

Easter V

29 April 2018

Christ Lutheran Church

Platte Woods, MO

What in the World Does the Holy Spirit Do?

John 16:5-15

Where is Jesus going? Why does He say that it is to our advantage that He goes away? We are now deep into the Easter Season- the Fifth Sunday of Easter to be exact yet Jesus' word were spoken on the eve of Good Friday, that dark night when He was betrayed and handed over to suffer in our place. He is going to His Father by way of the cross, the empty tomb, and the mount of the Ascension. It is indeed to our advantage that He goes away for in His going He will not leave us alone but will send the Helper.

Who is the Helper? The Helper is the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life as we confess in the Nicene Creed. The Spirit is our Advocate and Comforter. He is literally "the One Called Along our Side." The Paraclete as He is named in some of our Pentecost hymns. Pastors often find it a bit more challenging to teach confirmands the Third Article of the Creed. Teaching the First Article with its assertion "I believe in God the Father Almighty" is less challenging for we all know something about a father. It is concrete. Likewise with the Second Article, "I believe in Jesus Christ." We have a clear picture of Jesus from the NT. But "Spirit"- who or what is that? We use the word in so many different ways. We speak of team spirit or community spirit. Spirit is imagined to be a mood or state of being such as the "spirit of the times." Spirit is more often than not thought, of as an impersonal force or energy. None of these definitions will do when it comes to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a person; He is the third person of the Trinity. Jesus calls Him the Helper and the Spirit of Truth.

A number of years ago when the Charismatic Movement with its emphasis on speaking in tongues and miraculous manifestations of the power of the Holy Spirit was in vogue, two theologians wrote a book with the intriguing title, "The Holy Spirit: The Shy Member of the Trinity." In one important sense their title was on target as they wanted to accent over and against the preachers of the Charismatic Movement that the Holy Spirit doesn't call attention to Himself; He brings Christ Jesus into focus full and clear and through Him we have access to the Father. The Holy Spirit is not a self-promoter. He promotes Christ Jesus as the Son of the Father come to be your brother and redeemer. But in another sense there is nothing about the Holy Spirit that is shy for as Martin Luther says of our text: "Here Christ makes the Holy Spirit a Preacher. He does so to prevent one from gaping toward heaven in search of Him, as the fluttering spirits and enthusiasts do, and from divorcing Him from the oral Word of the ministry. One should know and learn that He will be in and with the Word, and that it will guide us into all truth, in order that we may believe it, use it as a weapon, be preserved by it against all the lies and deceptions of the devil, and prevail in all trials and temptations....The Holy Spirit wants this truth which He is to impress into our hearts to be so firmly fixed that reason and all one's own thoughts and feelings are relegated to the background. He wants us to adhere solely to the Word and to regard it as the only truth. And through this Word alone He governs the Christian Church to the end" (AE 24:362).

Now this Preacher, the Holy Spirit, proclaims three things says Jesus.

First, the Spirit convicts the world of sin. To do this He preaches the Law that uncovers unbelief that is the root of all sin. You know those words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 3 very well. Through the Law no flesh will be saved but through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. This past Thursday, April 26th was the 500th anniversary of another important Reformation document, "The Heidelberg Theses." In the first of these theses Luther asserts that the Law that most salutary doctrine of life will not advance the cause of your righteousness before God but rather it actually hinders it. The Law of God is good and wise as the old hymn puts it. It orders our life in this world but it does not save. The Spirit uses the Law to bring the inbred sin to light, revealing one thing for each and every one of us: our guilt, for all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory.

Second, Jesus says that the Spirit convinces of righteous because Jesus goes to the Father. Jesus, the Righteous One who knew no sin was made sin for us. It was a great exchange, a "sweet swap" when the Lamb of God who had no sin of His own was made sin for us, going to His Father by means of a cross where He hung accursed under God's wrath for us and our salvation in order that in Him we might have God's own righteousness. Put to death for our trespasses and raised again for our justification, He gives us forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. In short, our justification! For the sake of His innocent suffering and death, He declares us righteous. This is the Gospel that the Spirit of Truth is declaring to you right now.

Third, the Holy Spirit convinces of judgment because the prince of this world is judged. Satan is known by several names in Holy Scripture. Two of the stand out. He is a liar and He is the accuser of God's people. He lies regarding God's Word, whispering into your ear just as he did to Eve, "Did God really say?" And then when you believe the lie, he accuses you and he always has more than enough evidence to prosecute the case! Jesus tells us this darkling prince is judged by Jesus' death on the cross. Christ's blood and righteousness cover you. Satan is robbed of his right to accuse and terrify your conscience. Jesus has you covered with His blood and righteous. The old evil foe is defeated and casted down. He is judged and the deed is done.

What in the world does the Spirit do? He takes everything that Christ Jesus did for you in His obedient life, His innocent death, and His victorious resurrection and He makes it yours. Think of it like this. The Father wills your reconciliation from all eternity. The Son accomplishes that reconciliation and now the Spirit delivers it to you. Where does He doing? In Baptism which is the washing of regeneration –literally a new genesis –rich in the Holy Spirit as through His words He breathes over the water to name you as His own. He does it in and through the Holy Scriptures He has inspired for they are words of spirit and life. He does it through preaching which is faithful to these Holy Scriptures as Jesus is put into our ears and hearts. He does it through the body and blood of our Savior that we are given to eat and drink, as we trust in His words given and shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins.

The Holy Spirit takes what belongs to Jesus and He gives it to you right here and now. You need not seek the Spirit out there in nature or in the deep places of your own soul, but right here in this place as through His Word and according to His promise, He is declaring to you that Jesus Christ is your Lord in life and in death. Jesus has gone to the Father but you are not left alone for all that Jesus has done for you, the Holy Spirit now gives you enabling and enlivening you to believe and confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord to the glory of the Father. Amen.