

Sermon #1,268: John 14:23-31
6-4-17, Pentecost, Bethany-Princeton MN

SAVED BY GRACE IN THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Text, St. John 14:23-31 (v. 26-27). ²⁶ But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. 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." Lord, this is Your Word and these are Your words. Sanctify us by the truth. Your Word is truth. Come, Holy Spirit, and fill the hearts of Your faithful people, and kindle in them the fire of Your holy love. Amen.

Dear fellow redeemed in Christ: Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

We know that God the Father is the God who saves us by grace alone. He so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son. He is the God who saves us; He planned our salvation.

We know that Jesus, the Son of God, is the God who saves us by grace alone. He saved His people from their sins by dying on the cross. He's even called the "Savior." He is the God who saves us; He won our salvation.

Do we know that the Holy Spirit is the God who saves us by grace alone? We don't know this part well enough.

Think of it this way. When your child is sick, you take him/her to the doctor. The doctor examines your child, diagnoses the problem, and writes a prescription. Your child needs that prescription! But is your child better when the doctor hands you the slip of paper? No. Still sick. Then you go to the pharmacy, hand them the slip of paper, and they work on the prescription. Then they hand you the medicine. The medicine is absolutely essential! It contains your child's healing! But is your child better the moment the medicine comes into your hands? No. Still sick. It isn't until you administer the medicine to your child, and it actually goes into your child's body, that the healing can start.

That's how it is with the God who saves us by grace. God the Father is like the doctor. He diagnosed our problem, that we are sick with sin and will die in our sin, condemned to hell. So He wrote the prescription. He planned our salvation. He sent His Son.

Jesus Christ is like the pharmacist. He filled the prescription. He carried out God's plan. The healing and cleansing for sin is contained in the blood that He shed on the cross, the blood that cleanses of from all sin. When He was done, He said, "*It is finished.*" Everything had been done to save us. It is available to us, in fact to everyone in the world!

But we actually need Christ's salvation to be given to us. It actually has to come to us, into us, to do us any good. Administering it – distributing it – is the Holy Spirit's work.

The Holy Spirit does this by giving us saving faith in Jesus, "*the true faith which we need the most.*" Without it we can't go to heaven. We need this faith.

We don't know how much we need the Holy Spirit. You can see that in our attitude. We know we need God the Father. See how often we pray for more rain, or less rain, or for our sickness to go away, or for protection. We also know we need Jesus our Savior. We have so many sins! We need a Savior from our sins.

But what about the Holy Spirit? We need Him to give us "*the true faith which we need the most.*" But we're sloppiest and most careless when it comes to our faith. We treat Him the way we treat healthy food, medication, and a good night's sleep – we ignore all that, and then wonder why we're sick, sluggish, and tired.

The Holy Spirit is the only one who can give us faith. He also gives us the fruits of faith, or the "*fruits of the Spirit.*" Why don't we trust God better? Why is it hard to feel forgiven? Why isn't our conscience clear? Why do we lack peace? Why are we so impatient? Why can't we curb our acid tongues or our jealous hearts? Why is our first impulse not to turn the other cheek but to lash out or get defensive?

Who can help us with that? Only the Holy Spirit. But we act like He can't. How often is it no big deal to miss church or Bible class, or no big

deal to go through a day without spending time with God by reading a psalm or even one Bible verse?

We know what we want and need, but we cut ourselves off from the very thing – rather the very One, the Holy Spirit – we need, in order to have it. There's a good example in today's gospel lesson. Here Jesus speaks of two things that we dearly want.

First He says: **“My Father and I will come and make Our home”** with people. Don't you want that? For the Father and the Son to make their home in us, that Christ may dwell in your heart, and the Father too, that you would not just be a person but a dwelling-place of God; then it would be true for you that *“greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world”* (1 Jn 4:4).

Second, Jesus also says: **“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you,”** which He says is **“not [peace] as the world gives.”** We dearly want that, true peace. But those are results. It's like the example of the sick child. You want your child to be better. But if you don't give him/her the medicine, you can't cry about the result.

Here Jesus speaks very directly about what all His disciples need: **“The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and [He will] bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.”** – He will, not us. Only He can give us this faith.

Think of it. When we aren't letting Him bring to our remembrance the words of Jesus, when we are putting our walls up that keep Him from teaching us the things of Christ, then what? Then we're empty. This is why we hunger for what Jesus pictures here. We're hungry for Him to be present in us, and we're hungry for that peace He talks about. Why is it so hard to love like we should? Why is it so easy for our peace to go away? Because we aren't being filled with what the Holy Spirit needs to give us: Christ Himself and the Father's love.

This comes to us in His Word. We lose so much when we cut ourselves off from His Word! All our unhappiness is our own doing. Hell is full of people who did the same. It's our own fault.

We must learn that we aren't only saved by grace in what Jesus did for us. It's also in this part of our salvation – having faith – that we are saved by grace. Our faith is not something we do. We don't have it because we're able to trust in Him. We aren't. That's why we sing to the Holy Spirit, *"We trust in Thee to save us"* (ELH #35 v. 4). There's also a confession of our sin hidden in those words. We don't do it very well.

But Jesus' words about the Holy Spirit provide the good news for us today. So we don't do it very well, this trusting in grace bit. He doesn't promise to send the Holy Spirit if we start trusting better. He promises to send the Holy Spirit, period.

He does this in His Word. He comes in His Word. So this doesn't come if you trust; trust comes after the Word. It comes from the Word. *"Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God"* (Ro 10:17). Because you lack the faith that you need, God has His Word spoken to you. God's Word produces this faith and the ability to trust Him.

That's grace. That's His undeserved love. God's Word being spoken to you is a sign of His love, a greater sign than any of those spectacular signs on the first Pentecost. Those signs were there to indicate the coming of the Holy Spirit. God's Word being spoken is actually the Holy Spirit coming to you to produce faith and its fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, etc. You also feel how you lack those, so the Holy Spirit comes.

The Holy Spirit comes to people who can't do it. He comes to sinners. The Holy Spirit comes to us who act like we don't know what we need, and don't want it enough or at least act like we don't. The Holy Spirit comes to people who are empty and would keep ourselves that way.

So when we say, *"The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son,"* we are speaking of a great act of love on God's part. Why would He bother with us? Because He loves us. He knows that we need to know the undeserved love of the Father for His wayward children. He knows that we need to know Jesus our Savior.

So the Holy Spirit comes to us in His Word, and as Jesus says, He teaches us *"all things,"* specifically the things Jesus says in His Word, things like: *"Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you,"* and what we'll hear

soon: *"This is My body, given for you ... This is My blood ... shed for you for the remission of your sins."* And: *"Lo, I am with you always,"* and *"Blesséd are you,"* and *"I will give you rest for your souls,"* and *"I am the Resurrection and the Life,"* and *"Because I live, you will live also,"* and *"You are clean through the word I have spoken to you,"* and *"Fear not ... the very hairs of your head are all numbered,"* and *"Rejoice! I am He who was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you."* These are loving words, not condemning words.

There is a result. All our hungers are filled. Not perfectly, of course. We aren't in heaven yet. We still need more and more of what the Holy Spirit has to give us in His Word. But we will find that we do have what otherwise we lack without the Holy Spirit. We have the peace that flows from sins forgiven. The God who saves us is living within our mortal bodies. Because of that, even unknown by us, we will be more willing to love others, and think first of others besides ourselves, and to be patient, and to turn the other cheek, and to curb our tongues, and to put down the desires of the flesh, and to bear with one another's faults and to bear one another's burdens, and to rejoice in the midst of sorrows and disappointments. And how? The Holy Spirit is working unseen by His Word.

This is all the gift of the Holy Spirit. We are saved by grace also in what He does. *"By grace you are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God"* – God the Holy Spirit! He gives us so much! He saves you by grace in giving you faith. He is the Person of the Trinity who **completes** the work of salvation by grace in us. He completes us. Without Him, we are incomplete. With Him, by His Word, we are being *"strengthened in faith, perfected in holiness, and comforted in life and death."* Amen!