

Sermon for Pentecost John 15:25-27; 16:4-15 The Spirit of Truth

Have you noticed how much rain we have been getting lately? All this rain provided food for my thoughts. How many of you have ever had the chance to lie still in bed, listening to the rain fall on the roof? Maybe a tin roof? During my time of study for today's message, I was moved by a recent song titled "Fall Like Rain." This song is from the 2024 Passion Conference, and if I have not told you before, the Passion movement connects to the confession of Isaiah 26:8: "Yes, Lord, walking in the way of your laws, we wait for you; your name and renown are the fervent desire of our hearts." As I listened to the writer of the song, he painted this beautiful metaphor of rain that washes away things, of life and refreshment. The bridge of the song serves as a reminder to know and exist in the presence of the Holy Spirit, the promised gift of God to us through Jesus, helping us to live in the way Jesus told us to live. By the same power that lifted Jesus from the dead, the Holy Spirit is alive in us. What a great prayer to give in saying, Holy Spirit, live in us and let your glory fall on us, and then, as a people, we can experience the friendship of God. That is why Jesus came so that we can be in a relationship with Him.

Back in the Garden of Eden, the image we see is that closeness of walking with God in the cool of the day, and that is how we come to life on the inside to be connected so that we do not have to walk through this life alone. We do not have to go through hardship alone because we have the promised one of God living in us because of what Jesus has done on the cross. As I listened to the song, I felt this sense of an extensive yet comforting eternity shaping prayer. Unfortunately, not everyone knows the gift and power of the Holy Spirit, that we can live in the fullness and victory of the resurrection. The Holy Spirit is alive, and there is something unique about the time following Jesus' death and resurrection when He promised to send a permanent helper for us, to bear witness to Jesus by bringing the words of Jesus to the minds of His followers, the truth about Jesus and the same Spirit who hovered over the empty void of creation as the Father created all that exists. The same Spirit that connects us to the truth falls like rain. Listen to these words. "Fall like rain, Holy Spirit, fall like rain. Holy Spirit, have your way, let your glory fall down, let your glory fall down." Let's pray.

We stand before you, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in your name. With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts; Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it. We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder. Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path, nor let partiality influence our actions. Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right. All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. Amen.

We left off last week with Jesus' greatest prayer, with the promise of God's purpose for his disciples and us as his future followers, leaving us to glorify the Father and "Armed for the World." We can think back to the end of Jesus' earthly ministry when he told his followers to "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit." When we think of the third person, the Spirit, there are rare narratives in which we see the Spirit revealing any desires, only a handful of words throughout the Bible. Unlike the Father and the Son, Jesus, we do not get to know what the Scriptures call

the “Holy Spirit,” or the Spirit of the Lord, or the “Spirit of Truth.” The Bible does say in the Book of Acts three times that the Holy Spirit communicated to the apostles, but we do not know how he spoke. Furthermore, the Bible gives us five verses describing the Holy Spirit as a “voice.” The most relevant verses come in Hebrews 3, Ezekiel 2, Matthew 10, Mark 13, and from our text today in John 16, the most extended single section about the Holy Spirit in all of the gospels, and what some refer to this section as “Jesus’ Spirit Sermon.” Listen as I read from John 16:13. “But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak, and He will disclose to you what is to come.”

There is more, for not only will the Spirit witness the words of Christ but also witness to the work of Christ. John the Baptist was correct in saying that Jesus would send forth a powerful Spirit to the world to teach, suffer, die, and rise again. When we look at verses 7-11, specifically verse 11, Jesus explains to his disciples that the Holy Spirit will bear witness to the world about the ministry of Jesus. When the truth is declared, if there is any conviction about sin or his victory over sin and death, that conviction will come because of our Helper. The talk of judgment in verse 11 directs us, the reader, back to the cross. John 12 confirms the talk of judgment when Jesus says, ³¹ **Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.** ³² **And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.** ³³ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.”

From our focus scripture, we can note three things Jesus would witness to the wider world when the truth is declared: what is wrong (the sin of unbelief), what is right (baptism and repentance), and who won (the Spirit of truth exposes the truth-the evil ruler of this world has been condemned).

On the day of Pentecost, Peter gave the sermon, and Peter told the crowd how the coming of the Spirit would fulfill the prophecy of Joel, saying: “God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Then we are told that “when the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” Peter’s answer? The Holy Spirit had come to begin his work of conviction of sin in the world. The Spirit needs to convict the world of guilt with regard to sin. We can all agree that there is something wrong with the world, and the Holy Spirit of Pentecost serves as our reminder that just talking about the fact this world has problems is not enough.

Before Pentecost, the disciples struggled with unity, often stubborn and self-promoting, and Jesus had to correct them because they were arguing about which of them was the greatest. Like the scoffers, they, too, fell under the sin of unbelief. Following Pentecost, something right happened, and a radical transformation took place. Although Peter gave the sermon under an anointing, it was the empowerment of the Holy Spirit that brought unity and a focus of purpose they had not known before. Instead of competing with one another, instead of conflict, they now collaborated. In John 17:21, 23, Jesus said, “I pray for them to become one of us so that the world will recognize that you sent me, that they will experience perfect unity, and the world will be convinced that you have sent me.” Based on these two Scriptures, we read that the world will know, recognize, and be convinced of God’s work in our lives, and His love toward them is

through our love and unity! That, my friends, is precisely what we see happening in the lives of the earliest believers following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost!

As a preacher, it is tempting for me to focus on how much “power” I feel when I stand here before you in the pulpit. There is a sense of divine empowerment when preaching, but the design of Pentecost is to produce so much more! Pentecost is to empower the church of Christ to witness to the world, and on that day, the ascended Lord has kept his promise as the effects of wrongful sin are being undone as the Holy Spirit goes forth with the gospel of God’s grace in Jesus Christ. According to the Scriptures, to right what is wrong, Jesus has risen from the dead and, like the falling rain, has poured out his Spirit to fill God’s new covenant people, a redemptive-historical confirmation that Christ is reigning on the throne. Victory in Jesus! Jesus has won!

How do you know if you are alive in God’s Spirit? How do we know if we have found the water of life? I said once before that God has found us in Jesus Christ. God has come to us with forgiveness of sins and life everlasting because of Jesus’ death on the cross and his resurrection. He comes to us, not through our own thoughts or understanding, not through willpower or obedience to the world, but through God’s Word. God comes to us through baptism even before we come to know God. God found you and made you God’s child. It was God’s grace that came to you in baptism, and God’s grace comes to you in the Lord’s Supper, received by believing the words “for you.” God comes in Bread and Wine, the Body and the Blood of Christ, “for you.” The Spirit is given to you as we come together to look back in remembrance.

Jesus has answered the question of whether or not we are living out our lives in the Holy Spirit, saying, “The Spirit will witness to him, and the Spirit will empower us to witness to him. Being a follower of Christ, being alive in the Spirit, is not a burden but a joy. Look to Jesus, the center of our faith. Jesus is the fountain of living water offered to all through faith. The Spirit of Truth is at work in and among us all the time, even if we are not aware of it. We need the Spirit to see our need for righteousness for life itself. The Spirit enables us to perform acts of kindness, witness to others, and give faithful service. Are we willing to do His work? Thanks be to God for sending a helper because we have made a mess of things that matter most in our lives. Amen.