

Pentecost 5/31/2020
John 7:37-39 A

NOW THIS HE SAID ABOUT THE SPIRIT, WHOM THOSE WHO BELIEVED IN HIM WERE TO RECEIVE, FOR AS YET THE SPIRIT HAD NOT BEEN GIVEN, BECAUSE JESUS WAS NOT YET GLORIFIED.

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the Scriptures say the Holy Spirit hovered over the water. The Psalmist tells us it is God the Spirit who gives life to the creation. The Psalmist says this, "When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground" (104:30). And you go through the Scriptures, you see that the leaders of God's people had the Spirit of God upon them. We saw how it was upon Moses, and it was given to some of the elders in our first reading for today. We see it also in this: Moses said the Lord had spoken to him and said this, "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him" (Nu 27:18). King David also had the Spirit and said, "The Spirit of the Lord speaks by me; His words is on my tongue" (2 Sa 23:2). Ezekiel also confesses that when God spoke to him, "the Spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard him speaking to me" (2:2).

Then, there's Jesus. Jesus goes down to the Jordan to be baptized by John the Baptist. And the Evangelist Matthew records this, "And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on Him" (3:16). Not long after that, Jesus went to His home synagogue in Nazareth, and it was on the Sabbath Day. He received the scroll of the Prophet Isaiah and He stood up and read this very passage, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty

to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the years of the Lord's favor" (Lk 4:18-19). And He told everyone looking at Him in the synagogue that day, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (v. 21).

To put it all together – the Spirit of God is present at creation, hovering over the waters and giving life to the creation. The Spirit of God is present with the leaders and prophets of Israel. The Spirit of God is present at Jesus' baptism, anointing Him for ministry and present with Jesus throughout His ministry. So, the Spirit of God is with God's people, among God's people, and doing what the Spirit of God does. It makes you wonder, then, how the Evangelist John can record these words of Jesus, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water'" (v. 37-38). He records those words of Jesus and in the very next verse, he writes this, "Now this He said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (v. 39).

On one hand, the Spirit of God is present at creation. He's with the leaders and prophets of Israel. He's with Jesus at His baptism and throughout His ministry. Yet, on the other hand, the Spirit has not yet been given. Now, if that doesn't set your mind spinning like a top, I don't know what will. But, here's the thing: You're Lutheran. You've stumbled into a Lutheran thing, so you are not afraid to ask the question, "What does this mean?"

"The Spirit had not been given." Here's what it means. Jesus is at the Feast of Booths, Tabernacles. This is the feast that recalls Israel's 40-years of wandering in the wilderness. Each year, when they would gather

in Jerusalem to celebrate the feast, they had to make booths, shelters, out of tree branches and live in them for seven days. And a big part of this feast focused on water. It recalled the time when they were wandering in the wilderness and needed water and God provided water for them. It's also an agricultural feast, asking God to send rain for their crops.

Given this "water-y" background, Jesus says, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water'" (v 37-38).

So the question for you becomes: Do you thirst? When I ask you, "Do you thirst?", I am not asking you if your mouth is dry, nor am I asking, when you get done cutting the grass or working out, do you have a sustained sensation for hydration. The thirst I am asking you about is the thirst Jesus is talking about. It's the thirst that comes about because of sin. You've looked at your life in light of God's commands. And you wonder, where is it that I stand with God? And You see that when it comes to loving God and loving your neighbor, because of your sin, you are parched, you are empty. You thirst for what it is that only God can give; you thirst for the forgiveness of sins. And that is what Jesus desires to give.

But, not everyone thirst for the forgives Jesus desires to give. There are a lot of human beings who look at their lives in light of God's Word and commands and yet still say, "the only thing I'm thirsty for is what I've already got." The same sinful thoughts, words, and deeds. And they are so satisfied with themselves that don't realize they have any need for God.

But, not you. You are watching this morning because you are very thirsty. And, the first thing you did in worship once again today was confess your sins. You confessed your great need for God and for His

forgiveness. You said, “I thirst. I thirst for God. I thirst for His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation.”

And the beautiful thing is this is exactly what our Lord Jesus gives you today. He gives you the forgiveness of sins through His Word, Baptism, Absolution, and Holy Communion. He gives all that to you, because He won all that for you when He was glorified.

When John tells us the Spirit had not yet been given, it is because Jesus had not yet been glorified. In John’s Gospel, Jesus’ glorification is His crucifixion. And it’s His crucifixion when He gives Himself into death for all of you sins. He’s beaten, crowned with thorns, and nailed to the cross. He endures the damnation you deserve for all of your sins. He gives His life into death for you; in your place. And by doing that, He has won for you the refreshing forgiveness of all your sins.

Here’s the thing: by your own reason and strength, you can’t receive that to be your very own. Your sinfulness will not allow you to believe you are a poor, miserable sinner who cannot save yourself. Instead, God has come to you and brings salvation to you. And Jesus gave the Holy Spirit to make that happen. He sent the Holy Spirit at Pentecost to call you, gather you, enlighten you by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He works faith in you so that you do believe in Jesus, and pours the refreshing forgiveness of sin over you like a river and so that it flows like a river out of you to others.

Like Peter on the day of Pentecost. He received the Spirit, proclaimed the glorification of Jesus Christ. And the Spirit worked that Word into the hearts of people so that they became believers in Jesus. They, too, received the refreshing, thirst-quenching forgiveness of sins.

Are you starting to see how all this works? Jesus does indeed give the living water of forgiveness to you. He gives it to you by being glorified

on the cross; by giving His life into death. That's where He wins it. Until that is won, it cannot be given. Now, that it is won, Jesus sends the Holy Spirit so that it is given. And the Spirit has delivered it to you.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.