

Christ is risen! **He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!**

This week being the 5th week of Easter, the historic Gospels take a turn.

In the first few weeks of Easter, we rejoice in the resurrection and revel in the faith given to us by our Good Shepherd; a faith that comforts us as we bear our crosses by keeping us focused on Jesus. Starting with this fifth week, we prepare for Jesus' Ascension and for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Feast of Pentecost.

We're directed to meditate on the gift of the Holy Spirit, who *proceeds from the Father and the Son*.

Of course, it's not like we have not been meditating on the Holy Spirit's work already.

He is the one who blesses us with faith to believe in and confess Jesus, our risen Lord and God.

The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, who comforts us in our crosses and afflictions.

And today, we reflect on Jesus' testimony that it is the Spirit's work to convict us,

that is to convince us/ give us certainty of our salvation in our crucified, risen, and returning Lord.

As follows in Jesus' name:

[Jesus said:] "But now I am going to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you. 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.

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take what is Mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is Mine; therefore I said that He will take what is Mine and declare it to you."^(ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

Jesus spoke these words to His apostles the night He was betrayed; the evening before His crucifixion and death.

His purpose was not to cause them fear or sorrow, but to encourage and comfort them.

But even as He does this, He knows how weak our mortal nature is.

We're easily distracted, and once our emotions get involved, it's hard to concentrate/think straight.

Consider how, when serious health issues arise,

it's often advised to take someone else along to doctor appointments.

That way, the other can be listening to the doctor's report, take notes, or help ask questions,

because when the news is heavy, it shakes you so much that you don't think or remember the same as when the appointment is a routine well-ness visit.

It's good to have an advocate for you and extra ears to hear & remember important information.

On this night, sorrow had filled the apostles' hearts.

Jesus Himself was distressed. He was struggling with the burden.

Jesus had told them, yet again, of His imminent crucifixion, and they didn't know what to make of it.

How could this be good news?

How could this lead to joy filling their hearts?

How could this be part of God's plan of salvation?

They heard the words coming out of Jesus' mouth, but... it was unbelievable.

If He were the Messiah, the One to reign forever, how could He suffer & die as He was saying?
– Jesus' words were not computing.

And just as a doctor might try to explain what benefits an operation,
even while he knows it is more information than will be understood at the moment,
Jesus informs them ahead of time, showing that He was in complete control
and that this was all part of His Father's plan.

And as a doctor might try to calm a fearful patient about, what is for him, a very routine surgery,
so Jesus would calm His apostles ahead of these events... absolutely certain of the outcome.

But Jesus was doing more than just encouraging them through His suffering and death;
He was also preparing them for the work that He was calling them to do afterward.
It was, in fact, to their advantage that He suffer, die, rise, and ascend into heaven,
for then He would send the Holy Spirit.

They would be witnesses of some horrific things.

They would live through some very difficult times, watching Jesus suffer and die as He would,
things that would cause, what we call today, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Watching Jesus suffer the burden of the sins of the world in the garden...

hearing Him cry out to His Father, being forsaken...

The viciousness of the High Priest's attacks and false accusations would wound any conscience.

Roman beatings and scourging and crucifixions were meant to be horrific.

They were meant to deter people from crossing the Romans.

And fear, indeed, swept over the apostles as they fled from Jesus in the garden

and as they cowered in the locked upper room on the evening of Easter Sunday.

But His suffering and death were necessary. And it was good that they witnessed it.

These were the price God had to pay for our atonement,

otherwise, God's righteous judgment wouldn't have been satisfied.

And His resurrection proves to us that the Father accepted Jesus' death for all sin,

otherwise, Jesus would have remained in the tomb, as One who was guilty of sin.

Jesus' *ascension into heaven to sit at the right hand of God the Father almighty* was also in view.

As He was destined to take on all authority in heaven and on earth,

He desired that the world, filled with His human brothers and sisters, would believe in Him...

that they would receive the benefit of this/His work of redemption.

These men reclining at table with Him would be those He initially called to go out into the world,

but He would not send them out alone, nor would it be their job to convert the nations.

Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit upon them **to guide them into all truth,**

to cause them to remember His holy words, even these words... which are the breath of life.

The Holy Spirit, speaking with the authority of the Father and the Son,

would glorify the Son by focusing His words on Jesus and His works of redemption.

So here Jesus tells His apostles that the things that they were about to see and hear,

His innocent sufferings, death, and resurrection were to be the focus of their preaching.

It would not cause them PTSD.

Recounting His death would not trigger them... or cause them to despair,
but would invigorate them and give them great joy... and not only them,
but also those who would hear them and believe.

Through their preaching, the Holy Spirit, the **Helper**, would be working.
He would be doing His job of convicting them... and the world,
convincing you of Jesus' redemption for you.

And just as true as Jesus was when He spoke to the apostles that night before He was betrayed,
so He is still shown to be true as the Holy Spirit continues to work through their words,
as we are now meditating on Gospel according to St. John.

The Holy Spirit is still convincing you of the sin of unbelief and misbelief.

He convicts our consciences that it is wrong to deny our Savior's death and resurrection.

And look [*pointing to the cross*], we have images of that horrific death even hung in our church.

It displays for us the terrible consequences of *our misbelief, despair, and other shameful sin & vice*.

And yet, we see in it,

not something to trigger our fear or guilt,

but you see in it the love of God for you,

because the Holy Spirit is also and still convincing you of Jesus' righteousness for you.

The Holy Spirit comforts your conscience as He causes you to remember your baptism.

There, with that water and His powerful word,

Jesus washed your sins from you, while giving you His righteousness.

You no longer stand before the Father in naked shame, but you are clothed with Jesus' perfection,
which prepares you for the Judgment, of which the Holy Spirit is also and still convincing you.

In Jesus, that judgment is nothing to fear.

As you heard Jesus say in the text, **the ruler of this world is judged...** past tense.

Jesus has already, by His death and resurrection, overcome and defeated the devil.

While we will continually have spiritual skirmishes each and every day of our lives here in this world,
and we will stumble in the battle, giving into temptation and sin,

Your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ would have you humbly confess these sins

and then He would have you hear His gracious judgment of forgiveness declared upon you.

Through that declaration, the Holy Spirit is working to give you the conviction
that you are God's child and an heir of everlasting life.

God grant you these convictions;

that your sins and unbelief and misbelief have been paid for and forgiven by Christ's death;

that the Father sees you as holy and righteous on account of Christ's life;

and that you stand before His judgment throne innocent, cleansed by Jesus' blood and righteousness.

Christ is risen! **He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!**

Soli Deo Gloria