



THE COMPASS

RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Compass:
Encounter-Examine-Explore-Embrace God's Word
On
Your Discipleship Path

Sermon Series: "I Believe." The Nicene Creed
(Pentecost, 2025)
"God the Holy Spirit."

□ **Day #1—Monday, October 27th. Read: Acts 2:1-4. –Encounter: God's Word and your life—What do you Hear and/or See?**

We now move to the third article of the Nicene Creed...*I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life...*

The promised Holy Spirit was sent upon the early church on the day of Pentecost. The day of "Pentecost" was originally an annual Jewish feast that followed the "Feast of First Fruits," also called the "Feast of Weeks" (Leviticus 23:15-22). The name "Pentecost" comes from the Greek word "*pente*" meaning "50," because it fell 50 days after Passover. In the New Testament era, Pentecost also commemorated Moses' giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. Pentecost was one of the three, annual *pilgrimage* festivals in Judaism, which required *physical attendance* in Jerusalem and the Temple. Consequently, during the festival of Pentecost, many pilgrims from throughout the surrounding empire would come to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast and offer sacrifices.

While the Holy Spirit had been active prior to Pentecost, for example, the Spirit was present at creation (*Genesis 1:1–2*), in Old Testament history (certain individuals and/or groups; *Judges 6:34*; *1 Samuel 16:13*), and in the life and ministry of Jesus (*Luke 1:30–37*; *4:1, 14*; *Acts 10:38*), now there would be two changes. First, the Spirit would dwell *in people* and not just come to them for a *certain time*. Second, and relatedly, the Spirit's presence would be permanent, not temporary (*John 14:16–17*). The Spirit could not have come sooner, for as we have discussed in this series, it was essential that Jesus die, be raised from the dead, and ascend back to heaven before the Spirit could be given (*John 7:37–39*; *16:7ff*). On the day of Pentecost, God's plan of salvation was being fulfilled!

On the day of Pentecost, there was the visible manifestation of the Spirit's presence and power: tongues of fire. The symbol of fire is multivalent in scripture. On Mt Sinai (*Exodus 19:18*), the fire on the mountain represented the presence of God. The tongues of fire would also symbolize the powerful witness of the church that was to be given to all people. As we will explore in the third article of the Nicene Creed, it is the consequential work of the Holy Spirit that is being confessed. The Holy Spirit is, like the God the Father and Jesus the Son, *the Lord*. The Spirit is the *giver of life*.

Most importantly, Pentecost marked the beginning of the church. Up to this point the church was anticipated (*Matthew 16:18*). Now, the church will be a gathered body by means of the Holy Spirit through baptism (*1 Corinthians 12:13*; *Matthew 28:19–20*). The Spirit will dwell in every believer and in the church (*1 Corinthians 6:19*), as we live in fellowship with God. The Spirit will fill and empower us! When the Spirit does fill and empower, we are enabled both to serve and to grow in our knowledge of faith and in our dependence upon Jesus (*Galatians 5:19–23*).

Consider/Reflect: (In the book of Acts) Luke describes the scene with a comparison. The emphasis in the wording is on the mouth ("tongue," "speak," "utterance"), which may indicate where the "fire" appeared (see Moses' appearance in Ex 34:29). The fire appropriately appears as tongues of flame, since the Holy Spirit works through the apostles' speech. In the OT, angelic spirits were described as fire (see note, Ps 104:3–4). Fire also represented the presence of God's Spirit (Ex 3:2–4)."¹

1 *The Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

□ **Day #2—Tuesday, October 28th. Read: Ephesians 4.17-20. —Examine: The Text and its Context.**

Paul continues to encourage and describe the *new life given* through Jesus. The old way of life must be completely abandoned. The new life in Christ that is the focus of this section in Ephesians, is the day-to-day life of serving God and growing in one's relationship with Jesus. One theological description of this ongoing life of faith and growing in faith is "Sanctification." Being sanctified by the power of the Holy Spirit is the *lifelong journey of becoming like Jesus*—the purpose and goal of discipleship!

Sanctification, the misused and forgotten word in the Christian vocabulary, has to do with holiness of life—personal but not private holiness. In Protestantism, especially, we have failed to emphasize clearly enough that *regeneration*, the remaking of life into the likeness of Christ, is the natural result of justification...Justification carries the transformation of life with it...Justification creates a new creature, with a new heart, in a new world. The new world is a new realm into which the Christian enters, moving out of the strictures and controls of the powers in the domain of flesh. Thus Paul's words, "*you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk*" (v. 17). The old world is still present, and the temptations and powers of the old world still have a magnetic pull upon us. In most cases most of us may only be "signs" of new life in the midst of deceit and decadence.²

Paul reminds the people of the way of life that reflected the *unbelief* of the Gentiles. Because of the "callousness," or *hardness* of their hearts, these unbelievers had given "themselves over" to sensual sin and greediness. Clearly, this is NOT the life of a follower of Jesus, who is learning to live their lives as Jesus would! Again, this is our definition of a disciple at Red Hill: "*Learning to live my life as Jesus would live it if He were me.*" The word "learned" in v.20 is *μανθάνω* (*manthano*), meaning "To be taught, instructed." It is the same root word in Greek for "disciple." In other words, because of their (our) *new life in Christ*, we are truly *new creations*! What this means is...

The truth of God and of his purpose has come to dominate your minds, and this truth has ethical implications. Your lives are no longer dark, your minds no longer vain. You are no longer alienated but walking step by step in the full light of the Lord, and in fellowship with him. So you must finish with all immorality, and the passion for what is impure, and for what outrages the souls and bodies of others.³

Consider / Reflect: "Jews in the first century were deeply concerned about ceremonial purity—avoiding "common" or unclean foods, not touching a corpse, and keeping a variety of other purity regulations based on the Mosaic law and Jewish tradition. Paul, however, stresses only the importance of moral purity for followers of Christ. He insists that all his churches renounce the various kinds of moral impurities that were so rampant in the culture in which they lived."⁴

□ **Day #3—Wednesday, October 29th. Read: Isaiah 11.1-6. —Explore: The background to this text(s).**

Why is the Spirit called the "Holy Spirit?" The Spirit is holy because God is holy and the Spirit is one of the persons of the Trinity—the Spirit is *the Lord*. The holiness of God is an attribute that is repeated throughout the Bible. The prophet Isaiah saw a vision of the throne of God, over which three seraphim (angels) proclaimed: "*Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory*" (Isaiah 6:3). When God is mentioned as being holy, this includes all three Persons of the Trinity, so the Holy Spirit is just as holy as God the Father and just as holy as the Son of God. They are all three co-equally God as well as *holy, holy, holy*.

In our text for today, Isaiah prophecies about the work of the Holy Spirit for the promised Messiah (Jesus). The coming King will be from the family line of David. Not only this, but the Messianic King will be endowed with power from the Spirit of God—the Holy Spirit! J.A. Motyer describes the significance of this prophecy...

This sevenfold elaboration of the divine endowment of the messianic King begins with *the Spirit of the LORD*. This denotes the Spirit as himself divine...The further six elaborations develop this in three pairs: the king's ruling attributes, *wisdom* and *understanding*...his practical abilities, *counsel* and *power*, and his spiritual qualities, *knowledge* and *fear*. All these characterize the true ruler: *wisdom*, the general capacity to 'have a right judgment in all things'; *understanding*, the ability to see to the heart of an issue (contrast the king of Assyria, 10:13); *counsel*, the ability to devise a right course of action, here coupled with *power* to see it through. *Knowledge* goes beyond 'knowing about'...for *knowledge* is enjoying a personal, intimate relationship with a person...When that person is the Lord, the relationship demands and prompts the *fear* which shows itself in moral concern (Gen. 20:11), obedience (Exod. 20:20), sensitive conduct (Neh. 5:9, 15), loyalty (Ps. 2:11) and worship (Ps. 5:7). (Cf. 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Pet. 1:17–18; 3:15.)⁵

2 M.D. Dunnam and L.J. Ogilvie. *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Thomas Nelson Inc., 1982).
3 F. Foulkes. *Ephesians: an introduction and commentary* (InterVarsity Press, 1989).
4 C.E. Arnold. *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Zondervan, 2002).
5 J.A. Motyer. *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (InterVarsity Press, 1999).

Consider/Reflect: “The Lord describes the coming rule of the Messiah. As believers in Christ, we already enjoy the benefits of His wise rule, having received His Spirit, wisdom, peace, and other blessings. The Spirit equips us to spread word of this blessed reign to all nations. [Pray]: Pour out Your sevenfold Spirit, O Lord, that we may boldly proclaim Your goodness. Amen.”⁶

□ **Day #4--Thursday, October 30th. Read: John 14.15-17. The background to this text(s).**

Jesus assures His disciples (us) that love for Him will naturally result in obedience to Him. In the Gospel of John, obedience and love are inseparable. As G.L. Borchert notes:

For John the “commands” (John 14:17, 21), “my word”...and “my words” ...are closely related and involve the entire scope of Jesus’ teaching and revelation (cf. 8:31; 12:47, 50; etc.). Segovia argues that the meaning is three sided, for it includes the elements of love, practical directives (though he really defines that in terms of loving one another), and “the whole of Jesus’ teaching and revelation.”... Even in his first epistle the concept of obedience is rather generally defined in terms of rejecting sin as an attachment to the devil (1 John 3:4–10), loving and caring for the brethren/community in deed and not merely in words... Thus, obeying Jesus’ commands in effect means to copy the example of Jesus.⁷

And, Jesus knew that we need help and the power to be obedient and love our Lord. Consequently, He promises the “Helper,” the “Spirit of truth.” What we experience is that “in the process of responding to the Son of God we discover that Jesus has provided a divine agent to us for living in this world.”⁸ The Greek word translated as “Helper” is *παράκλητος* (*paraklētos*). Meaning, literally, “to be called to the side.” Borchert describes the significance of this description of the Holy Spirit:

The term Paraclete (*paraklētos*), rendered “comforter” in the KJV, “counselor” in the RSV, NIV, HCSB, and NLT, “helper” in the TEV and NKJV, and “advocate” in the NRSV, is a verbal adjective carrying a passive force. It is derived from *parakalein* and has the same meaning as *ho paraklelēmenos*, the articular perfect participle that means “the one called alongside.” It was sometimes used within the Greek legal system, but in the Roman legal system the comparable Latin word *advocatus* became a technical term referring to a defense counsel.

In Jesus, the Holy Spirit dwelled fully. When Jesus would ascend back to heaven, the Spirit would dwell personally in the disciples and become their guide (*John 16:13*). When a person becomes a Christian, we receive and experience the presence of God that dwells in us individually and corporately.

Consider/Reflect: “Jesus’ promise to the disciples was that when he departed the Spirit of Truth would come to abide in them. What a great promise! And what a great fulfillment of that promise was experienced by the early Christians and continues to be a mark of genuine Christians today (cf. 1 John 3:2, 13).”⁹

□ **Day #5— Friday, October 31st. Read: John 14.25-27. —Explore: The background to this text(s).**

As Jesus continues to prepare His disciples for His coming death, resurrection, and ascension, He once again ensures His followers that the Holy Spirit will be sent by the Father and empower them (us) to know, love, and serve Jesus through our lives.

Jesus said he would send the Counsellor ‘in my name’. In this context ‘in my name’ means ‘representing me’... Jesus said the Counsellor’s [Helper’s] role would be to represent him to his disciples so they would not feel destitute after his departure. In fact, Jesus said he himself would come to them in the person of the Counsellor... He will teach the disciples ‘all things’. ‘All things’ does not mean everything that it is possible to know, but all that Jesus himself taught them: he ‘will remind you of everything I have said to you’. This promise is very important for today because it provides assurance from the Lord himself that the first witnesses, whose testimony is preserved in the New Testament, would be instructed by the Spirit regarding the truths that Jesus taught them, even though at the time he taught them they often did not understand.¹⁰

Jesus also promised that peace would be one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (the Trinity). This divine peace is not based on always positive circumstances or lack of trials. Rather, it is a “peace of mind in the midst of trials and persecutions, a peace they would experience with the coming of the Counsellor (cf. Gal. 5:22).”¹¹

6 *The Lutheran Study Bible.*

7 G.L. Borchert. *The American Commentary: John* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1996).

8 *Ibid.*

9 *Ibid.*

10 C.G. Kruse. *John: An Introduction and Commentary* (InterVarsity Press, 2003).

11 *Ibid.*

...the peace that Jesus gives is the natural result of the presence within people of the Holy Spirit of whom Jesus has been speaking. Peace is Jesus' bequest to his disciples. Peace was commonly used at this time as a word of greeting (20:19, 21, 26) or of farewell... Jesus is using the term in his own way and for his own purpose. The repetition of "peace" is impressive. The concept is important. Having stated positively what he gives, Jesus goes on to differentiate this gift from anything that the world can give. When the world uses "Peace" in a greeting it expresses a hope... But Christ effectually gives people peace. Moreover, the peace of which he speaks is not dependent on outward circumstances... In the Bible "peace" is given a wider and deeper meaning than in other Greek writings. For the Greeks (as for us) peace was essentially negative, the absence of war. But for the Hebrews it meant positive blessing, especially a right relationship with God.¹²

Last Sunday, we celebrated the "Sunday of the Reformation." Today is Reformation Day proper. In the little town of Wittenberg, Germany, on October 31, 1517, Martin Luther, a Catholic priest, nailed his 95 theses to the village church door, challenging the church leadership to debate some theological principles that Luther believed contradicted the heart of the gospel: Justification through faith in Christ by God's grace.

Most offensive to Luther was the practice and selling of indulgences—certificates provided by the church which would shorten one's (or a loved one's) stay in Purgatory. However, Luther could not find any Biblical authority for indulgences. Consequently, he desired to discuss this theological point (and others) with his superiors.¹³ Soon, Luther would be called to appear at an Imperial Diet (meeting) in Worms, Germany. It was there that he was told to recant his writings and teachings. Luther's response? "I cannot and will not recant! So help me God"

Consider/Reflect: "Christ promises that He and His Father will come to dwell in those who hear and believe His Word, and that He will send to them the Holy Spirit as the Helper. Those who neglect Christ's Word isolate themselves from God. Jesus Christ reveals God's grace in His Word, dispelling our fear and unbelief. [Pray]: O Holy Spirit, draw me ever closer to my Savior, and focus me on His Word. Amen."¹⁴

☐ **Day #6-Saturday, November 1st. Read: Ephesians 2.18-20.—Embrace: God and His guiding you through His Word.**

Today is All Saints Day; the day in our church year when we remember those who have gone on to heaven and are with the Lord. We remember their faith, their testimony and their sacrifices. All believers in Christ are considered "saints," as we are set apart for God and His purposes. And, because of God's love and grace in Christ, one day, we will be together with ALL the saints in Heaven! Until then, we *press on in faith*.

Think about the saints in your life that are now with the Lord. These saints might be parents, children, spouses, grandparents, and friends. Thank God for their lives. Think about how they influenced your life, especially your life as a Christian. Remember that one-day you will be together again with them in God's Kingdom where there will be no more tears, pain, or sorrow. This is our hope!

Consider/Reflect: *Hebrews 11* is often called the "Hall of faith" chapter. Read *Hebrews* chapter 11 and think about those *saints* who lived by *faith alone*. Which story speaks to you as an example to follow?

12 L. Morris. *The Gospel According To John* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1995).

13 Adapted from a Christian History Institute story. For further study, see: Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand*; Will Durant, *The Reformation*; Julius Köstlin, *Life of Luther*; Amos Wells, *Treasure of Hymns; Brief Biographies of 120 Leading Hymn- Writers and Their Best Hymns*; Various encyclopedia articles.

14 *The Lutheran Study Bible*.