spirit. The problem is a lack of the person using the Means of Grace - Word and Sacraments - the Means the Holy Spirit uses to sustain and strengthen faith and get us through the nasty parts of life!

In the Lord's Supper it is the Word Himself, our Lord Jesus, Who says and promises, "Take, eat; this is my body.' And he took a cup...saying, 'Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many **for the forgiveness of sins.**'" (Matt. 26:26b-28)

And please forgive the incredible repetition, but we too easily set aside the words of Jesus: "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears (from the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ!) He will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come." (Jn. 16:13) Every verse I've placed in front of you this morning points to the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit working through the written and spoken Word and the visible Word of Baptism and the Lord's Supper to assure us of sin forgiven, to fill us with His presence (the Holy Spirit's presence), to direct us to Jesus and, consequently, everlasting life!

III. Counsels Us.

In describing the Holy Spirit and His work, Scripture refers to Him as “the Helper,” as in “But when the Helper comes.” The word has also been translated into “Counselor” and “Comforter”. Keeping those terms in mind, Martin Luther said:

...the word “Comforter,” ...refers to the counsel (given to) a man who has been accused, (from) a person who espouses his cause, who defends him, straightens his affairs, and serves him with counsel and aid, admonition and encouragement, when he is in need of them. This (says Christ) is to be the office of the Holy Spirit after I leave you and you will have no comfort and no assistance in the world. All the world will be against you... Besides, your own conscience and heart will plague and frighten you with the fear of God’s wrath, with sadness and heavy thoughts of your own weakness, so that you well may and must despair if you were to be left without comfort and strength in this predicament. (What Luther Says, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo., 1959, p. 662)

Indeed, the Holy Spirit is our Counselor, our Comforter, our Helper. The chief work of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Jesus. Jesus is glorified when God’s people are brought to faith. And that ultimately directs us to this:

Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (Col. 3:2-4)

We are thankful to **Him who made us alive in Christ?** All glory be to Jesus! Amen!

Pastor Bill Abbott

PENTECOST

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“Him Who Made Us Alive in Christ”

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II. Through Means.

III. Counsels Us.

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