

John 16:5-15
Cantate – Easter 5
One-Year Series
“The Holy Spirit For You”

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

As it was last Sunday, so today. The Gospel places us back in the Upper Room, on the night of our Lord’s betrayal, on the eve of His death. He has washed their feet; giving them a part with Himself. He has fed them His own Body and Blood, given and shed for the forgiveness of sins. He is soon to return to the Father who sent Him by way of His Cross and Passion, in His blessed death and burial, in the handing over of the Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life.

Within the Trinity no Person is lesser or greater than the other. The disciples sorrow because Jesus has told them that He is departing from them. They do not want Jesus to leave them. Yet Jesus says in John 16:7, “It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you.” It might sound as though Jesus is saying that the Holy Spirit is greater than Himself. It is more advantageous for the disciples to lose Jesus but gain the Paraclete. Yet, the Holy Spirit does not come to replace Christ, or give a greater advantage than Christ, but to connect the apostles to Christ—and through the Apostles to connect the entire Church to Christ. That’s why it is to your advantage that Christ departs and the Helper comes. The Spirit will glorify the Son by taking what is the Son’s and declaring it to the Church. And everything that belongs to the Son is nothing else than what belongs to the Father.

(Pause) Dear friends, the promised coming of the Holy Spirit then is a great comfort to us. Without the Holy Spirit we would be disconnected from Christ. But the Holy Spirit will be sent when Jesus is glorified in order to keep us connected to Christ who reconciles us to the Father. The unity of the Trinity means we never get part of God. We get all of Him!

Jesus’ description of the work of the Holy Spirit illustrates just how intimately the Spirit’s work is connected to the work of the Son. John 16:8-11, “When He comes He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.”

You see, the work of the Holy Spirit is entirely wrapped up in the work of Christ. Christ has come as God’s representative, His apostle. “If you have seen Me you have seen the Father,” Jesus tells Phillip. “I and the Father, are one.” To Nicodemus Jesus says, “No one has ascended into heaven except He who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.” Because Jesus has come and revealed the Father through His own life and ministry, the Holy Spirit convicts the world. Notice that Jesus does not say that the Holy Spirit convinces the world but convicts the world because they do not believe in Me. Yes, because of the world’s response to Jesus, the world is convicted of sin.

Jerusalem is the prime example here. When Jesus draws near to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, before He goes to the temple and drives out the money changers, He weeps and says in Luke 19:41-44, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”

A few days later when Jesus' disciples point out to Him the magnificent stones of the temple, Jesus responds by warning them of the signs of the end. Often it is difficult to discern between the signs of the end of the Temple and the signs of the end of the world, because Jerusalem's destruction is a sign, a foreshadowing of the end of this age. The unbelief of Jerusalem is parallel to the unbelief of the world. The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, for nothing else but unbelief in the Son.

(Pause) The Spirit also convicts the world of righteousness, because Jesus goes to the Father. Look around you, and you will see in all people a common need to be justified. When someone accuses us of wrong, we defend ourselves. We insist that either we didn't do it, or we had good cause to do it. Watch children point out the sins of others in justifying their own behavior. I didn't sweep like I was supposed to because Johnny is the one who made the mess. I only pushed her; she hit me. Consider the excuses put forward in court. If my parents had raised me better, I would have better self-control; I can't be punished for what I did. I experienced temporary insanity and can't be held responsible for the harm I caused. Now, there may be truth behind some of the excuses. I am not saying that mental health is not important or should not be considered in carrying out punishments but note the need of people to feel righteous.

What about you? Where have you tried to justify your actions before others? Before God? Repent.

The Holy Spirit shows us the source of true righteousness. Righteousness is not being as good as your experiences allow or require. Righteousness is found in Christ who has gone to the Father, who has entered the holy places not with the blood of goats and calves, but by means of his own blood. Hebrews 9:13-14, "For if the blood of goats and bulls sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God."

There is a universal human need to be justified, and the Holy Spirit come to us to prove that the only true justification comes to us because Jesus has ascended in His crucified and risen flesh to stand before God and intercede for us. He continually shows to the Father the wounds that He endured to mete out God's wrath against us because of our sin.

(Pause) But there's more. You see, the Holy Spirit convicts the world of Judgment because the ruler of this world is judged. The ruler of this world is Satan, who devises Jesus' death. He who stole life from Adam in the garden strikes the heel of the Second Adam, but in doing so his own judgment is confirmed.

The world is convicted by the Holy Spirit of the sin of unbelief, of the lack of righteousness that comes from faith in Christ and is sentenced to the same judgment of Satan whom the world follows.

But—and you heard me say this the last time that I was with you—there's always a but—but you are guided by the Holy Spirit into the truth. The Holy Trinity would not see you perish with Satan and the world. He would not see you convicted of the sin of unbelief, or of lacking any righteousness, or falling under the same judgment, as the devil and so He has called you by the gospel enlightened You with His gifts, sanctified and kept you with Jesus Christ the one, true faith.

Jesus has been promising the gift of the Holy Spirit since the beginning of the Gospel. He promises rebirth by water and the Spirit which is joined to the eternal life promised to all who believe in the only begotten Son given by the love of the Father for the world in order that as the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness, so, too might the Son of man be lifted up in order to draw all people to Himself.

That's why Jesus cries out to the crowds in Jerusalem saying in John 7 (37-39), "If anyone thirsts, let Him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of His heart will flow rivers of living water.'" John explains, "Now this He said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."

Jesus is glorified when He is lifted up on the cross. There when cries, "It is finished," He bows His head and gives up His Spirit. Except this giving up is more a giving over. Along with the stream of water and blood flowing from Jesus' side, the Spirit is present at Jesus' death testifying to the life that comes from Him. 1 John 5:7-12, "For there are three that testify: ⁸ the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree. ⁹ If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has borne concerning his Son. ¹⁰ Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son. ¹¹ And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life."

(Pause) Do not think that you have less than the disciples because Jesus does not stand before you. Do not suppose that the Holy Spirit is less comforting than Jesus. When the side of Jesus is pierced, the wells of salvation are opened. The temple curtain is torn, all separation between you and God is removed, as Jesus becomes Your intercessor and the Spirit comes as your comforter. As the prophet Isaiah says so beautifully in chapter 12, our response can only be one that sings and lives out the faith that we have been given in word and deed:

**"Give thanks to the Lord,
call upon his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples,
proclaim that his name is exalted.
⁵ "Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously;
let this be made known in all the earth.
⁶ Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel."**

Yes, great in Your midst is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The very One who has saved You, so that you might now glorify Him in all that you think, say, and do. Amen!