

Prayer of the Day:

Holy Spirit, God and Lord, come to us this joyful day with your sevenfold gift of grace. Rekindle in our hearts the holy fire of your love that in a true and living faith we may tell abroad the glory of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Father, one God, now and forever.

Verse of the Day:

Alleluia. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful people, and kindle in them the fire of your love. Alleluia.

Sermon Text:

(Reread lesson) Just a wonderfully comforting lesson, isn't it? Especially nice to hear are those closing words of Jesus as He promises us that lasting peace that can never be taken away. It's a good word that one, peace. But, as I'm fairly sure I have said before, even in a sermon, it is an interesting word. Peace is a word that can be defined differently depending on the ethnic group or geographical location you are in. For example: ask your average American out there to define peace for you and I would imagine that you will hear an answer that talks about what peace is not. Peace is the absence of war, strife, hardship, and pain. If taken to its most self-centered of definitions, peace is the absence of all the stuff I don't like. If that's all gone then I'm at peace. But travel across the ocean and into Israel and ask someone what peace is (Shalom there) and they may give a slightly different answer, or at least so I am told. Peace in the Hebrew mind isn't a lacking. Instead, it is like a brick wall, expertly laid, with all the bricks and mortar joints perfectly placed. We might say in this concept of peace everything is exactly where it should be. There is another word for that. It's perfect! When everything is perfect, then there is peace.

As we take that concept back to our lesson then, I would venture to say that the disciples probably don't feel like everything is perfect in this moment. We have rolled back the study of scripture to before the time of the crucifixion again and Jesus is increasingly preparing the disciples for all that is coming. He speaks about His death, His departure from them (the ascension), and everything they will need to endure as they carry on the work of the Church without the visible presence of Jesus Christ. To say that the disciples don't get it is probably putting it mildly. At one point Jesus has to rebuke Peter, and the rest of the disciples repeatedly prove that they don't understand what Jesus is trying to say. It feels like the brick wall is crumbling before them.

I get the feeling. We listen to the news and all the things I don't like are front and center, hardly absent these days. War, awful and grotesque, raging between Ukraine and Russia all the other nations are at a loss at how to stop it without instigating World War III. Children dying in classrooms as depraved minds do the unthinkable. Shortages in the stores as supply chains that were disrupted now struggle to keep up with the pace to catch up even as supply runs low. Prices, for just about everything, are spiraling out of control as inflation predictably follows. Panic attacks starting yet? That isn't peace! Of course, there is a reason for all that. Sin continues to assault society no matter what we do to try and stop it. Things aren't perfect.

Ah, but then this is no surprise. Sin begets sin and because no one is perfect corruption is evident everywhere, even in our own hearts. God back to the beginning of our lesson for a second. *Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are*

John 14:23-27

²³ Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. ²⁴ He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

²⁵ "All this I have spoken while still with you. ²⁶ But the Counselor, 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. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me. Are you a perfect follower of Jesus? If you can say, “yes”, you are better off than I am. If you say, “yes” and your name isn’t Jesus then you are a liar. In the coming weeks, we are planning on looking at God’s will for our lives as spelled out in the 10 Commandments. Spoiler alert! If we do the introspective thing and really look into our own hearts, and not down our noses at everybody else, well we quickly come to the conclusion that we have broken every commandment. They lie shattered on the floor before us like a mishandled mirror.

So then, since we haven’t followed God’s teachings, because we certainly haven’t shown perfect obedience, does this mean we are to be numbered among those who do not love Jesus? If that’s true then does this mean no home with the Father, no lasting place in heaven? And if not heaven then where? Does this mean hell for the lot of us? Honestly, it should.

But then return to the lesson. Does Jesus conclude the first paragraph with “and since you haven’t, to hell with all of you?” I don’t recall that. Instead, we hear, *All this I have spoken while still with you.*²⁶ *But the Counselor, 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.*

Ah, it’s far from hell for all of us. Instead, Jesus knows we need help. He knows we struggle and that our world is anything but peaceful so he provides us with one who will grant us a peace-filled reminder. The Holy Spirit will come. Did come to those disciples as promised in that lesson from Acts. Miraculously the sound of a raging wind, tongues of fire on their heads, they received perfect clarity of all Jesus had taught so much so that they could now preach it to all gathered around even in languages that were previously unknown to them.

No, I don’t expect to see tongues of fire tonight/today. If we hear raging wind, it’s probably a storm outside and if I start making funny noises, well, call a doctor. But this doesn’t mean the Holy Spirit isn’t here. It certainly doesn’t mean He isn’t working mightily among us these days.

Look at how Jesus describes the work of the third person of the Holy Trinity. He will remind us of all things. He takes us back to the Word of God. He wraps us in the means of grace. For many of us it happened first at a font, maybe this one, maybe another, it doesn’t matter. There, simple water connected with the powerful Word and promise of Jesus, *in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit* (Matthew 28:19), it washed away sin, delivered from death and the devil, and gave eternal salvation to all who believed it as the words and promises of God declare, as the Spirit granted faith. He continued to visit troubled hearts in the promises of the Word as it was read to us and then by us as the Spirit winged us back through centuries of wrong to the one place where Jesus got it all right for us. His life, His death, His resurrection, they provide a perfect wall to surround the peace which He alone could win, give, protect even if everything else seems to be shaking and quaking in this messed up world of ours. What God has done provides a peace that doesn’t disappear as soon as the threats return. He provides a peace that is unlike that of the world because it only shines all the more brightly when sin rages around it. In that supper, instituted by Christ, the Holy Spirit works in the very body and blood of Jesus in, with, and under bread and wine to forgive us for all the times our lives have followed others or self rather than Jesus, for all the times doing so brought the walls tumbling down and all the stuff I didn’t want came racing back in. I’m God’s child. He loves me. It’s gone! That forgiveness allows me to live each day for Him in the strength He provides and yearning, focused on the glory that He has in store for me and all other believers in heaven.

When the Spirit brings me back to it all, reminds me of all that Jesus has done, well no wonder Jesus says those words. *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.* Yes, dear friends, even a pretty mixed-up world, confidence, hope, peace! Because we know Jesus has promised that one day it will all be in its proper place. One day sin will be gone! One day the struggles will cease. No need for trouble, no need for fear.

Pentecost provides us with a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the work of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps we should find more opportunities for that as He comes to us with His **PEACE-FILLED REMINDERS**. Amen!