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St. John's & Immanuel Lutheran Churches – Kimball, NE & Burns, WY

Fifth Sunday of Easter (Series C)

April 24, 2016

Text: John 16:12–22

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The Easter season is moving forward quite briskly now. This is the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter. Even though we continue to rejoice in Christ's victory over death and the grave, our attention is beginning to shift. From the post-resurrection appearances and teachings of the Lord Jesus to the promise of the coming Holy Spirit. In today's gospel reading, Jesus is preparing His disciples and His Church for the days of life in the Holy Spirit. Those are the days we are living in now. Faith in Jesus means necessarily live in the Holy Spirit as we journey through this valley of sorrows to the joy of our heavenly Father's eternal inheritance.

Our Christian life, from beginning to end, is a Trinitarian life. God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit work together in beautiful harmony to bring about the salvation of His people, to save and renew His beloved people gathered here in this place, Immanuel/St. John's Lutheran Church, and in every Christian congregation around the world.

In John 16:12, Jesus tells His disciples, "I still have many things to say to you but you cannot bear them now" (vs. 12). And the truth is Jesus won't be able to tell them. In a few short hours, Jesus will be betrayed and handed over to the Jewish leaders and eventually to Pontius Pilate for crucifixion. John chapter 16 records what Jesus said after they finished the Last Supper and before His betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus, the wise and faithful pastor, realizes that they can't at this moment handle what needs to be said. It'll have to wait for another time when they are ready. These things they will be taught, not by Him, but by the Spirit of truth.

Listen to what the Lord Jesus says about the Holy Spirit in vs. 13, "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." The Holy Spirit is a giver of gifts. In the Nicene Creed, we say that

the Holy Spirit is “the Lord and giver of life.” The gifts He gives to the Church are the same gifts that He receives. What the Holy Spirit hears from the Father and the Son He speaks and gives to you, through the Holy Scriptures. Jesus continues in vs. 14–15, “He (i.e., the Holy Spirit) 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.” Jesus receives all that the Father is and gives. The Holy Spirit in turn receives all that Jesus is and gives that to the Church, the people redeemed by Jesus’ death and resurrection. It’s the Trinitarian chain of giving. The Father gives through His Son, Jesus by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit.

Dear saints of God, the love and grace that is given to us is beyond human telling. When we are baptized into God’s Trinitarian name, we are brought into the life and love of the God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We are made participants in God’s eternal life and glory. Listen to how the apostle Peter describes our participation in God’s divine nature in II Peter 1:3–4, “

<sup>3</sup>His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, <sup>4</sup>by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

You have been gifted with everything pertaining to life and godliness. Through faith in Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit you are made partakers of the divine nature. Thus Scripture declares that you are born again by the grace of the Holy Spirit to a living hope in God the Father through the resurrection of Jesus. You are made partakers of God’s divine nature by being born again of the Spirit.

That’s how things are going to work in the Church. And Jesus is getting His disciples ready for the time He will no longer be with them visibly. Crucifixion, resurrection and ascension are just around the corner. Jesus’ Church needs to know the chain of giving – the Father gives through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit so that redeemed humanity might be made partakers of God’s divine nature and eternal gifts. That’s life in the Spirit!

As maybe you can see, the Holy Spirit is quite busy and active in the lives of God’s people. He’s constantly giving us the gifts that God the Father and God the Son want us to have. Jesus said in vs. 13 & 14 that the Holy Spirit “declares to you the things

that are to come.” In other words, God’s gifts are powerful gifts delivered through the proclamation of words, Gospel words of new life such as:

Your sins are forgiven in Christ. Jesus’ death and resurrection are your death and resurrection. Through baptismal waters you are made a participant in Christ’s death and resurrection.

This bread and wine are the body and blood of Jesus given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins, for life and salvation.

Christ’s ascension is the guarantee that you will be lifted up in the resurrection of the Last Day to participate forever in God’s eternal life.

Each and every moment of your life is a holy work of God the Father created in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The second coming of the Lord Jesus is the grand event to which all Christians await for He will take us home and so shall we always be with the Lord.

These are the kinds of things the Holy Spirit says to you through the Bible.

The Holy Spirit always directs our attention back to Jesus who receives everything from the Father. That’s an important point which Jesus made in vs. 14–15, “He (i.e., the Holy Spirit) 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.” The Holy Spirit never works independent of what Jesus did in His perfect life, death, and resurrection. What the Father gives to the Son is given to the Holy Spirit who in turn gives the gifts to you and me.

That’s the Spirit-filled life of the Church. The Holy Spirit gives to you and me Christ and all His gifts who received them in love from God the Father. God’s gifts are given freely and received freely with faith and thanksgiving. No strings attached. The gifts are always there in the proclamation of Jesus for you, your family and neighbors; for the world.

But what of everyday life? How does the Holy Trinity’s chain of giving impact day to day life? Uncertainty and fear about the future are ever present, our kids and family, our country and community, our jobs and livelihoods, our world. Add to this, the daily struggles of everyday life. Even in these things, the Holy Spirit always takes us back to Jesus.

In the remaining portion of today's Gospel reading, Jesus tells His disciples that they will have sorrow because He will be taken away from them in death. "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice" (vs. 20).

For three days, the disciples' world came to an end. Jobs, careers, their livelihood had all been abandoned to follow Jesus and now He's gone, killed by crucifixion. And the reality of being arrested stared them in the face. But Jesus told them in advance that "in a little while" they would see Him again and their hearts would rejoice. "You will be sorrowful; but your sorrow will turn into joy" (vs. 20). That too is life in Spirit, joy that comes from God the Father through the Son in the power the Holy Spirit to you.

The Holy Spirit will not swoop in and fix the mess that our world has created for itself. We have no such promise. But in the midst of our world's chaos and confusion, He promises to settle our hearts and minds by taking us back to the resurrection of Jesus. Death is conquered. Sin is destroyed. Satan is defeated. The Holy Spirit will remind us that Jesus is preparing a place for us, the heavenly Jerusalem.

Joy and peace are perpetually yours as a gift from the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit even in the midst of chaos and uncertainty. Jesus said in vs. 22, "So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy from you." The Holy Spirit declares that these are the gifts that Jesus and God the Father want you to have. From sorrow to joy. It was true for the disciples of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, it's true of His disciples in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

You belong to Jesus and nothing can take you from Him. Our Lord is faithful. The resurrection victory remains true and steadfast. All that God is and desires you to have are given to you by the Father through the Son in the grace of the Holy Spirit. "I will see you again," says Jesus, "and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you."

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

✠ In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ✠ Amen.

Now the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.