

Pentecost - May 31, 2020

Pre-service Music: "Beautiful Savior"

Opening Address

Hymn "O Holy Spirit, Enter In" LSB 913

1 O Holy Spirit, enter in,
And in our hearts Your work begin,
Your dwelling place now make us.
Sun of the soul, O Light divine,
Around and in us brightly shine,
To joy and gladness wake us
That we may be
Truly living,
To You giving
Prayer unceasing
And in love be still increasing.

2 Give to Your Word impressive pow'r,
That in our hearts from this good hour
As fire it may be glowing,
That in true Christian unity
We faithful witnesses may be,
Your glory ever showing.
Hear us, cheer us
By Your teaching;
Let our preaching
And our labor
Praise You, Lord, and serve our neighbor.

3 O mighty Rock, O Source of life,
Let Your dear Word, in doubt and strife,
In us be strongly burning
That we be faithful unto death
And live in love and holy faith,
From You true wisdom learning.
Your grace and peace
On us shower;
By Your power
Christ confessing,
Let us see our Savior's blessing.
Text: Public domain

The Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Confession: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Let us then confess our sins to God our Father. Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve

Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.

The Absolution: In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for His sake, God forgives us all our sins. To those who believe in Jesus Christ, He gives the power to become the children of God and bestows on them the Holy Spirit. May the Lord, who has begun this good work in us, bring it to completion in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer of the Day: Let us pray...through Jesus Christ, Your Son, Our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The Old Testament Reading is written in the book of Numbers, chapter 11, verses 24-30.

²⁴ So Moses went out and told the people the words of the Lord. And he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tent. ²⁵ Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. And as soon as the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied. But they did not continue doing it. ²⁶ Now two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the Spirit rested on them. They were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. ²⁷ And a young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." ²⁸ And Joshua the son of Nun, the assistant of Moses from his youth, said, "My lord Moses, stop them." ²⁹ But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!" ³⁰ And Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.

The Acts Reading is from chapter 2, verses 1 to 21.

² When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested^[a] on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. ⁵ Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. ⁷ And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? ⁹ Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, ¹¹ both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians—we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." ¹² And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³ But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine." ¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. ¹⁵ For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. ¹⁶ But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ "'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; ¹⁸ even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. ¹⁹ And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; ²⁰ the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. ²¹ And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

The Holy Gospel is according to St. John, chapter 14, verses 23-31.

²³ Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. ²⁴ Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me. ²⁵ "These things I have spoken to you while I am

still with you. ²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. 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. ²⁸ You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I will come to you.' If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. ²⁹ And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe. ³⁰ I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, ³¹ but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.

Apostles' Creed: I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

Hymn "Holy Spirit, Ever Dwelling" *LSB* 650

1 Holy Spirit, ever dwelling
 In the holiest realms of light;
Holy Spirit, ever brooding
 O'er a world of gloom and night;
Holy Spirit, ever raising
 Those of earth to thrones on high;
Living, life-imparting Spirit,
 You we praise and magnify.

2 Holy Spirit, ever living
 As the Church's very life;
Holy Spirit, ever striving
 Through us in a ceaseless strife;
Holy Spirit, ever forming
 In the Church the mind of Christ:
You we praise with endless worship
 For Your gifts and fruits unpriced.

3 Holy Spirit, ever working
 Through the Church's ministry;
Quick'ning, strength'ning, and absolving,
 Setting captive sinners free;
Holy Spirit, ever binding
 Age to age and soul to soul
In communion never ending,
 You we worship and extol.
Text: Public domain

The Sermon: Who Is He?

A famous Christian scholar and prolific New Testament writer, Gordon Fee, once shared a remark about the Holy Spirit that he had heard from a student. The student said, "God the Father makes perfectly good sense to me, and God the Son I can quite understand, but the Holy Spirit is a gray, oblong blur." Why the color "gray," I don't know. Why "oblong" as the shape? I don't know that either. In their defense,

what shape would a spirit be? But that is what the student said, and to some extent, I think most of us can relate to this remark.

As Lutherans, we have a good grasp of God the Father. He is the Creator Who loves us. We love to focus on God the Son. He is our Savior Who died and rose for us. The Holy Spirit, though, can be a different matter. We believe in the Holy Spirit. We just confessed that in the Creed. We know that He lives and dwells in us through faith in Jesus Christ. We confess that He is with us every time we come together around Word and Sacrament. But it can be hard to picture or even describe this Divine Being whom we also call the “Holy Ghost.” As Lutherans, we can even feel uncomfortable, or out of our element, in talking about God the Spirit.

Perhaps, it is ironic, then, that the longest season in the Church Year by far is the season of Pentecost. For almost 25 straight weeks, from now until Thanksgiving, we will focus on various aspects of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. That is what the upcoming season of Pentecost is about. However, most of us would probably admit that of the three persons of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit remains the fuzziest when it comes to understanding Who the Spirit is and what He does and exactly how He does it.

In our Gospel text, Jesus gives us clarity and focus as we celebrate Pentecost. He tells us about the office and work of the Holy Spirit. He says that He is the Helper Who brings to remembrance all that Jesus said and done, and brings us His peace.

Jesus says, **“These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name....”** Notice what Jesus calls the Holy Spirit. He calls Him the “Helper,” or, in Greek, “the parakletos/paraclete.” The word “paraclete” is a hard word to translate, and it doesn’t have a great English equivalent that captures the full sense of the word. The word has a wide array of meanings, and is defined as, “one called to the side of, mediator, intercessor, comforter, counselor, helper.” All of these describe in some way what the Holy Spirit does and is to us, right? Mediator, intercessor, comforter, counselor, helper. How do we understand this word? Most scholars agree “Helper” is the best definition, and that “Helper” encompasses all of these ideas and aspects.

The Helper, the Holy Spirit, brings us to faith through the Word and keeps us in this faith. He preserves us. The Spirit, the Helper, consoles us with the Gospel when our consciences are attacked, and our hearts are grieved. The Spirit, the Helper, empowers God’s people and emboldens them to share His Word. We see this in our Acts reading, do we not? The Spirit, the Helper, makes us holy and makes us like Jesus. We call this Sanctification. The Spirit, the Helper, comforts and strengthens us in the midst of trials, troubles, and temptations. He even helps us pray. The Holy Spirit is a helper in every sense of the word. He is sent to our side.

Jesus says that He is more than a Helper, though. He is also a Teacher. He teaches and proclaims God’s Word. He brings to mind *all* that Jesus has said and done. Our Lord says, **“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”** It was certainly true for the Apostles. They didn’t always get or remember what Jesus had told them. John gives a great example of this back in chapter two. When Jesus told the Jews, **“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”** No one understood Him. They didn’t realize He meant His body. John wrote in 2:22, **“When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.”** The Spirit brings to remembrance Jesus’ Word. He taught them.

And you know what, this is true for us as well. The Holy Spirit brings to mind *all* that Jesus has done and spoken. This takes place with us when we read God’s Word, which record Jesus’ own words. The Holy Spirit enlightens us and He gives us understanding. To reinforce this, just a few verses prior, He is called the Spirit of Truth. This means He will not deceive or mislead us. He does not lie and can be counted on. He reveals the Father and the Son. Anything that does not directly lead us to loving Jesus and His Word cannot be of Him or from Him, because He is one God with the Father and Son. The Spirit is our Teacher and guide, too, through the Word.

As Jesus continues, He shows us the Spirit’s greatest work and purpose as He talks about His peace. Jesus says, **“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you.”** Jesus contrasts His peace with the peace that the world gives. This COVID era has given a great reminder of this, hasn’t it? It has forced us to reevaluate and examine where we really look for peace. It is like a game of Jenga,

that game where you make a tower of blocks by removing blocks from the base and adding them to the top. In this pandemic, block after block has been removed, and the tower starts to wobble and wobble. Is the tower still standing? Is it getting ready to fall? Is it swaying or starting to slant? What blocks does the world use for peace?

The world promises peace with the blocks of money and property. But you know what, it cannot be found there with GDP drops, the stock market riding a roller coaster, historic job losses, and an unknown future for the economy. Besides, money will never be enough. America's first billionaire, and perhaps the richest person in modern history, John D. Rockefeller, was once asked, "How much money is enough?" He said, "Just a little bit more!" And he has more than *we'll ever have*. (COVID has pulled this block out)

The world promises peace with the blocks of success and status. But, you know what, this too won't last. This is all inward and me focused. Luther calls this "naval gazing." Once we lose that success, or once it lessens, we can panic, or become discouraged. Once we lose that status, we can see ourselves negatively, and in a different light. Remember the star quarterback from High School? Maybe. But does it matter now? Not at all. This block, too, will be pulled out.

The world promises peace with good health and long life. This, however, is an illusion. The woman who worked in the cubicle next to me on vicarage who taught so much about doing ministry, suddenly died last weekend. She had no obvious health issues and the cause is still unknown. The poor lady just recently made her dream house. At some point, this block, too, will wiggled and pulled out. All of these blocks, all of these things, are based on things outside of us and outside of our control. They can change or disappear in a moment! This is the world's peace.

Jesus' peace is different. It is completely different. He uses different blocks. His peace has nothing to do with money, property, success, status, or health. It isn't based on the absence of stress, strife, or stinky situations. For we daily fight and are assailed by the devil in body and soul in the form of temptations, anxious thoughts, and "Did God really say?" We experience all that the world throws against us, and live in a creation that groans and suffers from the effects of sin. We have the internal battle with our sinful flesh, that old Adam.

Yet, Jesus' peace gives comfort. It was earned on the cross by His blood, sweat, agony, and tears. His peace addresses our deepest need and longings: the need to be right with our Creator because of the sin we have done. Where does Jesus leave this peace? He leaves it right in the Spirit's wheelhouse! He leaves it where the Spirit carries out His work and office.

We have it in baptism! How certain! It is where the water and word mark the person who receives God's grace and His Holy Spirit! We have it in Holy Absolution! How personal! We hear pastors say, "In the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you..." That "you" is singular. It is focused. It is specific. You are forgiven as if by God Himself! We have it in the Holy Supper! How near! There we receive the flesh and blood of our Savior that strengthens and nourishes us. We have it in the Word! How close! We receive it in that living Word that works within us! We have God's peace by the Spirit and these means He works through!

That is why Jesus then says, "**Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.**" Jesus says, "There, there. It's okay," as He calms our hearts and minds which can race at 1,000 miles an hour. Hearts and minds that say, "But, what if, Lord..." or "I do believe, help my unbelief!" Jesus says, "**Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.**"

But you may say, "Pastor Kooi, that is easier said than done! The economy is uncertain. Nothing is the same, and won't be for awhile. I've prayed, and am still stressed and scared. I fear for my health, the health of a loved one, and my country."

And, you're right. It isn't easy. We can all struggle with it. Our faith can rest secure but our bodies can still be responding to these things with stress and worry. But, because Jesus gives us such a peace, a reconciliation with God, He can encourage us to not be afraid, to not be troubled in our hearts, or to cower in fear. He lifts up our sullen and sulking faces with His nailed pierced hands, and focuses it on Him.

Jesus has given and sent the Helper. As He says a few verses prior, "**I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.**" Pentecost reminds us of that. He kept and keeps His word. The Helper, the Holy Spirit, reassures us of this truth and promise. Remember, He brings to mind all that Jesus said and done. He lives and dwells within us.

“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.” Thank God for the work and office of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayer of the Church

Almighty God, You have blessed us in love with the Savior to whom the nations cry and in whom is forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. Grant to us Your Holy Spirit, the Comforter whom You have promised, that we and all who call upon His name shall be saved. Help us to treasure in our hearts Your mercy and to give ourselves fully to Your service. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, You delivered Your Word through Moses and the prophets and fulfilled Your Word in Christ. He was planted in death for our sins and raised for our justification, and in Him shall all the nations of the earth be united. Give us pastors who will preach this Word faithfully and church workers who are devoted to Your service. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, You have promised the thirsty will drink and from the empty will flow forth rivers of living water. Help us to show forth in holy lives the fruits of the Spirit and to live with love toward our neighbor. Give us a servant’s heart that doesn’t seek our own way but walks on the path of eternal life. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, You have promised to make one people from the many. Take from us all pride, prejudice and hate, that we may not hinder the cause of the Gospel by our shame but give welcome to all people in the name of Christ. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, You have ordered all things in heaven and on earth. Bless Donald, our president; _____, our governor; the Congress of the United States; and all elected and appointed civil servants, that the rule of law may protect the weak, preserve life from conception to its natural end, and peace may reign for the benefit of all. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, have mercy and spare us. Put an end to the pandemic, and restore the communities of the world to their common life. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, You have given our nation the gift and heritage of freedom. It came at the cost of many lives on battlefields far and near. Receive our thanks for their sacrifice, and give us the courage to preserve liberty in our own time and use it honorably. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, You breathe hope into the weary and renew Your Church by Your grace. Bless newly planted congregations that they may endure, guide established congregations that they may not lose heart, and build up our Synod that our zeal for Your Kingdom may not flag but flourish and prosper according to Your will. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, You carry the burdens of our lives in Your hands. Deliver from illness and suffering all who cry to You for release. Hear us on behalf of the sick, the dying and those who mourn [*especially* _____]. Answer Your people, O Lord, and deliver them from their infirmities and their grief by Your grace. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, Your Word endures forever. Give us grace so that we may be united in doctrine and in the fellowship of Your table, confessing Christ boldly and living together in faith and love until our Lord returns in His glory to bring all things to their appointed completion when we will dwell in His house forever. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, hear Your people for the sake of Him who loved us even to death and who lives to call to Himself all who will be saved. You know what we need and those things we should ask in Your name. Grant them to us for the sake of our crucified, risen and ascended Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer: Let us pray the prayer Jesus has taught us to pray: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

The Benediction: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious unto you. The Lord look on You with His favor and give you peace. Amen.

Final Hymn "O Day Full of Grace" LSB 503

1 O day full of grace that now we see
Appearing on earth's horizon,
Bring light from our God that we may be
Replete in His joy this season.
God, shine for us now in this dark place;
Your name on our hearts emblazon.

2 O day full of grace, O blessed time,
Our Lord on the earth arriving;
Then came to the world that light sublime,
Great joy for us all retrieving;
For Jesus all mortals did embrace,
All darkness and shame removing.

3 For Christ bore our sins, and not His own,
When He on the cross was hanging;
And then He arose and moved the stone
That we, unto Him belonging,
Might join with angelic hosts to raise
Our voices in endless singing.

4 God came to us then at Pentecost,
His Spirit new life revealing,
That we might no more from Him be lost,
All darkness for us dispelling.
His flame will the mark of sin efface
And bring to us all His healing.

5 When we on that final journey go
That Christ is for us preparing,
We'll gather in song, our hearts aglow,
All joy of the heavens sharing,
And walk in the light of God's own place,
With angels His name adoring.

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Closing Address and Announcements

Postlude "Flesh of His Flesh"