

THE FEAST OF PENTECOST
John 16:5-11 – June 8, 2014
Sermon by Pastor Roger Zehms
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Radcliff, Kentucky

⁵“Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’
⁶Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. ⁷But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; ¹⁰in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; ¹¹and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

Just what does the word “Pentecost” mean? Think of the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. It is called by that name because it is a five-sided building. So in the word Pentecost we have that word five. Pentecost tells us this day is fifty days after Easter. In the old Jewish church year they also celebrated Pentecost. It was fifty days after Passover and it was a harvest festival.

On the fiftieth day after the first Easter that word Pentecost took on a new meaning. The promised comforter, the Holy Spirit, the one our text for today calls the “**Counselor**,” was sent to the believers in Jerusalem. That Day of Pentecost became the birthday of the New Testament Christian Church. That Day of Pentecost, a Sunday, became the day of the week on which Christians, in their freedom, chose to make their special worship day.

The words of this gospel lesson were spoken by Jesus just before his arrest, suffering and death. He describes what was going to happen to them when the Holy Spirit came upon them. He explains how that Holy Spirit would be the One who would guide them – and us! – into all truth. We are all interested in the truth, and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. This morning, then, let us see that

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH HAS COME!

HE “CONVICTS THE WORLD” JESUS SAYS.

HE “CONVICTS THE WORLD OF GUILT IN REGARD TO SIN.”

The Holy Spirit – the third person of the Godhead – is the One who is doing this. This is more than proving that the world is sinful. He is going to do more than instruct them about what is sinful and what is not. Rather we dig deeper and ask “Which sin really condemns a person?” And Jesus answer and explains it in verse nine: “**In regard to sin, because men do not believe in me.**”

The entire world, Christian and non-Christian, will admit to failures and mistakes in life. Even the world condemns and judges our outward life and conduct. Look at all the laws and regulations we have in our land. We have law upon law relating to autos and travel. We have laws regarding our property. We have laws regarding food, and the list could go on an on. If someone breaks these laws he is subject to a punishment relative to the offense committed. It was not necessary for Christ to go to his heavenly Father or to send the Holy Spirit to make that known to us.

The Holy Spirit is looking at our hearts. The Holy Spirit can see what the real person inside of us is really like. The Holy Spirit can see regardless of what the person on the outside says or does. The Holy Spirit sees our worship and our lives as true or false. He sees if we have a true love from a heart of faith or contempt for God and his Word. He sees disobedience of God's laws and he sees if our heart is filled with lust.

The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin on the basis of God's Word. He need only convict us of one sin – that is all that is necessary. That sin is the sin of unbelief. This is the sin of rejecting Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. That sin is behind every other sin. And the world stands convicted of this sin of unbelief. He came not only to tell us this is true but to prove it to us. If we do not repent of that sin we stand convicted in God's sight. All other sins mean nothing in the face of unbelief.

HE **“CONVICTS THE WORLD IN REGARD TO ... RIGHTEOUSNESS.”**

What kind of **“righteousness”** avails in God's sight? There is a righteousness in secular or worldly affairs. Sometimes we call it civic righteousness. Many pious people in Jesus' day and in our day have that kind of righteousness. It was not necessary for Christ to go away or send the Holy Spirit for that kind of good moral life of righteousness – it exists!

Consider Mr. Schober's funeral sermon. He was a friend's grandfather and he was a great man. However, he rejected his Savior for many years even though he grew up in the church. On his deathbed he repented and the funeral sermon made that clear. Some visitors were disturbed by the pastor's words. They were aware of his civic righteousness. He had led a good moral life in the eyes of the world. However, had he not repented of his sin of rejection, it would have been worth nothing.

That is the way the world looks at righteousness. The world does not want to acknowledge sin – they would rather cover it up. The world prefers its own righteousness and good moral life. Its mistakes are to be excused or at least made less than “sin.” This is nothing else than work-righteousness – a way of trying to earn one's way into heaven!

The Holy Spirit convicts the world of this kind of self-righteousness. There is only one kind of righteousness that avails in the sight of God. That is the righteousness of Jesus Christ! For that righteousness there is no merit on our part. That righteousness was won by his “going away” to his suffering and death. That righteousness is not poured into us like a bottle filled. That righteousness is grasped by faith in Jesus Christ – a faith worked by the Holy Spirit. Jesus made this righteousness acceptable to our God. The Spirit comes in Word and Sacrament to effect repentance and faith. This is the only righteousness that stands before our God.

HE **“CONVICTS THE WORLD IN REGARD TO ... JUDGMENT.”**

What judgment will God hold? The Holy Spirit has shown us the fact of sin and also God's righteousness in Christ Jesus. When sin and righteousness oppose each other and clash there is judgment. The judgment that the world makes contradicts and clashes with the judgment of God. Look and see what happened to the prince of this world, the ruler of darkness, the devil himself. The devil's judgment is already affected. Where justice prevails there judgment must be pronounced. Christ has sealed the devil's doom.

This is comfort for the believer. It is condemnation for those who are lost. It is an acquittal for those who believe in Jesus, for those who recognize the Spirit's work.

HE GLORIFIES THE SAVIOR BY HIS WORK.

HE WORKS THROUGH THE MEANS OF GRACE.

The Holy Spirit does not work in any other way. Look back to Jesus' ascension. The disciples were told not to just stand gazing into heaven. We cannot sit in a corner expecting in some miraculous way the Spirit will come on us. Some Christians get carried away looking for such a charismatic experience rather than listening to God's Word. We can't separate the work of the Spirit from the Word and the Sacraments.

The work and office of this Spirit of Truth comes from the Word of God. In John 16:12-13 Jesus says, **"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth."** He guides and instructs us. He has brought our sinful and dead hearts and minds into the truth. He makes us familiar with the truth of God. He has let us understand and grasp the truth and made us realize the grace of God in Christ Jesus. He is the "follow-through" in the game of golf.

The blessings of the Spirit are ours. He has done his work in us through the Means of Grace. He did that in Baptism. In Acts 2:38-39 Peter is quoted as saying, **"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. The promise is for you and your children..."**

Jesus put it this way to Nicodemus in John 3:5-6: **"I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."**

He does that also in Holy Communion. Listen to Jesus' words recorded in Matthew 26:27-28: **"Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."** Jesus also said this in Matthew 11:28: **"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest – rest for your souls."**

The Spirit works through the Word. Jesus says, John 8:31-32: **If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."** In the Psalms we read: (119:32) **"I will run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free."**

He continues to do his work through the Means of Grace. Reflecting on our Baptism he gives us daily strength. We use the Bible daily and he speaks to us in it. We come to his altar for the personal and individual assurance and blessing of his forgiveness and help and that is why many churches are celebrating communion every Sunday and not just once or twice a month.

HE IS OUR "COUNSELOR."

He is doing the work. He has done it in the past and will continue doing so in the future. He does the work of convincing us. He lays open the wounds of sin. He applies the healing medicines of the Gospel. He will do this for us in the next twenty Sundays of the Pentecost season.

We need to look to him! He is our divine helper, our advocate, our intercessor, our comforter. We have the comfort that Jesus is our Savior. We have the comfort that he will keep us in the faith until the end. We have the comfort that he is with us always. Let us turn to our God as the Spirit has turned us to him in faith. Let us praise and glorify the Father who created us. Let us praise and glorify the Son who redeemed us. Let us praise and glorify the Spirit who makes and keeps us holy. May the Spirit of truth keep you in that truth forever. Amen.

