

Sermon for June 1, 2025 - Exaudi - Sunday after the Ascension

Ezekiel 36:25-27, 1 Peter 4:7b-11 and John 15:26 - 16:4

From the Nicene Creed - 3rd Article - *And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spake by the Prophets. And I believe one Holy Christian and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.*

The Holy Spirit - also known as the Holy Ghost - is the Lord and giver of life. He is the giver of physical life. And He is the giver of spiritual life. There is no life given unless it is given by the Holy Spirit of God. It has been that way since God breathed the breath of life into Adam. Adam was formed physically by the Hand of God. He was given life – physical and spiritual - by the very breath of God who is Spirit. And it was that spiritual life in Adam and Eve that died when Adam fell into sin with Eve. Humanity and all of creation is separated from God by sin and death. Since the fall into sin and death, we are born into this world spiritually dead, having no connection with God. God is God of the living – not God of the dead. God has nothing to do with the dead and can have nothing to do with the dead.

Things being this way, God would need to put a new heart and a new spirit within man – within us. Per Ezekiel 36 verses 25-27, man's heart had become like stone - hardhearted and unrepentant. Like Egypt's Pharaoh whose heart God hardened with the infliction of plagues, all men who refuse to repent of the breaking of the Ten Commandments harden their hearts. Unable to soften our own hearts to repentance and faith, we of sinful humanity are lost, separated from God by sin, unrepentance, and unbelief. We are unable to change our sinful ways on our own. It is totally up to God to put His Spirit within us and cause us to walk in His Statutes. It is only then that we can - even in a slight way - begin to abide by God's commandments and judgments.

And so we find ourselves on our own, lost, dead in sins, dead in death. And we look to our Gospel text, where our Savior Jesus tells us that He will send the Holy Spirit to us. What difference will it make? What difference does it make? Does the Holy Spirit actually do anything?

“the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.” That is what difference it makes. The Holy Spirit who comes from the Father, Jesus' Father, will testify about the Father's Son. That is what the Holy Spirit does. He always testifies about Jesus and what He has done. He always points to Jesus, the Son of God, who came into the world to save the world from sin, death, and the devil. He always testifies about Jesus and points to Him as the Savior of the world who suffered and died and rose from the dead to accomplish his work of salvation.

But there will be those who do not hear and believe the testimony from the Holy Spirit or from us about Jesus being the Son of God come to take away the sins of the world. And they who don't believe will not like that we testify about Jesus. And they will persecute believers. They will do all that they can to prevent us from testifying about Jesus. They will persecute and yes, even kill, those who testify about Jesus, even thinking that they are doing a good thing. Saul/Paul is a case

in point. He was on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians when Christ knocked him off the back of his horse and claimed Paul as his witness.

Why are unbelievers so wrong? Why are they so misled? Why are they so misguided in their thoughts? Because they do not know the Father or the Son.

“And these things they will do to you, because they have not known the Father nor Me. But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them.”

We are seemingly at the end of a pandemic where worship has taken on new forms in our country. People have not worshiped in their churches as they have in the past. They have worshiped by teleconferencing or streaming. Some, like us, worship in our homes with a combination of live and video conferencing participation. Will there be more changes? What are we to expect? We don't know for sure what to expect. Will we be more extremely persecuted? We don't know, but we can expect that what Jesus has told us will be true. *“And these things they will do to you, because they have not known the Father nor me. But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them.”*

Things will change. For those of us who testify that Jesus is our Lord and God, those changes will never make things better for us in this world. We can expect difficulty. We can expect persecution. The world does not know God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We can't expect the world to act as if it does know the only true and living God. But we can always expect Jesus words to be true. And we can always expect that the Holy Spirit, who has bound Himself to the Word and to the Sacraments, will point us to Christ as Our Savior.

And we can also expect that not only these words that warn us about what the unbelieving world will do to us will be true but that all of Jesus' words will be true. And some of those words are, *“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”* Do you want to know where Jesus is? He is where He tells us He will be. And He is where the Holy Spirit points him out to us, the Spirit of Truth will always point to Jesus as our Lord, our Christ, our Savior.

He will always be with us as He is now in His Word. And He will be with us again in a few minutes. In His Body and in His Blood, Jesus Himself, comes to us in the Lord's Supper. His Words are faithful and true. He is faithful and true. He is the Son of the only true and living God. COME, LORD JESUS. He comes in meekness and humility. AMEN.

Ezekiel 36: 25-27

²² “Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “I do not do *this* for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name’s sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. ²³ And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I *am* the LORD,” says the Lord God, “when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. ²⁴ For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. ²⁵ Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*. ²⁸ Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God. ²⁹ I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you. ³⁰ And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations. ³¹ Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that *were* not good; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations. ³² Not for your sake do I do *this*,” says the Lord God, “let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel!”

1 Peter 4:7-11 Serving for God’s Glory

7 But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. **8** And above all things have fervent love for one another, for “love will cover a multitude of sins.” **9** Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. **10** As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. **11** If anyone speaks, *let him speak* as the [a]oracles of God. If anyone ministers, *let him do it* as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the [b]dominion forever and ever. Amen.

John 15:26 – 16:4 - The Coming Rejection

26 “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. **27** And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

Jesus Warns and Comforts His Disciples

16 “These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. **2** They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God

service. **3** And these things they will do [b]to you because they have not known the Father nor Me. **4** But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them.

“And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you.