

CANTATE (EASTER 4)

April 29 2017

Old Testament: Isaiah 12:1-6

Epistle: James 1:16-21

Gospel: John 16:5-15

Standing...

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our Gospel lesson takes place on the night when Jesus was betrayed, where, Jesus tells His disciples that His redemptive work—
(His death, resurrection and His ascension) must be completed so that
the Holy Spirit—also known as the Paraclete—
may take all of Christ's saving work,
and spread it to the ends of the earth.

Let us pray. These are Your words Holy Father. Sanctify us in the truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Sitting...

On *Cantate Domino* Sunday we are encouraged to sing a new song.

This is what the Israelites did—
after crossing the Red Sea and looking back over their shoulder,
they saw Pharaoh and his army floating face down.
As a result, the Israelites broke out their tambourines and started to sing,
for they had been delivered—
given new life by means of water.
No more bondage in Egypt,
no more servitude to Pharaoh,
no more oppressive decrees.
The Israelites sang a new song
as they traveled into the desert
a delivered people.

We, in like manner, follow suit.
For what reason? Well, as we chanted in Psalm 98,

"for He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations."

How has He done this?

By the Holy Spirit,
who has faithfully been doing His work of gathering in the great harvest,
for almost 2,000 years, since Christ sent Him on the Day of Pentecost.

However, when Jesus Christ spoke initially about His leaving
and how it would be to the disciples' advantage,
the disciples were perplexed.

As you might imagine, they wanted to keep on enjoying
Christ's visible presence on earth...
and who could blame them?

However, the coming of the Paraclete or the Comforter—
is a very good thing.

Now look, we don't know anything different.

None of us have walked and talked with Jesus.

All we have ever known—
all we ever will know this side of glory is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus explains—His work will be twofold. So, imagine two columns in your mind.

On this side, you have conviction to the unbelieving world.

Over here, you have guidance to the disciples. Got it?

Now look, the Spirit of God wasn't a stranger to the world.

As most of you know, the Holy Spirit was active in creation.

Moreover, the Holy Spirit inspired every prophecy and every word of Scripture.

But our text teaches that when Jesus departs, the Holy Spirit will direct His
activity toward the unbelieving world **and** direct His activity toward
guiding the disciples.

And as we'll see, these two are inextricably bound.

To the unbelieving world,

Jesus explains the Holy Spirit will do three things.

First—the Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin.

The lies that exist about sin are heard everywhere we turn—
we hear these lies on the television,

in the movies we watch and from our favorite news commentators—
right or left. It doesn't matter.

These lies are in the very air we breathe.

Lies like: Sin won't hurt you, sin is good for you—a lie which leads people to plunge themselves into every form of sexual perversion and evil imaginable.

Other lies are: Sin can be covered up, excused or hey—let's just give sin another name. You're not a sinner who sins. Call the sin a disorder and just say you have a condition.

My point is, the unbelieving world believes the lies, not realizing that sin has corrupted the whole person and there's nothing anyone can do about it.

Enter the Paraclete who confronts the lies by preaching the Law of God,
accusing the world of their lack of faith in Christ.

Will everyone believe they are sinners? No—not all—but some will.

Some will hear it and be crushed by their sin and unbelief—

sorry they have offended God and frightened,

yes—actually frightened by the wrath of God they currently live under.

They will repent and flee to Christ, no longer taking pleasure in their sin—

and have no intention to continue in unbelief.

However, others won't. They will persist in their sins—continuing not to believe in Christ.

Preferring instead to live in unbelief.

They'll fight against the truth until they perish

and will be doomed and damned forever.

Second—the Paraclete will *convict the world of righteousness*.

The Paraclete preaches at the top of His lungs,

that Jesus Christ is the only righteous One.

And if ones righteousness is in themselves, they're lost.

It's as simple as that.

Your righteousness has not been, is not, nor will it ever will be good enough.

St James says,

"Whoever keeps the whole law, yet stumbles at one point, he is guilty of all,"

Meaning, if you want to get into heaven your righteousness must be perfect.

Jesus alone is your righteousness—and your only hope.

His ascension to the Father demonstrates that—

and He gives His righteousness away—to any and all.
He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations.

Will everyone believe this truth? No—

There are always those who claim to be righteous without Him...
 but some will hear it and toss aside all reliance upon themselves,
 putting their trust solely in Him who went to the Father by way of the cross.
 Others however will spurn the only righteousness that exists for sinners.
 Doing so until they perish.
 and they will be doomed and damned forever.

Third—*the Holy Spirit convicts the world of judgment.*

This is the Judgment that is to come—
 foreshadowed for us in the account of Noah and the Flood.
 Church, we live in the exact same days as Noah.
 People will hear that Christ is the Judge
 coming to judge the living and the dead;
 coming with fire to consume everything on earth.

Will everyone believe this truth? Of course not—

Most folks today are more afraid of meteorites and asteroids—
 more worried about global warming than they are of the judgment of God.

But some will believe.

So much so that they will repent and be forgiven.
 Others, however, will reject it, laughing it off until
 the Judgement comes, and it's too late.
 They will be doomed and damned forever.

Beloved, the Holy Spirit is constantly at work doing these things wherever the Word of God is preached. Bringing some of those very sinners in the world—the ones like you and me—to repent of our sins and to believe in Christ Jesus.

He washes away sins in Holy Baptism and there He clothes us with the true righteousness, with the righteousness of Christ.

And now we are safe from the judgement to come,
 for we remain in Christ.

In these few hours before Jesus' arrest, He lets His disciples know
 that if He does not go away, that is,

die and be removed from this physical existence, then nothing is gained.

The Jews remain under the Law of Moses,
and the heathen remain in their blindness.

No Scripture would be fulfilled
and no one would be delivered, nor saved.

Sing a new song?

Forget it—sing an old song, sing a funeral dirge,
for all is useless.

However, if I depart, Jesus says, and die and rise so as to carry out what God has decided in His counsel to perform through Me, then the Paraclete will come and do His convicting work upon the unbelieving world.

That brings us to the second column, the one where the activity of the Paraclete is directed toward guiding the disciples. Jesus tells them, *"...when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you (the disciples) into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you (again the disciples) things to come."*

Jesus tells them...

the Paraclete—the One whom Jesus will eventually send
is not going to use some mysterious force or send shivers up your spine...
The Paraclete will use the weak and powerless mouths of Jesus' disciples.
Our Lord uses means...

Think about the Paraclete working through Peter on the Day of Pentecost—
where thousands believed and were baptized.

Think about how the apostles handled their trials before the Sanhedrin.

Think about how the apostles scattered themselves throughout the known world to
preach the Gospel.

Some believed, and a church grew in that place.

Of those who believed,
some were commissioned to go and preach elsewhere,
and in those places, some believed,
and church was planted there too.

On and on it went—all the way to 1888—to this church. And
here we are, one of countless others.

The Holy, Christian Church has been built solely by the divine work of the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, think about how the Paraclete had the sermons and letters of the apostles written down—frozen, as it were, in a book—
 whereby their successors
 have been confronting the lies and preaching the truth
 concerning sin, righteousness and judgement ever since.

Jesus wanted to tell His disciples more, but in their present state of little faith,
 of immature spirituality, mixed with sorrow and grief over His leaving,
 they couldn't grasp it—it was too much.
 And you know, maybe it's too much for us as well.

This is why we do well to think on the Holy Spirit's work according to the simple explanation given to us in the *Small Catechism*:

"I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith."

The work of the Holy Spirit is explained right there,
 so simple and clear that a child can understand.
 How does the Paraclete do these things?
 The same way He's always done them—
 the way He will do them until Christ returns again in glory.

Specifically, He does it all through the preaching of the Gospel, using weak and powerless preachers, some even with Southern accents, to broadcast the gospel of Christ all over the world for nearly two thousand years. The Paraclete as well uses the administration of the Sacraments—directing you to where Jesus is for you, here in His Holy Church, at the font, at the pulpit, and at the altar. This is how we are preserved in the truth and protected from lies of the Devil.

And this is why—this is why...we sing a new song.

In the Holy Name of Jesus, Amen.

Standing...And now may the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.