**John 16:4b-15**

“…I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. **5** But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ **6** But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. **7** 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. **8**  And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: **9** concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; **10**  concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; **11**  concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. **12** “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. **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. **14** He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. **15**  All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

**“Semper Fi”**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. Vows are important for stability and integrity in life. Love between a husband and wife in marriage is far more than self-gratification but to actually say, “…until death do us part.” In terms of military service to our country, the Marine Corp motto gets straight to the point stating, “Semper Fi” or “Always faithful.” Likewise, the rite of confirmation today renews us to answer that question once again, “Do you intend to continue steadfast in this confession and Church and to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it?”

The erosion of truth going on today has taken their toll on vows. Yet, thankfully Pentecost celebrates what God vows to do. Jesus promised three things of the Holy Spirit. He said, “And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment…” Fifty days after His Resurrection, the Spirit of God came upon the baptized disciples of Jesus. In that brief moment, the Word miraculously went out in various languages. It was proof that the Gospel would be at work in the world. The spectacle of Pentecost is not for us to recreate. Instead, we are to seek the real security in the power of God’s Word. Pentecost begins the Holy Spirit’s faithfulness to pour out all truth in Jesus Christ unto the nations.

First, we give credit where credit is due. Let us open our hymnals to pg. 323 to the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed. Answering, “What does this mean?” We join to say from the Small Catechism. “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the truth faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian Church He daily and richly forgives me all my sins and sins of all beliers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give everlasting life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.”

The Holy Spirit faithfully speaks to the true sin of unbelief. Where it is easy to get side tracked by what kinds of sin we deal with in the world. Jesus makes it clear at the heart of it all is unbelief. The Ten Commandments reveal our failure to the Law, but it always keep going back to the First commandment. “You will have no other gods before me.” Jesus made His First commandment claim before the Pharisees. He stated, “I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins.” (John 8:24). The darkness that haunts all of humanity has roots originating in the Garden. Unbelief is finally rejecting the Holy Spirit. It denies how the Word calls all to repentance for the sake of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Second, we need to distinguish between two kinds of righteousness. Righteousness in terms of the Law is what we need for life in this world. God has given this work to government and family to uphold what is good and just. Even the church seeks to help promote and support such orderliness. This rightness is the kind soldiers enter into battle over to defend against our enemies. Yet, this kind of righteousness is never finished no matter how many wars are fought or lives lost. As Jesus told us, “you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet” (Matthew 24:6). Likewise, works in life regardless of how good and loving they may be cannot save. As St. Paul declares, “For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse…” (Galatians 3:10).

The Holy Spirit faithfully reveals true righteousness is alone in Christ. It is what exclusively belongs to Jesus. What is pleasing to the Father is His Son. He alone earns us forgiveness and eternal life by His sacrifice. Hebrews tells us, “But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (9:26). This righteousness is outside of the Law, our works, and cannot be found in us in any way, shape, or form. It rests purely by faith in what Jesus says before His crucifixion, “I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer.” To see Him no longer meant His suffering and death would be a sufficient payment. What we do matters for a time, but what Christ won for us is the eternal treasure that remains. The Holy Spirit makes known this righteousness of Jesus so that by Word and Sacraments sins are forgiven, life restored, and salvation upheld in Him.

Lastly, we consider the current conflict that wages on. Pentecost surprised a world even when it tried to rage against Christ and His Church. Luther describes how the world and Satan judge saying, “The world rushes in and condemns to the depths of hell the message of the apostles and the Gospel and all who cling to it. And it does this through the agency of the highest power and regularly appointed legal authority given to it by God for the punishment of evildoers. This it employs against God and His Christians in an effort to exterminate the message of the Gospel” (LW Vol. 24). Such darkness we see happening today at the highest courts in our land. Confirmation is no longer a cultural norm, but confirms the cross in our life. Yet, take hear Jesus still promises, “The ruler of this world is judged.”

The Holy Spirit faithfully comforts with true judgment that none can silence. Satan and the world would have us believe one way, but it is an idolatrous lie. Pentecost burst open the seams of this lie proclaiming Christ to the nations. Rather than shrink back, the Comforter guides us in all truth by way of the cross. St. Paul says, “God disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in Christ” (Colossians 2:15). Even greater, we have the promise from Jesus who declares, “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18b). Those who render another judgment are living a lie. It will not last for Christ has overcome death, the world, and even the Devil.

Vows are important and we need them now more than ever. They keep intact family, church and state. However, God has made the ultimate vow centered with all faithfulness on Christ. The Spirit will carry on this loving work, “…to convict the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment.” It is greater than a change in behavior, but the gift to believe in Christ crucified for sinners. This is the glory that is taken from Christ and given to you in all fullness by Word and Sacrament. Pentecost begins the Holy Spirit’s faithfulness to pour out all truth in Jesus Christ unto the nations. Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.