

Pastor T.C. Arnold  
The Festival of Pentecost  
John 14:26-27  
May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016

When I was in college I had a religion professor who was asked by one of my classmates, “How do I teach all of these fine points of the Bible to children.” He answered, “I have no idea. That’s why I teach adults.”

Teaching children is a difficult task. Those of you who are teachers know that there is more to sharing what you know about a particular subject when it comes to teaching. For those of you who are parents, remember, you are teachers as well. We find ourselves, at times, not quite knowing what to do, what to say, how to handle the situation – or second guessing ourselves. We know this challenge when we teach our kids the lessons of life. Talking in a language kids – younger kids or older kids – can understand is difficult. Talking in a way that they will listen is another challenge all together.

I had the pleasure of spending a goodly number of Wednesday afternoons with this year’s confirmation class. We worked hard. Sometimes we worked hard to keep our eyes open and focused on the task at hand. It’s a challenge sharing the faith that our Lord gives us through the Holy Scriptures. It’s a challenge for me – I’m always in the process of learning myself. I learn what the kids learn over and over again. I learn as I teach and I learn more and more about teaching each time I teach. And I also know this; when I’m teaching about our Lord, the significance of faith, and the work of our Savior Jesus – it’s not me. Is it my voice and my words from my mouth? Yes. Is it my style and my way of communicating the Word of God that never changes? Yes. But it’s not my work. It’s the work of the Holy Spirit when it comes to sharing the faith.

Jesus Himself tells us how the Holy Spirit will work in the lives of God’s people. The Holy Spirit is our guide. He says in the Gospel text for today, “*But the Counselor (or helper), the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you ALL things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*” What will the Spirit teach us? He will teach us all things. Not a few, not some, but all things, the Holy Spirit will teach us. So when the Word of God is being shared to the young and old alike we are not just making up words that seem fitting and comforting. Rather, we are sharing the work of the Lord given to us, blessing us, strengthening us, encouraging us, instructing us, and sustaining us. All of these things come not from my heart or your heart but from the action of the Holy Spirit. We recall what the catechism says in the explanation of the third article of the Apostle’s Creed when it says the “*Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the one true faith.*”

The Lord is the one who enlightens us and keeps us in the true faith. This is very important to know. Kids, you have a very special opportunity today. For the very first time you will be receiving the very body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is His work through these everyday means (bread and wine) that give you the forgiveness of sins. Make this a part of something you will continue from today forward. Please do not take for granted what this day means to you and your walk in faith. You see, I talk about the Lord’s work of faith in you through the Holy Spirit because this is the place where you receive such work – His work for you. The Lord uses this place to give you the means of grace. He uses that altar; He uses that font at which many of you were baptized. He uses these people to encourage you.

And parents, here is your role that continues today. It’s not good enough that you have brought your sons and daughters to confirmation class. As your pastor, I thank you for doing so. Your encouragement and help is needed and appreciated. But you’re not done. You are not done in the

spiritual formation of your children. Confirmation does not mark the end of all of this. It continues. And the last time I checked, none of these kids have a driver's license. You are going to have to bring them to church. You are going to have to remain the example of doing the right thing and saying the right words for the sake of these kids who need your love, support, and nurturing in their Christian faith. All of these things have happened – but are yet to happen.

And parents who do not have kids in class this year...you're not off the hook. You have much ahead of you. I don't care if your child is younger than confirmation age, older than confirmation age – or much older than confirmation age. The situations may differ – but the Lord has “called you by the Gospel, enlightened you with His gifts and kept you in the true faith” to share with the people that are the closest to you. That means your kids that still have a room in our homes – or – our adult kids who live far away. If you still have a mouth, the Spirit can use you. If you still have a body, the Spirit can still use you – as an example – as an encourager.

Beloved in the Lord, the life we receive in this place is so important. You don't have to go too far to see the death – the hurt and the heartache that this world and our lives endure each and every day. Read the paper, turn on the television. Our Oromo friends who have been worshiping in the Ephphatha room since this past March have told me many stories of what their people and their families are going through in Ethiopia. They fled political persecution to be refugees in a free country. They now have a man who finished the Seminary in Ethiopia and he will be ordained this summer in the Mekane Yesus Church in His own country. This congregation is looking to join the LCMS in the future and Pastor Abdi to join the LCMS clergy. They recently received 12 new members into their parish family three Sunday's ago. God is calling, gathering and sanctifying in tremendous ways.

That's why we continue to need our Lord's words. Those words spoken to us in John 14:27: *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”* Beloved in the Lord, you will not be able to find God's peace apart from God. And God, even in your most desperate times, wants so badly to show you this peace – to give it to you. In Christ, you have God's peace. What you are getting today for your life everlasting in the true body and blood of our Lord is God's peace. You see, peace doesn't always come right away – or the way we think it should come – but it comes. Know that the peace that you receive right here is a peace that the world does not know. It's a peace that gives us more than we could ever imagine here. And for this reason our Lord can say, *“Let your hearts not be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”* Why? Because there's more. There's more than this life of “lack of peace” we fight each day. There's more – and more to come. In Christ, I promise you that.

“In this Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers.” That's you. In this Christian Church which we celebrate today – the birthday of the church – Pentecost – when the Holy Spirit rested upon the heads of those faithful in Jerusalem and the church would spread from there. And from you – the church spreads. Take what you get here – and take it out there when you go and live in the World. But never forget... your life is in the church. Your life is in Christ and no other place.

How does one teach adults? How does one teach our children? You can teach – no matter what age the audience might be. Here's how: teach by bringing! Teach your neighbor and teach your children by bringing them to the Lord's House to receive His precious gifts. These gifts are won for you – at a huge price – the price of our Lord's horrible suffering and death. But that death of our Savior is a teaching death – a bringing death. His death brings us life. And right there – at that altar – that's where we get it. Amen

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.