

The Spirit's Work

In the name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit.

St. John 16:14 – [Jesus, speaking of the Holy Spirit, says] **“He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is mine and declare it to you.”**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the name of Christ Jesus our crucified and risen Savior, fellow redeemed.

The work that the Holy Spirit carries out is twofold: First we see in vs. 8-11 His work is to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgement. **“And 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.”** The word convict makes sense when we consider Him convicting of sin, but not so much when it comes to righteousness and judgement. If we apply an alternate translation “convince” it makes better sense in our minds. For example, from Scripture of the Holy Spirit convicting of sin we look to the Holy Spirit doing this work in Acts 2; after the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the disciples on Pentecost; Peter in his sermon preached the Law and the Gospel. The Law, **“Therefore, let the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart,** a beautiful example of the Law being preached and the Holy Spirit convicting the sinful heart. The Holy Spirit works in our hearts the same way. This is why it is so important for our pastors to preach both the Law and the Gospel. This work of the Holy Spirit “convicting” is sometimes referred to as the foreign work of the Gospel, as we look mainly to him as our counselor, our helper, that is the second portion of His work and will be the focus of our meditation this morning.

If you were to tune into some of the many televised churches found on the air today you would hear such things as being “Spirit-led”, being “Spirit-filled”, “feeling the Spirit”, being “baptized with the Holy Spirit.” The Holy Spirit is a big deal in their circles. But these words and phrases are misuses and misunderstandings of how the Holy Spirit really works in the hearts of Christians.

In our text this morning, as well as many other places in the Gospels, Jesus informs us about how the Holy Spirit works. Jesus says this about the Holy Spirit: **“...for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak.” vs.13** Jesus is teaching that the Holy Spirit is doing His job not when we hear about Him, but when we hear the Gospel preached and have the forgiveness of sins delivered through the Means of Grace. The Holy Spirit is not an entity that goes around zapping people who display a certain level of faith, so they speak in tongues,” or causing them shake and fall on the ground with a touch to the forehead. Believe me these things have been attributed to the Holy Spirit for many years, and I emphasize once again these are misuses and misunderstandings of how the Holy Spirit works.

The work of the Holy Spirit is to guide us to Christ through the Means of Grace, Word and Sacrament, thereby creating and maintaining faith in our hearts. Therefore, the more you hear

of Christ crucified and risen for our salvation through the Means of Grace, the stronger our faith becomes. That is why it is so important for us to present ourselves to God's house to be feed the Bread of Life.

The Holy Spirit accomplishes His work by leading us to the truth, as Jesus instructed, ***"When that one comes, the Spirit of truth, He will lead you into all truth."*** And that truth is the truth of the Gospel, that Jesus is ***"the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."*** John 14:6

Rejoice dear Brothers and Sisters, we as God's children being guided to Christ through the Means of Grace and having faith created through believing in the truth have the assurance that our sins are forgiven, that eternal salvation is ours. As the Holy Spirit speaks and testifies to the truth, we are reconciled with God. The Apostle Paul wrote that ***"in Christ, God is reconciling the world to Himself."*** (2 Cor. 5:19)

With the joy of the forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation burning in our hearts we want to share that joy with the world. In fact, we are a part of God's plan to do just that, we are here to be the ambassadors of truth as we share our faith with others. And the devil, this evil world, and our own sinful flesh do not want this to happen. They throw up roadblocks to try and stop the truth. They mislead churches using lies and half-truths. The TV churches mentioned earlier are good examples. How many times have you heard them mix the truth with lies, for example, have you heard someone say, "It doesn't matter what church you belong to, we are all praying to the same God." Or "It doesn't matter what you believe, just as long as you believe something."? Or "As long as you have Jesus in your heart, that is all you need the other teachings don't matter." Or how about this doozy, "My God is a loving God He would never condemn me for my lifestyle." Those who teach and practice such lies, and half-truths are guilty of idolatry. They are putting themselves above God and in fact, creating their own gods. Our Gospel lesson clearly teaches that lies and half-truths have no place in God's church and in the hearts of His people. Jesus said, ***"When the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth."***

Brothers and Sister, we can clearly see the faults teaching in the world and easily point them out, but we also must watch after ourselves as well. It is easy to slip into sinful patterns and thoughts. For example, we may have a pet sin, a pet sin is a sin that we have trouble rejecting as we might count it a small and insignificant. A sin that we will even defend. They come in all forms, anger, "If she wouldn't have said the things she said I wouldn't have gotten anger and blown up in her face." Lust, "There is no harm in looking as long as I don't act on it." The one I struggle with is speed limits, "I know the speed limit is 55, but they usually won't stop you for 7 mile per hour over." It is one thing to look down and see that you are going 7 mile over and correct it, but it is quite another when you set the cruise control at that speed. Just in those three examples we have the breaking of the 4th, 5th, and 6th commandments.

The point is, not only do we have to be aware of the false teachers and teaching in this world, we have keep our sinful natures in check. One of the blessings of being a part of a small synod is

that we can watch each other closely. Our pastors regularly meet twice a year, the pastor in our circuits meet 3 to 4 time a year or more. If there is even a hint that a false teaching may be slipping into one of our ELS congregations it is immediately addressed and with vigor. In our congregations we have elders to watch after the teachings and ask questions when those red flags pop at hearing something that doesn't sound right and proper. And we have one another as brother and sisters in Christ to watch after each other.

Thanks be to God we are not left to our own devises and wisdom, getting back to our text Jesus teaches us that ***“He [the Spirit] will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.”*** The Spirit was to glorify Jesus by taking, ***“of what is Mine”***; that is everything that belongs to Jesus – His teaching, His truth, His work, really everything the Bible reveals to us about the person, teaching and work of Jesus Christ – and making this known to His disciples. As Scripture teaches us a big part of this work and teaching was while Jesus walked on the earth as our brother. It includes Jesus living a perfect, sinless life. He did so in our stead as God demands that we be perfect but we cannot because our original sin handed down from generation to generation from our first parents, Adam and Eve. His work includes His being arrested, being falsely accused and humiliated, being beaten, being made to carry His cross to Calvary. Being nailed to the cross and pouring His life blood out to pay for each one of your sins. It included being abandon on the cross by His heavenly Father, ***“for He who had not sin became sin for us.”*** We hear Jesus cry out from the cross, ***“My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?”*** This work includes Jesus resting in the tomb for three days and rising from the dead on that first Easter morning, victorious over death., ensuring us that our salvation is sure and that we will stand before the throne of God in that eternal day.

To emphasize His teaching and to ensure that we know the source of everything we are taught and everything that we have talked about here this morning Jesus added this statement, ***“All that the Father has is mine; therefore, I said that He [the Holy Spirit] will take what is mine and declare it to you.”*** Whatever belongs to Jesus belongs to the Father. Just as, whatever belongs to the Father belongs also to Jesus. The Holy Spirit takes this treasury of truth, the truth of our God who pours His grace over a sinful world and makes it known to mankind through the Means of Grace. All persons of the Trinity are equally active in the great work of mankind's salvation. To the Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – be all glory forever.