

How can they hear unless you go?

Bible reference for sermon John 20:19-23

¹⁹When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors were locked where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

When Jesus ascended into heaven he promised his disciples a gift. But they were to wait as we heard last Sunday. Ten days later the gift was given. The story of Pentecost tells of God giving the gift, the Holy Spirit.

Let's pray... (Nev prays)

So what does Jesus' gift of the Spirit mean for you?

What does it mean for me?

What does this mean for us as Church?

We sometimes talk of Pentecost as the birthday of the Church. And it is. There is no Church without the Spirit. So, it's a celebration. But not just an in-house family birthday celebration.



In the explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed, "I believe in the Holy Spirit." in the Small Catechism Luther outlines what this gift is.

"I believe I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him.

But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts and kept me in true faith."

One of the reasons we celebrate today is that the gift and coming of the Holy Spirit is our gift too and the reason I have saving faith and that I'm part of the church So yes, there's much personal reason for each one of us to celebrate the gift of faith today. But there's so much more to the gift of the Spirit.

The gift of the Holy Spirit means that Jesus' presence is magnified and multiplied. How? I'm going to suggest three community things...



1. In our gospel reading today, Jesus comes to fearful disciples and twice says

“Peace be with you.”

The coming of the Spirit is the promise of PEACE to disciples who fear.

When Jesus was in the Upper Room sharing the Passover meal before his cross, he prepared his disciples for his departure.

In John chapters 13-17 we have details of Jesus’ loving farewell to his disciples. And it’s not just or so much farewell but it is the promise of Jesus to them and to the future church that he is going to equip them. Here the promise is of peace.

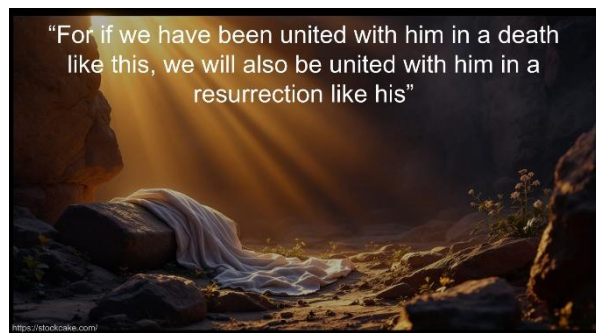
In John 14 Jesus says to the fearful *disciples* *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me. And then Jesus promises his fearful disciples that, although he must go to the cross, he will not leave them as orphans because the Father will send the Holy Spirit, the Advocate. He will teach the disciples everything and remind them all that Jesus has said. They will therefore have peace. “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not be let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*

The coming of the Holy Spirit brings the fulfilment of this promise “Peace be with you.” Peace, I leave with you. My peace I give to you because the role of the Holy Spirit is to point fearful, uncertain, sad, disciples and people on the journey to faith to Jesus who is with them.

The words I read in John 14 are often part of the gospel reading for funerals. When someone we love dies, Jesus comes to us in our sadness and grief and uncertainty to give peace through the gospel promise now fulfilled.

Every Lutheran funeral service begins with the words of Paul in Romans 6:

“Don’t you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? Therefore, we were buried with him by baptism into death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.”



We are receivers of Christ’s peace through his cross and his resurrection.

And not only are we receivers of peace, but we are also called to actively share peace, to grace it to others. We, as Christians, are uniquely placed to share peace in the world.

In our country, National Reconciliation Week begins this coming week. It runs from May 27 – June 3 and its theme **All In**.

In 2018 the LCA at its Synod voted to support reconciliation in Australia by agreeing to form a reconciliation action plan so that we might learn to listen to one another, to learn and to help bring peace. May I strongly encourage you not to think of reconciliation this week as a human or political concept but to look to the One who served you with peace by his sacrifice on the cross, through which he has brought us reconciliation with God. We know peace because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. So, Christians, you and me, who have the power of the Holy Spirit have power to be advocates for peace in our land. We can certainly all actively stand up to racism and in our careful listening we learn to bring Jesus and his peace. We learn this only by looking to the cross. By being aware and alert you can speak and enact God's peace in a fractured world.

How can you bring this peace to someone you know?

What are we called to do, to say, to be as a church here on RR to bring peace to the community?



2. The Spirit is the cause for joy (John 20:22 fulfilling John 16:20-22) Joy of God's salvation; easter resurrection joy. The coming of the Holy Spirit is the coming of joy
John 20: 20 After he said this (peace be with you), he showed them his hands and his side. **Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.**

The disciples rejoiced. They knew true joy when they recognised Jesus. This was promised by Jesus in the Upper room too as Jesus prepared the disciples for the cross. In John 16 we hear Jesus say...

20 Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy. 21 When a woman is in labour, she has pain because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world. 22 So you have pain now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.

Jesus prepares his disciples for the pain of his suffering and his death. Death brings pain. But this pain will not last. His resurrection will bring joy and not only for them but to all who will believe including us today because of the work of the Spirit.

Finally, the coming of the Spirit means you and I and all Christians are sent and may I first give a most heartfelt thanks from Pastor Sue and I and the staff team for all of you who volunteer and fuel the church with your faithful love and energy. Bless you!

3. The Spirit means being SENT fulfilling John 17:18 & John 20:21

We as Church are sent to proclaim Christ and so proclaim the gospel and to offer the world the gifts of cross and resurrection. Not all will receive the gift of God and so are in danger of their sins being retained. That's the sad reality and that's the urgency then for us who have received the Spirit; the wake-up call for disciples hiding away in fear.

**The gift of the Spirit means that
you and I are SENT by God**

In our gospel fluency workshop today and next week we are discussing what it is to be sent to people in our lives, family, friends, work colleagues etc and we will discuss 4 questions (and I strongly encourage you to consider answering these too):

- **Why** should I share the gospel?
- **Who** should I share it with (and note that we pray by name for these people in the workshop)
- **What** do I say?
- **When** will I say it?

This is simply encouragement for you to plan and what's that old saying?

“Those who fail to plan, plan to fail”

You can find out more by attending a future Gospel Fluency workshop or take a peek at <https://www.lca.org.au/gospel-fluency/>

The gift of the Holy Spirit is a celebration for the church. But just as it was for the disciples who first waited for the gift it is also a time for us to wait, to prepare, to pray for and to receive anew the gift of the Holy Spirit. And to know the power of God to serve us as we are sent to share peace, to share joy, and to point people in our lives to the cross and the One who goes there for all people. Happy Birthday Church. Amen

Video of the service including the above address can be found on the St Paul's Lutheran Church Youtube page <https://www.youtube.com/@stpaulslutheranchurchboxhi1133>