

TEXT: **John 15:26-27**
THEME: **Who is the Holy Spirit?**
1. He Testifies About Jesus
2. He Sends Us Out to Testify About Jesus

²⁶ “When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. ²⁷ And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

This weekend in the Christian Church we are celebrating the Festival of Pentecost. That very first Pentecost must have been an amazing event to witness in person: the sound of a rushing wind, tongues of fire, men with very little education speaking in languages they had never learned to speak, Peter’s sermon to the crowd and the baptism of 3,000 people! The events of that first Pentecost were a fulfillment of the Savior’s promise to his disciples that we heard read just a few moments ago. Pentecost Sunday gives you and me an opportunity to talk a little about the one some refer to as the “forgotten person” of the Trinity. Today, as we listen to our Savior’s words in our Gospel lesson for this Pentecost Sunday, we will ask ourselves, “Who is the Holy Spirit?” We will see from this section of Scripture that the Holy Spirit is the one who testifies to us about Jesus. And then we will see that it is the Holy Spirit who sends us out to testify about Jesus.

Who is the Holy Spirit? In many churches today there is great confusion about the work of the Holy Spirit. Many churches will focus on outward signs of the Spirit’s power such as speaking in tongues, seeing visions and powers of healing. This section of God’s Word before us clearly states what the Holy Spirit’s main work is. Jesus tells us, “When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.” First, notice how Jesus refers to the Third Person of the Trinity – he is the “Spirit of Truth”. Dr. Martin Luther writes about this title for the Holy Spirit, “Christ says that he will give us the Spirit of truth. The Spirit will make us sure and certain of the truth, that we no longer dare doubt concerning our salvation, but may be sure of the matter, yes, that we may also judge all other doctrine concerning this salvation.” The Holy Spirit points us to the truth of God’s Word. Through that Word, he testifies about Jesus.

Look up the word “testify” in a dictionary and you will find definitions such as, “to bear witness to” or “to make known”. What facts about Jesus does the Holy Spirit make known to us as we read our Bibles? Is it simply that Jesus is a great man, whose example we should try to follow? Listen to what 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 tells us, “From the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our Gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” And then there are the words spoken to the crowd by Peter during his sermon on that first Pentecost, “Repent and be baptized, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

We know from the Word of our God that from the time we are conceived in the wombs of our mother’s we are conceived in sin. And that sinful nature wants nothing to do with Jesus Christ. As we measure up our life according to God’s 10 Commandments, we clearly see just how far we fall short of the perfection the holy God requires from us. So it is the work of the Holy Spirit to change our sin-filled hearts into hearts that trust in Jesus Christ as our only Savior from sin. And the tool that the Holy Spirit uses to carry out that work is the powerful Word of our Lord. As Paul writes to the Romans in chapter 10, “Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.” Pentecost Sunday gives us an opportunity to remember that it is only through the work of the Holy Spirit that the free gifts of forgiveness of all our sins and eternal life in heaven are ours to enjoy. It is the Holy Spirit who, at the time of our baptisms, through the powerful Word of God, placed faith into your heart and my heart to believe that Jesus Christ is the one and only Savior, who alone paid the price for the sins of all people. It is the Holy Spirit who uses his almighty Word to strengthen that faith in Jesus our Savior which he has placed into our hearts. Who is the Holy Spirit? He is the one who testifies about Jesus our Savior, and the forgiveness he won for us.

This coming weekend, some of my family and I will have the opportunity to attend the Indianapolis 500. If you have ever had the chance to attend the race or if you have watched the race on television, you know that most of the outside of the 2½ mile track is lined with grandstands. They have even built grandstands on the inside of the track, so they are able to seat more people. While the official number is never released, the crowd at this one race is estimated to be about 400,000. Each year, as I sit in my seat located in turn four, and look over all the people that are in turn three, through turn four, down the front stretch and into turn, I think to myself, "I wonder how many of these people here today know that Jesus Christ is their one and only Savior from sin?" "I wonder how many of these 400,000 enjoying the race with me today, will be enjoying eternal life with me one day in the glory of heaven?" This brings us to the second point that Jesus makes in these words before us. Who is the Holy Spirit? He is the one who sends us out to testify about Jesus.

Jesus said to his disciples, "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning." The Lord would send the Holy Spirit to the disciples to remind them of everything he had told them while he was with them on this earth. It is this Good News that they were to share with all those they came into contact with. What would the disciples tell people about Jesus? Yes, they would talk about the miracles Jesus performed: that the blind were able to see again, the deaf were able to hear again and the dead were raised to life. But, the most important part of their message would be about how the Promised Messiah offered his life as the payment price for all sins. Listen to Peter proclaim the Good News about the Savior in his sermon on Pentecost Sunday: ²² "Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ²³ This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. ²⁴ But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him...³⁶ "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

It seems like each year that we attend the Indy 500, we pass by someone who is standing on a street corner, speaking to people about Jesus. While we may not go out to the corner of the street in front of our house, shouting into a bullhorn, you and I are to go out and share the message of Jesus Christ. Find a friend, a neighbor or a relative who does not yet know Jesus as their Savior. We may think that we don't know what we will say, or that we might not be able to answer every question they ask of us. But, my dear friends in Christ, please remember that you are sent out by the Holy Spirit to testify about Jesus. The same Holy Spirit who used his almighty power to bring you to faith in Jesus as your Savior, will use that same almighty power to bless your efforts to tell others about Jesus.

In Church history, the first Pentecost is viewed as the birthday of the Christian Church. While we were not able to be there to witness it in person, today, almost 2000 years later, we in the Christian Church continue what was started that first Pentecost. Today we take time to give thanks to the Holy Spirit for all that he has done for us. Who is the Holy Spirit? He is the one who testifies about Jesus and it is the Holy Spirit who sends us out to testify about our one and only Savior, Jesus Christ. We close with a prayer taken from one of the Pentecost hymns in our hymnals:

O Holy Spirit, grant us grace That we our Lord and Savior
In faith and fervent love embrace And truly serve him ever,
So that when death is near at hand We at his cross may firmly stand
And there find our salvation.

Help us that we your saving Word In faithful hearts may treasure;
Let e'er that bread of life afford New grace in richest measure.
Make us to die to ev'ry sin; Each day create us new within
That fruits of faith may flourish. In Jesus Name we pray. Amen.