

Sermon Pentecost 2019

June 9, 2019

John 14:23-31

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. This morning we'll meditate on the Gospel Lesson previously read.

This week, I called a friend of mine who's also a pastor, and to tease him I asked him about Pentecost. You see when we were in seminary he would joke about starting a television ministry after ordination called "The Rev Trev Power Hour," something akin to what one might find commonly on Christian TV Stations. His joke was that he would profess to be filled with the Holy Spirit in a very gifted way so that people would send him money. With that in mind I asked if he would be giving any sort of special revelations from the Spirit in his preaching. To my surprise he didn't roll with the joke quite like I expected but instead ran a different direction that was profound. He said, "Well, Matt, I actually have a book that was written by the Holy Spirit." Knowing where he was going I played dumb, "Oh wow, can I get a copy of that? I'd love to see it!" "I'm sure you already have, you see it's the best-selling book of all time. You see it's the Bible."

Obviously our tone was jocular, but the point is well made, isn't it? We so often seek the leading of the Spirit, or we seek the guidance of the Spirit, or we seek the Spirit Himself in all sorts of means. And yet where does He promise to be? In the Scriptures. I've made this point before, but you know the Scriptures are said by Paul to be Theopneustos. Theos as in God, and pneustos-where we get our words like pneumatic or pneumonia, words relating to wind or air or breath, but which equates to the Latin Spirit. In other words the Scriptures are God-breathed, God-spirited. Want to know where the Spirit is? Look in this book that we so often ignore. It's more than sufficient for speaking for the Holy Spirit.

It's interesting, though, because in our time we so often want to seek the Spirit through any other means. In fact, so many want to be "spiritual" without seeking the Spirit in these words of Scripture and without gathering with other Christians whom the Spirit gathers by the preaching of that word and the giving of Himself and Jesus in Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Those of you who are joining in our Summer Book Reading may already have started on the book by Pastor Wolfmueller where he describes this milieu that we have in our religious culture. He calls it this mix of four things: revivalism, pietism, mysticism,

and enthusiasm. While he sort of equates pietism with legalistic works righteousness, the other three really fit with this idea. In fact, it really comes down to this enthusiasm in particular.

Now when we think of enthusiasm, we think of getting excited about something. But theologically, it actually has a different meaning. It relates to the idea that we would find God in ourselves. In other words, that when we would look for God we would find the certainty of what He says in our thoughts or in our feelings, or emotions. And that's so true today, isn't it? What's love? Oh it's how I feel. Forget that God has given us clear commandments that tell us how to love, commandments 1-3 that tell us how to love Him, and 4-10 that tell us how to love our neighbor, we know true love by what we feel.

In fact, I read an article this week that was written by a woman who had married a man about four years ago. She wrote about the bliss in her life now that they were together, and how they had left their significant others to come to this place of true love; she had left her boyfriend, he had divorced his wife and left his children. To her that was love. But what about the wife? What about the instability that creates for the children? Certainly, there is instability in a house with parents that don't get along, but so often divorce actually results in a much greater instability. And as I say that I know we have divorcees, and I want to be clear that Jesus did die for that sin too. Even though we might have greater peace in our lives after something like that, it doesn't mean that we don't still live in repentance for our short comings. But I digress, as my point is that there is in this mindset no view for a real revelation of the Spirit in the Divine Scriptures.

And as we see this, it's elsewhere too. It's all over in our churches, it's in the licentiousness in our society—that we would justify ourselves with a license to sin because it feels right and spiritual. In fact, I was reminded recently that we even see it in the office of the papacy. What do I mean?

Well have you ever heard what the Roman Catholic Church teaches about the pope? Listen to these words from the Roman Catholic Catechism: "The Roman Pontiff, head of the college of bishops, enjoys... infallibility in virtue of his office... This infallibility extends as far as the deposit of divine Revelation itself." Now that's a bit of an edit I'll admit. For the sake of length, I took some parts out, but I don't think I changed any meaning. The pope is understood to have the authority of divine revelation. By his office, he can speak for God.

Christians, whether this is there, or in our culture, or in our own hearts, we have to be careful in assuming that the Spirit is working anywhere besides the word of Jesus. Look again at what Jesus said, **“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 have said to you.”** You see we so often think of the Spirit as outside of the word, giving some sort of special revelation, but what did Jesus say? The Spirit will bring to remembrance all that Jesus said. You want to know how the disciples were able to remember so much to put in the Gospels? The Spirit reminded them. You want to know how Paul could write with the authority he did in the New Testament? The Spirit worked this. And the Spirit gave this gift to the Church that she would discern what books had been given in this work. That these apostles did this work, and not others who wrote much later, as we see with what are called the Gnostic Gospels. He’s worked here, He’s worked for our good, for our certainty.

But as I say this we might ask, how then is there so much that goes wrong with this? Why is it so rampantly misunderstood that we would find the Spirit floating around in the sky, or authoritatively speaking in our emotions or in our thoughts? Well the devil is so wily and good at what he does. Think about the fall into sin. What’s the first thing he says to Eve? What’s the first thing he attacks? Do you remember? **“Did God really say?”** Did God really say that? Is His Word trustworthy?

And with that he brought enough doubt to Adam and to Eve that they succumbed and they ate of the fruit. They fell prey. And when they did, do you know what happened? The authority that Adam had been given, the dominion that was his by gift from God, dominion over this whole creation, dominion shown in his naming of the animals, that dominion was handed over to the devil.

Have you ever noticed that, how Jesus speaks of the devil like he does in this passage? How he calls the devil **“the ruler of this world?”** Have you ever heard that and wondered how that is? How that could be because God rules over everything? Well, certainly God has the ultimate authority and power in the end, but because of His kindness in giving dominion and authority over this world to Adam, it’s all been made a mess. It’s been made a mess and now the devil has it; is called the ruler of this world. It’s in that that he is so good at creating chaos, at leading people to seek a false spirit away from the Word.

But Christian, take comfort. As Jesus said, **“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither**

let them be afraid.” Don't be afraid in this. Don't worry that the devil is some kind of untamable beast. Don't trouble yourselves with what he can do. Take it seriously, respect it and know that he's dangerous, but don't be afraid.

In fact as I say that word for not being afraid, that word used by Jesus is used also in the Old Testament with Joshua. If you remember the story in Joshua of the sun standing still, you might remember that the sun stood still in relation to a battle; that battle of Gibeon. And as the sun stood still, Joshua and the army of the Israelites defeated five kings and their armies. At the conclusion of the battle, Joshua bound those kings and told the people not to be afraid. His point? The Lord had defeated these enemies for them.

Christian, the Lord has defeated your enemies, the enemies of your sin, your death, and your enemy, the devil. This battle wasn't one that took place in a grassy field, but one that took place on the cross of Calvary. It took place as the Lord shed His blood for you, died in your place, took your punishment, that sin would be forgiven, that this tyrannical dominion the devil has in a sham arrangement would be cast down.

And the Spirit tells you this in the Word. It's done. So cling to that Word of Scripture. Cling to the promise given in that Scripture that you were united to the victory over the evil one in baptism. Cling to the promise that Jesus gives you a taste in that victory in His body and blood in the Supper. Cling to the promise that as you heard that word, "I forgive you all of your sins in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit," you were forgiven and given the peace that the world cannot give.

You see as much as we'd like to find the Spirit in other places, as much as the devil would like for us to find the Spirit elsewhere, when we hear that He brings to remembrance the words of Jesus, when we hear that these Scriptures are breathed out by God, we can know where to find the Spirit for sure. And when you have that certainty, you can hold to it over and against all other things. It's in that certainty that you can cling to the promise in our reading from Acts that Peter spoke by the Spirit, as he quoted Joel, who spoke by the Spirit, "And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Amen.