

May 19, 2024

John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

# “The Holy Spirit: Our Advocate!”

Pilgrim Lutheran Church  
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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today we celebrate the day of Pentecost. This was the day that the words of Jesus were fulfilled when he spoke to the apostles about the *Helper* who would come - *the Spirit of truth*. Other translations refer to the *Spirit of truth* as *Comforter* or *Counselor* or *Advocate*. All of these terms do their best to capture the meaning of the Greek term *Paraclete* which in our pew Bibles is simply translated as *Helper*. So which word should we use? Well it's okay to use all of them if they are understood as terms that define the content of the Holy Spirit's witness about Jesus and the heart of the Father. We all need help. We all need comfort. We all need counsel. We all need advocacy. And the Holy Spirit helps us, comforts us, counsels us, and advocates, that is, he speaks to us about Jesus and takes us to him and the Father.

The Holy Spirit is the *Advocate* who eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son. Not only does this mean that he is equal with the Father and the Son, but he proceeds from them in such a way, that in his person and work [his witness], he connects us to Jesus and our heavenly Father. *The Spirit of truth* is the *Advocate* who took the place of Jesus at the side of the apostles and brought to their minds everything that Jesus did and said so that when they wrote down the words of the New Testament Bible it became a powerful Spirit-filled gospel testimony that touches us in such a way that Jesus is truly with us and we abide in him now by faith and forever in glory.

Thus, the words of Paul in Romans 8:16 are true about us because of the miracle of Pentecost: "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit [our inner being] that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs - heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him." But not everyone happens to be children of God. There are those who are opposed to the work of **The Holy Spirit: Our Advocate!** There are those of whom our gospel lesson for this morning says that they will be convicted concerning sin because they do not believe in Jesus as their Savior. Jesus goes on to say that they will be convicted "concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged."

Our redemption in the shed blood of Jesus Christ has sealed the doom of all who are wicked and have rejected the truth of Jesus and the freedom he brings. Though we suffer in many ways, until we are in the paradise of God, we have the comfort of knowing that we will conquer in Christ and all our enemies will no longer be able to bother us. This the Holy Spirit makes certain for us when he promises to help in our weaknesses, even perfecting our prayers, interceding for us according to the will of God, and working out all things for our good that we may reach heaven. As Paul writes in Romans 8:31-39,

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In the meantime, until we reach the destination that has been established for us before the foundation of the world, the witness of the Holy Spirit in the apostolic Scripture has been entrusted to us as the church, the bride of Jesus. This is tremendously reassuring to us as Christians who have staked everything in Jesus. And Jesus is not far away from us but is with us always until the end of the age. It is the Spirit who, not only creates and preserves faith within our hearts, comforts us with Jesus when everything seems to be against us. Luther writes:

Christ wants to say: “He (the Spirit) will give you strength and courage to enable you to continue to adhere to Me and to pursue your course. For if He were not with you and you were to engage in daily combat with both the devil and the world, you would not be able to bear this. Therefore it is surely necessary for Him to be with you, not only to have His words resound in your ears but also to strengthen your hearts with His light and His fire. Then you will be able to persist; you will have power exceeding that of both the devil and the world with all their malice and might.”

The Holy Spirit is called our *Helper* or *Comforter* or *Counselor* or *Advocate* as one who has been literally called to our side. He is one who will constantly stand by our side in the means of grace to give us all the help that we need to make it through the dangers and the messes of our lives. **The Holy Spirit: Our Advocate** who speaks to us of all things regarding the Son counteracts all who would remove us from the saving rule of our forever King. The Holy Spirit is the *Comforter* who is stronger than anyone you can name because he shares the name of the Son and the Father. He is true God.

When evil comes to shatter your life, the Holy Spirit whispers with great consolation in the gospel and sacraments where Jesus is to be found: “Do not be afraid. Go and do that which you have been commanded to do, and do not fear the terrors of sin, the devil, unbelievers, death, or hell. God is not angry with you, nor does he reject you. Christ, God’s Son, died for you and rose from the dead. All your sins are forgiven and the kingdom has been given to you forever!” Luther writes:

Thus He again makes the heart happy and bold, and inspires it with the courage and confidence to say: “Now I will believe in this Christ; I will preach him and praise him even if this should vex the world and all the devils. And although I am a sinner and have lived ever so wickedly, yet I will not on this account deny and reject this Man [Jesus]; nor will I have such small regard for his suffering and death as you have, devil, when you try to make me believe that these are inadequate to cancel and extinguish all sin and your whole hell.”

The service of the Holy Spirit in Gospel and Sacraments is vital in every believer’s life! In them, he makes it possible for us to trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. He guides us into the truth about Christ as our Lord and Savior. This same Spirit enables us to have contact with God in prayer. He produces fruit in us and enables us to die to our sinful flesh and its evil works. The bottom line is that his presence in our lives is the grand assurance from our Savior that we never have to face the trials and struggles of life alone. To have the Spirit in the Gospel and Sacraments is to have Christ - his words and works - and to have our Father in heaven. Jesus went on to say to the apostles in our gospel lesson:

“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. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

These words teach us that the gospel is not understood and believed without the Holy Spirit. At the time, the apostles could not bear many things in the moment. Sometimes we experience this as well and see it in the newly converted. But Jesus also says that the Holy Spirit will guide the apostles to understand clearly the truth in which Jesus preached. Moreover, Jesus says to them that the Holy Spirit will “glorify” him and take what is his and declare it to them. And the apostles have done the same for us. All the gospel treasures of Jesus have been given to us by the witness of the Holy Spirit and apostles. **The Holy Spirit: Our Advocate** has given us faith to receive Jesus as well as to give him to others.

There are those you know and care about and even love who do not know Jesus. There are the strangers that we meet and get to know in varying degrees who are lost or who are weak Christians or Christians in name only. All of us were at one time like them. The most wonderful gift is that **The Holy Spirit: Our Advocate** gave his witness of Jesus to the apostles and took their witness to have it written down so that it would reach us down to our very day to make us witnesses with them.

That is the miracle of Pentecost. Roughly two-thousand years ago the apostles preached on that day to all who would listen. And when great persecution hit the church in Jerusalem, the children of God were scattered and yet proclaimed the Gospel and Sacraments wherever they went. Someone along the way was used by the Holy Spirit to bring you to faith. They spent the energy of their life so that you might have eternal life. Having been helped, comforted, counseled, and touched by their advocacy as you have - won't you do the same for others?

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott