

*Sunday. May 31. 2009*

*Pentecost Sunday*



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*"It's For Your Own Good"*

*Text : John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15*

THE COLLECT OF THE DAY

O God, on this day You once taught the hearts of Your faithful people by sending them the light of Your Holy Spirit. Grant us in our day by the same Spirit to have a right understanding in all things and evermore to rejoice in His holy consolation; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE HYMN OF THE DAY

"Holy Spirit, Light Divine"

Holy Spirit, light divine,  
Shine upon this heart of mine;  
Chase the shades of night away,  
Turn the darkness into day.

Let me see my Savior's face,  
Let me all His beauties trace;  
Show those glorious truths to me  
Which are only known to Thee.

Holy Spirit, pow'r divine,  
Cleanse this guilty heart of mine;  
In Thy mercy pity me,  
From sin's bondage set me free.

Holy Spirit, joy divine,  
Cheer this saddened heart of mine;  
Yield a sacred, settled peace,  
Let it grow and still increase.

Holy Spirit, all divine,  
Dwell within this heart of mine;  
Cast down ev'ry idol throne,  
Reign supreme, and reign alone.

THE TEXT : John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15

<sup>26</sup> [Jesus said:] “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. <sup>27</sup> And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning. . . .

<sup>4b</sup> “I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. <sup>5</sup> But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ <sup>6</sup> But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. <sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. <sup>8</sup> And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: <sup>9</sup> concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; <sup>10</sup> concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; <sup>11</sup> concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

<sup>12</sup> “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. <sup>13</sup> When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. <sup>14</sup> He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. <sup>15</sup> All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

THE SERMON

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

I had to take John-August to the doctor the other day for his eighteen-month shots. Doctor visits like that can be so gut-wrenching, can't they. They really have no idea what is going on. Everything is fine for a moment as the doctor listens to the breathing. They get weighed and measured. The temperature and other vitals are taken. And, the doctor will poke and prod a little bit just to make sure everything is working properly. But, then the nurse comes in and sits your child on the examination table so that his legs are hanging off from the knee down. She will then cross his feet and then stand up against his legs so that he can't work free. No big deal yet. The child may be wondering what in the world is going on, but all is well. Then the nurse lays the child back so that his thighs are stretched out and asks

you to hold him still. You know what is about to happen and you brace yourself for the crying. You do so because you know that as soon as the needle goes in your child is going to look at you with those longing eyes as if to ask, “What are you doing to me?” And, it breaks your heart because there is nothing you can do about it. Nothing you can say or do will make your child understand why you let this strange woman plunge a needle into his thigh - not once... not twice... but three or four times depending on how old your child is. But, even though they don't understand it, you allow it to happen because you know that is for their benefit.

There are a number of things about parenting that happen this way. You have to

do things that your children may not understand or even want, but you do them anyway because it is for their benefit. When they are young you have to make them eat their vegetables and have reasonable bed times. They don't like it. They don't understand it. But, it's for their good. As they grow older, you are a little over protective about them going outside to play or to the park by themselves without some sort of parental supervision. But, it's for their good. When they get into their teenage years, you set curfews and other types of limitations - perhaps setting parental controls on the TV and internet. They don't like it. But, it's for their good. And, whatever the age... whatever the situation... the limitations that you set or the rules you put into place are often accompanied by the words, "You'll understand when you are older." (Like that really makes things all better.)

As we get into our text this morning, we find this same kind of thing happening. The disciples are filled with sorrow because Jesus is telling that He is going away. The climax of His earthly ministry was drawing near. In fact, it was hours away from beginning. Jesus and His disciples are in the Garden of Gethsemane and these are His parting words to them. He knows that the betrayer is on his way with a band of armed soldiers and thus it would begin - His sufferings... His Passion... His crucifixion. But, the disciples didn't see it as necessary. They didn't understand. Chances are they figured that this was just going to be another Passover celebration with the Teacher and by Sunday they would be on their way back to Galilee. So, when Jesus tells them that He would soon leave them, their hearts were filled with sorrow. And, to comfort them, Jesus says, "It is to your advantage that I go away."

"Yeah, right!" the disciples most likely thought. "That's what you think. But, what good is it to us if You leave?" they most like

wondered. In retrospect, maybe you have felt like the disciples on occasion. After all, why did He have to leave? The disciples would have been much happier if He had stayed with Him. I imagine that there have been times in our lives when we wish He were more accessible than He is - times when we were hurting and grieving... times when we were frustrated and felt that we have been abandoned by God. Those times would have been much easier to deal with if Jesus were still around. But, like the disciples we don't always understand the Lord's purposes and why things happen the way they do. Thus, in moments of heartache or spiritual hollowness, we may have wondered, "Where is God for me? Has He left me?"

If you have ever felt this way, then listen to what Jesus says here in our text. Knowing what the disciples were feeling and that they didn't understand, Jesus says to them, "It is to your advantage that I go away for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But, if I depart, I will send Him to you." The disciples response? Our response? Most likely something like this: "But, Jesus, if you didn't go away You wouldn't have to send the Helper because You would still be here and could continue to do all the things that You do." But, there's the catch. If Jesus stayed, could He really do all the things that He does? The answer is no! Think about that for a minute. If Jesus didn't go away, He couldn't do all that He needed to do. Why? Well, consider where He is going. Is Jesus just taking a break? Is He just going to Rome for a few days of well-deserved R&R? No. He's going to the cross. And, if He didn't go to the cross then He would not be able to redeem you from sin and death - which would mean that He could not send the Helper, that is, the Holy Spirit - which would mean that we would never receive the forgiveness and life that God wants us to have. You see, the work of Christ on the cross and of the Holy Spirit are both essential

to your obtaining eternal life. Thus, Jesus' speaks here in our text better than any of us could ever understand. He says, "It is to your advantage that I go away."

While the disciples didn't understand what Jesus was saying at the time - and while we may not fully understand at times - Jesus speaks these words to bring comfort and encouragement to the disciples because He knows that there will come a day when they will remember these words and find strength and consolation. And, that is the what the ministry of the Holy Spirit is all about - the calling, gathering and enlightening of God's people in their faith through the Word and Sacraments. This is what Jesus meant earlier in this same conversation regarding the work of the Holy Spirit when He says, "But, the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach You all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." This is what the Holy Spirit did for the disciples on that first Pentecost. And, this is what He does for us today. He brings us the Word of God which reminds us of what Jesus has said and done all for our advantage.

You know, though, for as much as all this is done for our advantage, the Holy Spirit and His work still remains largely misunderstood. Of the three Persons of the Trinity, we can understand the work of the Father and of the Son. The Father creates and sustains life. He preserves His creation and provides for us all that we need. The Son took on our humanity so that by going to the cross we might have His forgiveness through His death. He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven that we might have victory of the grave. But, the Holy Spirit? Well, He remains something of an enigma. When we think of the Holy Spirit, we Lutherans are not really sure what to say. We think of Pentecost - the rushing wind, the tongues of flame over the disciples heads. We think of

speaking in tongues and other spiritual gifts. But, other than that we don't know what to think about this mysterious third Person of the Trinity. Chances are the disciples didn't understand Him at the time either. A Helper? The Holy Spirit? Who is He? What is He going to do? Well, as if anticipating their questions, Jesus explains the chief work of the Holy Spirit.

Here in our text, Jesus says that the Holy Spirit is going to do two things. He will convict the world of sin and He will reveal righteousness and judgment. Regarding the first part of His work, convicting the world of sin, the best way to understand this is by considering a very special time in parenthood. That time is when the child is about 18 months - the same age as my son, John-August. Right now, he is into everything... EV-'RY-THING! And, Erica or I are right behind him saying, "No, John-August... No, put that down... No, you can't have that... No, get out of there..." If we keep it much longer, he is going to think that his first name is, "No." This is much of what the Holy Spirit does for us. He is right behind us telling us, "No, don't do that... No, don't give in... No, don't go there..." You know that feeling that we get deep down in our gut when we are being sorely tempted or when we have given in to that temptation? In other words, our consciences? Well, that is the Holy Spirit convicting us. That is the Holy Spirit showing us our sin. No, we don't like it much, but He does it for your own good. He does it because sin ruins our lives. Sin separates us from God both here in time and in eternity if we die in our sin. So, the Holy Spirit works to show us our sin.

But, the Holy Spirit also works to show us God's grace in Jesus Christ. He works to reveal to us the righteousness of Christ. That means He reveals the forgiveness and life that Jesus has won for you by His death and resurrection. And, He does this not by

directing us to the things of this world but to the things of God, that is, to the Word of God, to Holy Baptism, and to the Lord's Supper, to those things that point us to Christ who sits at the right hand of God the Father in power and majesty. It can't be any other way. There is nothing in this world that is righteous. There is nothing within us that is righteous. Thus, the Holy Spirit works to lift our eyes from the hopelessness of this world and direct them to Christ, the only One who is righteous, the only One who has not only kept the Law in perfect obedience but who has fulfilled all of its requirements by dying on the cross under the judgment of our sin. He directs us to Christ because in this righteousness we receive a judgment, a judgment of sin and death. But, we are not to worry. It is not a judgment of what we deserve. It is a judgment of grace, a judgment of forgiveness and life.

Thinking of what is best for us, it might be easy to sympathize with the sadness that the disciples felt here in our text or that they felt when Jesus did go away and ascended into heaven. They most likely thought that it would have been best for them had Jesus stayed. After all, He had conquered death

and can not die again. Thus, why would it not be for their or our own good if Jesus stayed. But, how often do we really know what is good for us? Look around this world and I think you can answer that question quite easily. We often do things thinking that they are for our own good, but actually find that it was to our own detriment. But, thankfully, Jesus knew what was best for us. It was for own good that He did go away, that He went to the cross, that He rose on the third day, and that He ascended into heaven. For by doing this, He has won the victory over sin and death and has opened the way to heaven to all who believe. What could be more for our good than that?

Actually, one thing - the sending of the Holy Spirit who calls, gathers and enlightens us with His gifts, who keep us in the one, true faith, who daily and richly forgives us our sin, and who, on the last day will gather us before Christ to receive His judgment, our admittance into His kingdom where we shall live with Him for all eternity. All that Jesus has done has been for our good. Trust, then, that all that He will do will be for our good as well. In His name. Amen.

SOLI DEO GLORIA