



“He Will Teach You All Things”

In the name of him through whom we receive the Holy Spirit, dear friends in Christ: I expect that at one point or another – and probably more than once – all of you have experienced a mental breakthrough. It happens when you’re trying to understand a difficult subject or working on a particularly stubborn problem or even when trying to follow a story with an especially complicated plot. It’s not making sense to you. You don’t see your way through it. You’re struggling to understand. And then it’s like a light goes on, and what was so confused and obscure suddenly becomes clear. Almost miraculously it all makes sense. We’ve all been there, yes?

Okay, then take that great “Aha!” moment, multiply the experience by about a thousand, and you’ll have a pretty good feeling for what the disciples experienced on the day of Pentecost. They had spent three years with Jesus listening to him proclaim the coming kingdom of God. They heard his teaching: both the things he said in public and his private teachings – the things he said only to them. They saw his miracles. They saw the way he dealt with people. They knew Jesus not just as their teacher; they knew him as their friend. And they confessed that he was the Son of God most high. And despite all that, they were completely in the dark concerning his true mission and ministry. Oh, they thought they understood; but they were as wrong as they could be. While they were with Jesus, they were getting pieces of the puzzle. And they mistakenly thought that they knew what the completed picture looked like: namely an earthly kingdom in which Jesus would reign pretty much like any other worldly monarch, with them filling the positions of chief honor and importance under him. And so whenever they came across of piece of the puzzle that didn’t fit the pattern, like when Jesus would talk about his having to suffer, die, and rise again, they’d simply throw that piece away. “This doesn’t fit. He must have made a mistake of some kind.”

Amazingly enough, even after Jesus had been crucified and raised from the dead, they still didn’t understand. We’re told that right before Jesus ascended into heaven forty days after his resurrection, one of the disciples asked him, “Lord, are you *at this time* going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” They were still thinking purely in terms of an earthly nation of Israel ruled over by King Jesus. They didn’t get it. They had all the pieces of the puzzle; but they had no idea how they were to assemble them.

That’s why we celebrate the miracle of Pentecost. And it was a miracle. With the coming of the Holy Spirit, with his work of teaching, enlightening, and reminding them of what Jesus had really been talking about all the time he was with them, they began for the first time to comprehend. They understood that the kingdom Jesus had been proclaiming was not a nation state confined to a certain piece of real estate on the eastern end of the Mediterranean. Now they began to see that kingdom of Jesus was not like the kingdoms of this world at all. No indeed, they began to see that by his cross and suffering, by his death and resurrection, Jesus had opened the kingdom of heaven. They learned that people who heard the Good News of what Jesus had done and trusted in him were delivered from the spiritual kingdom of the devil in which they were under bondage to the law and condemned to hell were forgiven, redeemed, set free, and made children of God and heirs of his eternal kingdom. And not only were the disciples given the grace to understand and believe this for themselves, they were also given the ability to boldly proclaim it in a way that others could understand as well.

That's what we see taking place in the miracle of Pentecost: the flames of fire appearing over the disciples' heads indicating the presence and enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, and their ability to speak in other tongues – cutting through the fog and Babel of confusion and speaking directly to their hearers about Jesus in the languages of their hearts.

Though they did not understand it at the time, this is what Jesus was explaining to his disciples before it all happened in today's Gospel reading, which takes place on Thursday evening of Holy Week, just a few hours before his arrest by the Jewish authorities. And because his words are recorded for us, we, like the disciples, can go back now and look at what he said then with proper understanding – not only about what the Spirit did for them at Pentecost when he first came, but also about the person and work of the Spirit as he comes to us and performs his work in the present.

So, let me set this up. In the verses immediately before today's text, Jesus tells his disciples that he's going away and retuning again, and that when he returns they will see him, but the rest of the world won't. This flies in the face of what they expect. Remember, they're expecting an earthly kingdom. And how can a king rule if most people can't see him? It doesn't make sense. So one of the disciples asks, "How are you going to show yourself to us but not to them?"

This is where Jesus responds with the words of our text: "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word." Here Jesus is drawing a division between those who are his, those who will see him on one hand, and those who aren't his and won't see him on the other. The difference is the Word and teaching of Jesus. Those who don't have or keep the Word won't see Jesus. But those who do have it, who keep it, and continue to hear it and meditate upon it – they are the ones who will love and honor Jesus. And this not because they generate this love and honor for Jesus in themselves; but rather it's in keeping and hearing his Word that Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit works faith, hope, and love for God in them.

When this happens to someone, Jesus says, "My Father will love him, and we will come and make our home with him." That's interesting: earlier in this discourse, Jesus tells his disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you." He means that by going to the cross, he prepares a place in the kingdom of God for those who will receive and trust in the forgiveness he's sacrificing himself to attain. But here he turns it around and says that he's preparing a place for God to dwell in the believer. Both are true: if someone dwells in God's Word and trusts in Christ, then God dwells in that person. As it's stated elsewhere, the person becomes a holy Temple: a dwelling place for God on earth.

And then, as our text continues, Jesus explains the work of the Spirit. He says, "These things I have spoken while I am with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to remembrance all that I have said to you." Jesus is saying, "I know you don't understand now. You can't. Your minds are filled with misconceptions, with sin, and with doubt. You're in the dark. But by going to the cross, by paying the penalty of your sin, and by cleansing you with my blood shed for you, you will be made clean. Then you will be a fit vessel in whom the Spirit of God can dwell. And he will turn the light on. He'll teach you. He'll cause you to see and to understand. And he will remind you of these things that I have said to you, which you don't get now; but you will."

This is further highlighted by the word Jesus uses to describe the Holy Spirit, which our text rather weakly translates as "Helper". It's actually the Greek word that's transliterated as "Paraclete" – like we sang in the last hymn. It means someone who comes along side of you to

equip, to coach, to encourage, to counsel, to guide, and to defend you – like a trusted lawyer might. It's someone who speaks *to* you to empower you with advice and wisdom you don't otherwise possess, and who speaks *for* you to defend you against adversaries, and also who advocates on your behalf – who pleads your case before a judge or for your interests before a higher power who can grant your requests. The Holy Spirit does all of this.

And the most important thing for us to know on this day of Pentecost is that he still does. It was the Holy Spirit who first called you to faith in Jesus. As we recited together the Catechism: "I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified, and kept me in the true faith." That is to say, when you were dead in sin and spiritually in the dark, the Word of God's salvation in Christ Jesus came to you. You couldn't understand it. But by that powerful Word of God, the Holy Spirit gave you light, understanding, and life in Christ. It was your great "Aha!" moment.

But it wasn't the last – not by a long shot – for the Holy Spirit continues to teach you, coming along side in order to guide you into all truth as you continue to hear and to keep the Word of God. And I'm sure you can testify to this: how you'll be reading some text of Scripture, or listening to a sermon or teaching in a Bible study, and all of a sudden some other piece of the puzzle falls into place. You see Jesus and the comfort of his saving Gospel message some place where you had not seen him before. The world doesn't see him there; but you do. You see him there because of the work of the Holy Spirit whose mission it is to reveal to you Jesus Christ: that you may know him, trust him, keep his Word, love him, and experience his peace: the peace of God which passes all understanding.

Therefore it's fitting that we pray: Come Holy Spirit, enlighten our hearts and minds, show us Jesus, teach us all things needful in him, and grant us God's peace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!