

"The Spirit of Truth" John 16:5-15 Cantate 2022

He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed, Alleluia!

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

He is not coming. He is here! The Spirit of Truth of which Jesus spoke. He is here through Word and Sacrament. And, yes, it would be correct to say that He continues to come in the preaching of the Word and in the gifts of the Sacraments. My point is, however, that it is no longer merely a future event.

The Apostles were looking forward to the coming of Pentecost, although they did not know it. Jesus had not died yet, and they were not expecting that, so how could they be anticipating Pentecost? The Spirit is at work among us already, convicting the world and teaching us the truth. It is this work that is so important that it is to our advantage that Jesus is not among us now, so that the Spirit may be among us and working His work.

What is that work? He convicts the world concerning sin. People often think that you can't tell people that they are wicked and sinful and expect them to come back to church week after week. But in fact, that is the only tested and true way to make people want to come back. Those who hear such a message are the only sorts of people who will come back week after week, faithfully. Sinners need forgiveness and salvation.

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The whole thing really comes down to the “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me,” that Jesus spoke in our Gospel a couple of weeks ago. The Good Shepherd comes to rescue us, not entertain us, or please us with His bag of tricks. Too much of the world around us thinks that the purpose of religion is to make us happy or to make life make sense for us. The Gospel does that, but that is a secondary benefit. We find that life makes more sense when we know that we rest secure in the hands of the Good Shepherd, and when the real issues of life and death are resolved for us.

Thank God that He has done just what we really needed, solved the problem of dying and of eternal misery in hell. One of the reasons that you don't hear so much about that problem is that Jesus has saved us. Too many people figure that since we have salvation, we should talk about something else, and not dwell on the negatives - - like sin, and God's wrath, and guilt.

The Spirit of Truth convicts the world of sin by preaching it to them, and they simply will not listen. You can ignore those letters from Canada Revenue, too. But if you do, eventually, they will come and take your stuff away from you – and when people ignore it and reject it and call it a lie when the Holy Spirit preaches the Law to them, and reject the wonderful gift of forgiveness and life which He brings to

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them in Jesus' name – they still stand convicted of sins, precisely because they refuse to believe in Jesus.

The Spirit of Truth convicts them of righteousness, too, because Jesus is righteous, and he has gone to be with the Father. It is not their righteousness, however, that they stand convicted of, but Jesus'. He is perfectly righteous, otherwise He could not stand in the Father's presence. But we Him see no longer, as did the disciples of old, because He is righteous and can stand in the presence of the Father, interceding for us, and bestowing upon all that believe His own perfect righteousness. Believing or unbelieving, the righteousness of Jesus stands as a truth, and He gives it to each one of you – by grace, through faith.

Your sins are forgiven! Each of you stands before God as perfect and holy, just like Jesus, because Jesus died for you, and forgives you. It doesn't matter how you feel today, or tomorrow. It is simply the truth. If your life doesn't make sense to you, that's okay. Your salvation is still the truth of God!

Then, the Holy Spirit convicts the world of Judgment, because the ruler of this present, sinful world has been judged. Court was held on the cross, and in the grave that once held Jesus. The resurrection was the verdict. Christ is arisen! Your sins are forgiven. Now death and hell

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have been destroyed! No one need ever suffer eternal death and condemnation. The only people who will are those convicted of sin! Remember the great courtroom scene of Romans 8? Listen again as I read it for you. "What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us."

Far from being convicted of sin, you are each justified! Your sins are forgiven and are nowhere to be seen! The only people who will face judgment are those who refuse to be rescued by Jesus. They are the ones who stand convicted of sin. These are the truths into which the Holy Spirit leads us. They are God's treasures, poured out on all mankind, but received only by them that believe. To the rest, these truths are all either just a dream, or they are an error, and the world does not wish to participate. They stand convicted of judgment.

The Spirit of Truth teaches Christ. He proclaims forgiveness won by Christ and freely bestowed – and totally undeserved by every single one of those that receive it. The Spirit of Truth speaks of the Love of

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God and of confidence in His good will toward us within which we may rest secure. Every bit of it is true, because it is from Jesus, and Jesus got it all from the Father. Human opinion does not carry any weight here, because these things are work of Jesus Christ and the trustworthy teachings of the Spirit of Truth.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.