

John 15:26-27

On this very special **day**, the day of **Pentecost**, just 10 days after His ascension into heaven, Jesus gave His disciples a very special **gift** - the gift of the **Holy Spirit**. This was by no means the **first** gift which Jesus had given to them. He had already provided them with the gift of **salvation**, by living a perfect life, and dying a perfect death in their place. But now, through the gift of the **Holy Spirit**, Jesus was seeing to it that they would have the faith to **believe** in Him as their Savior, He was seeing to it that their faith in Him would continue to be **strengthened**, and that they would have all the **tools** they would need to **share** their Savior with others. Those gifts have been given to **us** as well, and they obviously deserve a **response**. The best response we can **give** is to put those blessings to **use**, as we **Testify About Jesus**.

At the time of His ascension into heaven, Jesus had told His disciples, “*Do not leave Jerusalem, but **wait** for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard Me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in **a few days** you will be baptized with the **Holy Spirit**.*” I’d like you to think about how the disciples must have **felt** immediately after Jesus’ ascension. They had just seen their Lord and Savior (as well as their Teacher and Friend for the past 3 years), slowly **rise up** into the sky, and then **disappear** as the clouds hid Him from their sight. As they stood there looking up into the sky in **awe** and **wonder**, the disciples must have had some very **mixed** emotions. On the one hand, they must have been filled with **joy** and **excitement**. After all, what a **privilege** it was for them to experience such a unique and blessed event - an event which they could add to the **miracles** which they had seen Him perform. But on the other hand, after everything they had been through together over the past 3 years, it would be hard to imagine their lives **without** Jesus. Could He really be **gone** now? Had He left them **alone**? Who was going **lead** them into the future? How would they be able to fend for themselves?

I’d also like you to think about what Jesus’ disciples went through while they were **waiting** for Jesus to **fulfill** His promise to baptize them with the **Holy Spirit**. Jesus had told them to go into Jerusalem, and to **wait** - but He didn’t **specifically** tell them how **long**. He simply said it would be “*in a few days.*” So, how do you think they felt when day 3, or 4, or 5, or 6 rolled around, and the UPS truck still hadn’t shown up - the **gift** still hadn’t **arrived**? My guess is that with each passing day, the disciples began to experience more **doubts**, and began to raise more **questions**. Were they **sure** they had heard Jesus **correctly**? How would they **know** when the Holy Spirit had been given to them? Was it possible that it could have already **happened**, and they didn’t even **realize** it?

All those questions and doubts were **removed** when the Day of **Pentecost** arrived. On that day, the disciples **heard** the sound like the rushing wind, the disciples **saw** what appeared to be flames of fire resting above all their heads, and the disciples **spoke** in languages which they had never studied before. Every sense in their bodies told them that this was **it** - this was the **gift** for which they had been **waiting** - this was the outpouring of the **Holy Spirit**.

As soon as they had the gift of the **Spirit**, they went from being people who were **wavering** and **uncertain**, to being people who were able to **boldly** share the Gospel, as they bore the **fruit** of the Spirit. Paul told the Galatians, *“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control ... Live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”* Since the disciples had been **anointed** with the Holy Spirit, they were now **fully equipped** with the tools they would need to **respond**, by **Testifying About Jesus**.

That’s exactly what Jesus **expected** from His disciples. In our text He said, *“The Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, He will testify about Me; but you also must testify.”* The disciples had **Good News** to share with the people of their day - people who lived in a **“bad news”** world. How would they **use** the fruit of the **Spirit** as they **Testified About Jesus**? The Prophet Isaiah gives us a pretty thorough picture of their activities, some 700 years **before** they actually took place. He wrote, *“The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion - to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.”*

Those words were actually spoken about **Jesus Himself**. But just as they would apply to **Him**, they would also apply to His **disciples**. Things in the future were going to be very **different** for them. The disciples would be leaving the **familiar** and **comfortable** settings which they knew so well, and they would be going out into the **world**. They would be following the Great Commission, and continuing to do the things which **Jesus** had done while He was still **with** them. Because their situation would be **different**, they would experience some **doubts** and **fears**. How would they **survive** out there? Were they making the **right** decisions? Who would **help** them when they didn’t know what to do?

But the disciples could take **comfort** in the events of **Pentecost** - and so can **we**. It's true, Jesus had visibly **left** His disciples, but He had not left them **all alone**, He had given them His **Holy Spirit**. The disciples had **Good News** to share with people who lived in a "**bad news**" world. We need to recognize that the world around **us** is **still** full of "bad news," but the **positive** results which are found when we **use** the gift of the Holy Spirit, still happen all around us. Be **comforted** every time the **Gospel** is preached. Be **comforted** that God can take a human heart which has been shattered into thousands of pieces by the heartbreaking ravages of sin, and He can bind that heart back **together** again. Be **comforted** to know that you have been **set free** from the prison of **guilt** and **shame**. And **tell others** that because of the working of the **Holy Spirit** - the greatest Comforter of them all - **they too** can be **comforted** through hearing God's Word and receiving the Sacrament.

We've been talking a **lot** about the Holy Spirit today, because Pentecost is **His festival**. Yet, I'm not so sure that the Holy Spirit would **want** it that way. You see, when the Holy Spirit comes to us and speaks to us through God's Word and Sacrament, He **doesn't** call attention to **Himself**. Instead, He's content to remain in the **background**, in order that the eyes of all may remain fixed on **Jesus**. Throughout the Book of Acts, which provides us with the history of the early Christian Church **beginning** with the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit continued to **turn** the hearts of men from **unbelief** to **faith**. He also continued to **strengthen** their faith through God's Word and Sacrament. And He did it, **not** by saying, "Hang on to the **Holy Spirit** and put your trust in **Him**," but rather, He did it by pointing to **Jesus alone**. "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.*"

My dear friends, Jesus is also **our** Lord and precious Savior. He is God's **Son**, who has set us free from sin, death, and the power of the devil. Thank God that our faith in Jesus is **strong**, because He continues to send the **Holy Spirit** into our lives to keep our minds and hearts properly focused on **Jesus**. The Holy Spirit has been **Testifying About Jesus** to **us**, now it's **our** turn to bring God's Word and Sacrament to **others**, so that the Holy Spirit can also **Testify About Jesus** to **them**. Amen.