

God works through means. This is something we confess regularly as Lutherans. We talk about God's means of grace: the Word and Sacraments –Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

As we talk about these means, we confess that through simple word, water, bread, and wine, we receive God's grace. We receive Jesus' body and blood. We receive the forgiveness of our sins. We receive life and salvation.

Today, especially, we rejoice in the fact that as the Lord works in these ways, He gives us something else. Or I should say some-One else. You see, He gives Himself to us. He gives us His Holy Spirit.

While some might look for extraordinary evidence of this, we know that our Lord who appeared to Elijah in a whisper and to shepherds as a baby often works in ordinary ways. In fact, He has promised to work in ordinary ways. So that when you confess that Jesus is Lord (as you just did in the Creed), you can be confident that you have been given God's Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3).

So let us rejoice that God has given Himself to us. Let us rejoice, especially today, that we have the Holy Spirit with and among us. And let us sing by the power of the Holy Spirit our Exodium Hymn, "Holy Spirit, God of Love."

Singing of Hymn

Beloved in the Lord: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

We pray. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be pleasing in Your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Congregation seated

"God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.'" That's the command that our Lord gives to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:28. God goes on in the words that follow that command to tell Adam and Eve that they are to have dominion over all

the earth. They are to have dominion over all of the animals on the earth. And God says that He has given to Adam and Eve food from every plant and tree yielding seed from all the earth.

God speaks in a similar way to Noah and his family in Genesis 9. Oh, things have changed as a result of sin when God speaks with Noah. In Genesis 9, God doesn't mention dominion. Instead, the animals will fear Noah and his family. And now in addition to plants and trees, God has given some of His creatures as food for Noah and his family. But while things have changed as a result of sin, this command remains: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (Genesis 9:1).

We should keep in mind this twice-given command as we today consider what happens at Babel in Genesis 11. From the Sunday School stories, we might immediately think of the building of a tower when we hear "Babel." The people there did want to build a tower. They also wanted to build a city. On the face of things that doesn't seem so bad. However, when we remember what God says to Adam and Eve, and then to Noah and his family, something jumps out about the people at Babel. And that is that the people there tried to build the city and tower for this expressed purpose: in order that they would not be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.

God had said he wanted his creation filled. God had given dominion over all the earth. But the people didn't want to be spread out. Here we see that the people at Babel had desires that were contrary to the Lord's. God's command and blessings involved the whole earth, but the people of Babel were hard at work because they didn't want to be dispersed. The people at Babel had desires that were contrary to the Lord's.

Such is the outcome and consequence of sin. Sin destroys the relationship between God and His people. Sin ruins the connection between us creatures and our Creator, so that we no longer desire what God desires. And we see that in the people at Babel.

Unfortunately, we also see it in ourselves as well. Our Lord desires that we would live in submission to His authority and the other authorities He has given to us, but we want to authority over our lives. This is something that children and especially teenagers can get a bad rap for, but what about the rest of us? How well do we submit to our boss at work? Or our leaders in government? Or anybody else who's been given authority over us?

Our sinful desires don't match the desires of our Lord. Our Lord teaches us to seek first His kingdom, but we strive for other things: our own pleasure and entertainment, our ease and comfort, the riches of this world. Our sin makes us like the people at Babel – people who have desires that are contrary to the Lord's.

Why look at what the people at Babel wanted: to make a name for themselves. But God's Word calls us in Psalm 29 to, "Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness" (v. 2). You see, the aim of people, as creatures, should be the proclamation and glory of the Creator's Name, the Lord's Name. But the people of Babel wanted a great name for themselves.

And don't we really want the same? Don't we want to be the best? Don't we want others to think that we are the best at work? Or that we have the best family? Or that we are the most skilled and gifted in a particular area? Why do we want that? Is it so that we can glorify the Lord who pours these gifts out on us? Not according to our sinful nature. It is so that we can be glorified. This sinful desire is what the people at Babel wanted. So, is it any wonder that God confused their speech?

This is precisely why the Law of God must work. When we people are clueless to our problems, to our sin, the Lord uses His Law to make us aware of our problems, aware of our sin. The Lord has to do this for us, because without the Law, we would just keep on heading down a path of our own design. Really, though, that is a path leading to our destruction.

Because whatever path we choose, whatever path we would follow; it would not be the path that the Lord first gave to Adam and Eve. It could not be, because our sin has so marred

us that our desires don't match the Lord's desires. And so the path of our choosing would not match our Lord's path for us. And so our path could not lead to life. For narrow is the gate that leads to life (Matthew 7:14).

In fact, there is only one path that leads to life, Jesus Christ, because Jesus came to walk the path that we should have walked. He lived without sin. He perfectly submitted Himself to the Father's will. He did everything that the Father wanted Him to do. He loved His neighbors. He had compassion on the helpless. He proclaimed the Good News of the Kingdom of God to the Father's glory.

He did everything His Heavenly Father wanted Him to do. He even walked the path to His own crucifixion. He did that, in order that He might suffer and die ... for you.

And we know that this was the Father's will for Jesus, because on the third day God the Father raised Jesus from the dead. Proving Jesus to be the Perfect Son of God. And proving also, that Jesus is the path to life. So that connected to Him, you could have life once again.

You have that life by virtue of your baptism. In baptism you are united with Christ in His death, but also in His life. In baptism, you receive God's grace and forgiveness. In baptism, you receive the gift of God's Spirit, His life-giving Spirit. You see, that's what the Holy Spirit does. He creates anew and brings life, abundant life according to God's plan.

And we get a picture of this from the day of Pentecost. We see this picture as the Lord undoes, at least for a time, one of the consequences of our sin. In Genesis, the Lord had to confuse the language of the people at Babel. They needed the Law to show them their sin. But, on the day of Pentecost, the Lord gives an amazing blessing to His people.

As the apostles do what Jesus had given them to do, as they proclaim the death and resurrection of Jesus by the power of the Spirit, the Lord enables them to communicate as people would have before Babel. The apostles are able to speak to Parthians, Medes,

Elamites, and on and on the list goes. All of them, without confused speech. In this, we get a picture of how the Lord undoes one of the consequences of sin.

This blessed picture from the Lord doesn't just point us back to what things were like at the beginning of Genesis, it points us forward to the Day when we will be with the Lord and all of His people. When we won't deal with sin or any of its effects. We won't have to deal with having desires that are contrary to the Lord's. We won't have to deal with the separation that sin has caused between us and God. And we won't have to deal with the separation that sin has caused between ourselves and others. We won't have to deal with confused speech. This is the promise and blessing that the Lord assures us of on this Day of Pentecost.

He assures us of this as He gives us His Holy Spirit. God's Word talks about the Spirit as a deposit, as a guarantee, on the promises that the Lord has made. Promises like: the promise of the resurrection; the promise of a relationship completely restored with God our Father; the promise of a Grand Reunion in heaven with all of God's people. This is all yours because of Christ. And you can be certain of this because you have the Holy Spirit.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, you have the Holy Spirit. God gives Him to you. Not just to somebody else. Not just to pastors, but to you. Oh, sure pastors share the Spirit with us as they do the things that they are called to do. As they administer the sacraments, as they preach God's Word, God's Spirit goes forth. But you too have the Spirit, because you've been given God's Word, you know the Good News of Jesus, and you confess it here Sunday after Sunday in the creed and through the liturgy.

And as you do, Sunday after Sunday, God's Spirit is here, through His Word and Sacraments, doing His work and enlivening your faith.

He does this that we too might join in His work. That we would join in the commission that God has given to His Church to make disciples of all nations.

You see, the Lord doesn't want us to be like the people of Babel and keep to ourselves. He wants us to go out and fill all the earth with His disciples.

Now, when I say fill the earth, I don't want you to be confused about what your part is in this. Your part doesn't mean that you have to travel to some remote place in West Africa to tell people about Jesus. God has already got people working there, who we are supporting through a special offering today. You don't necessarily need to go overseas. There are plenty of people around Topeka and in your life who need to hear about what Jesus has done. So you can simply speak the Truth of Christ in your daily life and invite people to come here to receive God's gifts. And as you do, you partake in the commission that Jesus has given to the Church.

Know that as you speak, as you invite, the Holy Spirit is there with you. And He is the One who does the difficult work of changing hearts and bringing life anew. You speak and you invite, and then you just trust that the Holy Spirit is there doing His work. And He is because He's enabling you to make that confess for "no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit."

So brothers and sisters, rejoice because the Lord has given you His Spirit. To give you faith. To give you life. To assure you of the promises He's made to you. So that you might confess Christ, here and throughout all your life. God help us all to do just that by His Spirit. Amen.

Congregation Stands

Now the peace of God which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Offertory