

20220605 - Pentecost Sunday

A sermon by Pr. David Johnson

One of my favorite *Andy Griffith* episodes involves Andy, trying to explain the importance of generosity to a very young Opie. He uses one example after another, hoping that Opie will understand, but to no avail. At one point, Andy speaks of the “ratio” of those boys who need the help of others, to which Opie responds, “Poor Horatio.” Andy’s point is lost on his 5 year old son. And the more Andy tries to explain, the more Opie thinks about “Poor Horatio.”

As you heard our pericope readings, I’m sure you could identify the common thread that ran through each of them? It was the Holy Spirit. And how fitting, because today happens to be Pentecost Sunday.

It was on Pentecost that the Holy Spirit came upon all those people in that upper room, a fulfillment of Jesus’ promise just prior to His ascension (*Acts 1:4-8*). And it was the Holy Spirit which was “to be poured out ... on all mankind...” (*see Joel 2:28ff*) But yet, in many segments of Christendom, the Holy Spirit is often the “unsung” person of the Trinity – the mystical presence and power of God.

But today, on Pentecost Sunday, He will be the focus of thousands of sermons being preached around the world. And though it is theologically sound, and critical that we understand the person, role, and blessings of the Holy Spirit, would it please Him that so much emphasis was being placed on Him today?

Well, depending on the church background you come from, that answer could be, “*Absolutely! It’s about time!*” And they would be right, to a point. The Holy Spirit is frequently ignored and passed over as the third person of the God-head. It’s often true that we fail to understand, or proclaim the critical role that the Holy Spirit plays in the “big-picture” of Christian life. It’s also true that many church groups rarely recognize the critical role of the Holy Spirit in both our Justification and Sanctification.

But that having been said, I think we fail to understand that it is precisely this “invisible/mystical” characteristic that is at the core of the Holy Spirit’s ministry. It is this ability to move, in and through time and events, unseen and undeterred, which is one of the amazing aspects of His mission.

You see, the Holy Spirit isn’t the spectacular, the exciting side of the Trinity, as many teach; as if the Father was passé and Jesus’ role was completed after His resurrection. The Spirit’s job isn’t to amaze or show off; to impress by imparting spectacular gifts to godly saints. On the contrary, the picture we see of the Holy Spirit’s mission from the pages of the Bible is that of a veiled (*though by no means quiet*) service to both the Heavenly Father and to His Son, Jesus. This is evident from the very earliest pages of Scripture.

Gen 1:2 The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. **3** Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

Our first encounter with the Holy Spirit is at creation; bringing light to darkness, and life to an empty wasteland. The earth was formless and void, God spoke His Word (*Jesus*), and the moving/ hovering Spirit of God exploded into action (*see Job 33:4; Ps 104:30; Ezek. 37:9; the Holy Spirit is often referred to as the “breath” or “wind” of God*).

Commentator Robert Jamieson makes this observation, “*The immediate agency of the Spirit, by working on the dead and discordant elements, combined, arranged, and ripened them into a state adapted for being the scene of a new creation.*”

But like wind and breath, it isn’t the moving air that you see; it’s the effects, the rustling leaves or the flicker of a candle flame. You recognize the impact and the power of the wind, not for what it is, but for what it does. And this effect can range from the subtle to the dynamic; even to the changing of entire landscapes.

Likewise, just as neither wind nor breath can be seen, it isn’t the Holy Spirit that should capture our attention, but rather it’s source. The awesomeness that accompanies the presence of the Holy Spirit is never intended to glorify the Spirit. Instead, we should direct our attention to the source, to the Father and the Son.

That is the role of the Holy Spirit (*to bring attention to the Father, and His Son, Jesus*). It brings Him the greatest satisfaction when the Father’s will is accomplished, and lives are changed as they are drawn to Christ.

In Luther’s Small Catechism, the meaning to the third article to the Apostles Creed, explains the role of the Holy Spirit this way:

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.

In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

In this Christian church he daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers.

On the Last Day he will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.

Martin Luther understood that the ministry of the Holy Spirit was both as specific as the individual believer, and as broad as the corporate Body of Christ. The Holy Spirit isn’t just active in the salvation and restoration of the singular sinner, He is also the active agent in the protection, provision, and eventual resurrection of the worldwide Church universal.

In each of these responsibilities, we see the third person of the Trinity (*the Holy Spirit*) serve in support of the

other two, and relishing that role. But this doesn't make Him lesser, simply different. He is serving the Father and the Son, just as the Son also carries out the wishes of the Father (*Matt. 26:39; John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38*). And this holy cooperation is critical to understand many aspects of life. In understanding the person and non-competitive role of the Holy Spirit, we are also able to better comprehend how God uses this perfect triad as a template for marriage, family, government, and a host of other facets of life.

But other than fulfilling the wishes of the Father and the Son, what is the job of the Holy Spirit? There is no way that we can, in the span of a few short minutes, fully discuss the far-reaching character and ministry of the Holy Spirit. But this brief outline will have to suffice for now as we briefly look at the Holy Spirit today.

A. The Holy Spirit calls us by the Gospel (points us to Christ through repentance and faith)

John 3:5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. **6** "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (also *Joel 2:28, 32; Matt. 28:19; Acts 2*)

Titus 3:5-6 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

B. The Holy Spirit empowers us with His gifts and fruit (see *Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12; & Gal. 5:22-26*)

Joel 2:28 "...I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions..."

Luke 12:11 "When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not worry about how or what you are to speak in your defense, or what you are to say; **12** for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say." (also *Mark 13:11*)

Acts 1:8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Acts 19:6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they {began} speaking with tongues and prophesying.

Heb 2:4 God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

C. The Holy Spirit sanctifies (perfects) us in faith

Is 63:10 But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; Therefore He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them.

Matt 12:31 "Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. **32** "Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the {age} to come.

Rom 5:3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; **4** and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; **5** and hope does not disappoint, because the love of

God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

D. The Holy Spirit keeps us in true faith

John 14:26 "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 said to you.

Eph 1:13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, **14** who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of {God's own} possession, to the praise of His glory.

2 Tim 1:14 Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to {you.}

E. The Holy Spirit daily and richly forgives our sins

Ps 51:9 Hide Your face from my sins And blot out all my iniquities. **10** Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. **11** Do not cast me away from Your presence And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. **12** Restore to me the joy of Your salvation And sustain me with a willing spirit.

Mark 3:29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" (also *Luke 12:10, Titus 3:5-6*)

F. The Holy Spirit will one day raise us to be with Christ

Rom 8:10 If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. **11** But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

2 Cor 4:13 But having the same spirit of faith...**14** knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you. (see *1 Cor. 6:14*)

In these 6 points, we have a summation of the primary tasks of the Holy Spirit. However, there is one benefit not listed here, which some might determine as the most critical of all. It is the ministry we find listed by Jesus Himself in John chapter 14; it is the presence of Jesus Himself acting through the Holy Spirit throughout life.

John 14:15-18; 26-27 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. **16** "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; **17** {that is} the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, {but} you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. **18** "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to 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 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. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.