

## “Peace from the Holy Spirit”

St. John 14:23-31

May 31, 2020

SERMON 1917

by Michael David Henson

Our sermon text is from St. John 14:27, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

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

There are two descriptions given at the beginning of today’s Holy Gospel. The first is that of the believer. Jesus says, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word.” It shouldn’t surprise us that Jesus describes believers as those who love Him. The Old Testament often describes believers as God-fearers. The New Testament describes believers as God-lovers. Both are a description of someone who believes or has faith in God. Dr. Martin Luther understood this when he composed the meaning of the first commandment. “We should fear, love and trust in God above all things.” Knowing that God does not simply desire outward actions, but actions which proceed from faith, Luther begins the meaning to every commandment with “We should fear and love God so that....” Jesus’ description of the believer is “he will keep My word.”

The description of the unbeliever is equally simple, “He who does not love Me does not keep My words.” The unbeliever is someone who doesn’t love Jesus. And thus, the fruit of unbelief is the rejection of the Word of God.

Maybe you have heard someone say, “Going to church doesn’t make you a Christian, anymore than being in the garage makes you a car.” The statement is true in so far as it goes. There are many things in my garage which aren’t cars. In fact, I can’t even fit a car in my garage. Nevertheless, the implication of this statement is that “going to church” is not an essential part of the Christian life. Some might even say it is optional. That implication is the falsehood. Those who speak this way show that either they don’t know the Word of God or by not keeping the word fit the description of the unbeliever.

**God’s Word makes many statements which teach that the Christian and the Word of God cannot be separated. Furthermore, it teaches that those who forsake the assembly of the believers gathering around the Word of God are sinning.** Hebrews 10:24-25 says, “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” Today’s Epistle from Acts 2 describes Peter preaching the Word on the day of Pentecost. It says of those who came to believe in verse 42 and 46 saying, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.... So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart.” That sure doesn’t sound like teaching that the gathering of the congregation to hear the

Word is irrelevant or even optional.

At Trinity Lutheran Church and in many other places, **the Lord is testing your faith.** He has graciously provided for you solid Biblical teaching, week after week, Sunday after Sunday, for many years. Nevertheless, in His wisdom, our Lord has taken away the opportunity to gather to hear the Word. On those Sundays when the Lord has taken away your opportunity to attend church, you have not sinned. In the same way that when you are sick or in the hospital, it is not a sin. **Nevertheless, the Lord is trying, testing, and even strengthening your faith by provided the Word at other times.** Jesus said, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word." So now will you take the extra effort to hear the Word on Saturday and at times when you normally would do other things? No, it is not nearly as convenient. However, believers cling to the Word. Will you give the hearing of the Word first place? Will you make sure to read the Word at home and continue steadfast in your prayers and devotions?

Later on in today's Holy Gospel Jesus makes another statement about the love of the believer. Verse 28 says, "You have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming back to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father is greater than I." By these words, **Jesus reveals the disciples lack of love,** "If you loved Me (as they should have, and they didn't), you would rejoice (but they didn't rejoice) because I said, "I am going to the Father" (instead the disciples became sorrowful). Jesus' "going to the Father" is none other than His suffering, death, resurrection and ascension. The Father had sent Him to accomplish our salvation, and now Jesus was "going to the Father," that is He was completing His mission. Jesus was completing His mission by forgiving our sins and taking our human nature back to heaven reconciled with the Father. When Jesus said, "I'm going to the Father," the disciples should have rejoiced, but instead they became sorrowful, almost accusing Jesus of abandoning them.

Those who love Jesus, rejoice in Jesus' work of dying and rising again. Believers rejoice in hearing about the good news of our salvation. **However, any description of the believer according to our performance will always leave us with a revelation of our sins.** God's love is firm and sure and beyond all human understanding, but our love for God is fickle and fleeting. Thankfully, **our comfort is not in our performance, but in the gospel message which comes from the Word.** You have not loved the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your spirit, or with all your strength. You have not loved your neighbor as yourself. You need to know that Jesus "went to the Father" on our behalf. The Word clearly tells us that Jesus voluntarily laid down His life for the forgiveness of your sins. The prince of this world has no control or connection with Jesus. But that the world might know the perfect love of the heavenly Father, Jesus suffered and died to take away your sins. Jesus allowed those moved by the devil to take away His life by crucifixion. By His love, you are forgiven for your lack of love. You are forgiven for your neglect of the hearing of God's Word. You are forgiven for not clinging to the Word.

**My second point today is about the forgiveness of sins and the promise of the mystical union of God with His believers.** Not only has our Jesus provided for our forgiveness, but He has also graciously promised to help and assist us after we have come to faith in Christ.

One, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to the Apostles so that they would accurately

remember all things which Jesus taught them. They would be able to accurately teach the meaning of all Jesus' words. We have their New Testament writings and we can trust every word which they have written. Keep these words of Jesus, written by the Apostles.

Two, on the day of Pentecost, St. Peter spoke to those who were cut to the heart by the Law and cried out for relief and salvation. Like a good preacher, He told them the Gospel message, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:38-39). Not only would they receive the forgiveness of sins, but Jesus promised the gift of the Holy Spirit for believers. You and I receive the gift of the Holy Spirit through the Word and in our baptism. The Holy Spirit not only creates faith in our heart, but He creates in us a new heart. He gives us new desires.

Three, Jesus explains that God gives His believers not just assistance, **but promises that they will receive the indwelling of God.** The Holy Spirit is promised in Acts 2 and in John 14 we hear this, "...and We will come to him and make Our home with him." The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit take up residence inside the believer. Theologians describe this indwelling of God in the believer as **the mystical union.** That indwelling is a great comfort for believers. God is not far away, He is with us. He has made His home in us.

1 Corinthians 6:19 says, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of **the Holy Spirit who is in you**, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" Romans 8:10 says, "And if **Christ is in you**, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." And finally through the Father's indwelling, Ephesians 2:10 tells us that "**we are His workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." The holy Trinity comes to us and makes His home with us.

It is only with the forgiveness of sins and the resulting promised indwelling of God that we keep Jesus' Word. Jesus has told us, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Jesus' going to the Father has secured our peace with God. That peace is an objective fact! Our sins are forgiven.

God continues to work with and in us. Keeping the Word, we confess our sins and fight against our sinful nature. God continues to teach us by His Word. We even pray for the things which God desires us to have. In today's collect for Pentecost we pray, "...bring us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things and evermore to rejoice in His holy comfort..." The best illustration of our new life in Christ is seen in the offertory which follows the sermon. We hear the Word and then we pray that God works in us that which Christ, our Savior, won for us. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free spirit. Amen."