

In the name of ✝ Jesus.

In the last days of Jesus' ministry, He turned the disciples attention to the coming of the Holy Spirit. On the night of His betrayal Jesus told His disciples to expect the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, sent from the Father (John 14:26). Jesus Christ, the righteous One, is our Paraclete — the ESV translates that as Helper. Jesus is our helper and friend by laying down His life unto death for us, an atoning sacrifice for our sins. But *“I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth”* (John 14:16-17).

Especially after His resurrection, as He approaches His ascension, Jesus prepares the disciples for the coming of the *“the promise of my Father upon you ... stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high”* (Luke 24:49). *“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you”* (Acts 1:8); *“You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now”* (Acts 1:5). In fact, Jesus' ascension was the catalyst for the Spirit's coming: *“if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you”* (John 16:7).

Actually, Jesus had spoken about this some time before, at another festival. In our Gospel, Jesus was at the Feast of Tabernacles, and there He spoke *“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,”* because Jesus had not yet ascended into heaven. Of course, Jesus was speaking about the festival day that we celebrate today. It's called Pentecost, the day when God the Father poured out the Holy Spirit upon the Church, that from her, as from the body of Christ Himself, rivers of living water might flow.

On this day, Pentecost, 50 days after His resurrection from the dead, what Jesus had promised from the Father, the Father fulfilled. God is faithful! The Holy Spirit came down with power upon the disciples, with the sound of a mighty rushing wind and with fire that divided into what looked like tongues and rested upon each of them, and they began to preach of *“the mighty works of God.”*

The disciples got the attention of the people; they were amazed. In part, it was because this was a diverse gathering of people from all over the Roman Empire, *“Parthians and Medes and Elamites,”* and so forth, who were all hearing the disciples preaching in their own diverse languages — not in the common language of the Roman Empire, which was Greek, but in their *“own native languages.”* You can understand their bewilderment. The disciples were Galileans. They hadn't learned these languages.

Of course, with the Scriptures to inform us, we understand how they did this. The Holy Spirit enabled them; the Holy Spirit gave them utterance; the Holy Spirit was their teacher; the Holy Spirit bore witness through them.

The people asked the Lutheran question, “*What does this mean?*” Peter supplied them the Lutheran answer. We’re not doing this “*by [our] own reason or strength*”; certainly, drunkenness would be no help (drunkenness doesn’t enhance our abilities; it depresses them); rather, God has poured out His Spirit upon us as the prophet Joel prophesied, so that by this proclamation, by the mighty signs done in the Lord’s name, many may call on the name of the Lord and be saved.

To be sure, the disciples had drunk on that first Pentecost; but they were not drunk from too much wine. They had drunk from that “*spring of water welling up to eternal life*” (John 4:14). They had come unto Jesus, as He had invited them to do in the Gospel lesson, and they had drunk from Him — from His belly or from His heart ... either way, for it was from Him whose side had been pierced for us, from whose side had flowed forth water and blood.

The disciples had drunk from “*the fountain of living water*” (Jer. 17:13). Truly Christ is the source of this living water, as He told the Samaritan woman at the well earlier, “*If you knew the gift of God, ... you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water*” (John 4:10). Again, Jesus said, “*The water that I WILL GIVE HIM*” (John 4:14).

That’s why Jesus said in our Gospel, and that’s why I translated it, “*If anyone thirsts, let him come to me; and let him who believes in me drink,*” for this believing, this faith, is given birth by water combined with Christ’s word, and it’s nurtured by the pure spiritual milk of God’s goodness in Christ (1 Pet. 2:1-2), and it’s preserved by hearing the preaching of Christ, by listening to His word. That’s what St. Paul says, “*faith comes by hearing... the word of Christ*” (Rom. 10:17), and in that faithful hearing, we hear Paul repeat the Pentecost promise of the prophet Joel, “*everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved*” (Rom. 10:13).

To be sure, there are other streams that one can drink from—there were back then; there are now. Today, here in our own country, these streams are filled with injustice and intolerance and hate and violence. Consider just in Minnesota in these last two weeks: a governor treating churches as if they were nothing more than entertainment, opening malls for their “retail therapy but [disallowing] churches from providing spiritual healing to their congregations” (LCMS blog); a man, George Floyd, a human being, murdered cruelly, callously, by a police officer, with his knee for over eight minutes on the neck of this subdued and handcuffed man, gasping for his life — inhumane treatment of one man by another sworn to

uphold justice; mob violence, looting, senseless destruction of private property, all supposedly with the purpose of securing justice for George Floyd — not just in Minneapolis on Friday night; all over the country, even in Fort Wayne. It's senseless — destroying the property of someone who had nothing to do with the evil deed. It's unjust, and none of this flows from Him whose heart pours out rivers of living water.

To be sure, Jesus Himself was on the receiving end of such actions. Jewish leaders tried to shut Him up. Lawless men — a mob — crucified and killed this innocent man (Acts 2:23) aided by a governor, who knew the right thing to do (his wife had told him—Matt. 27:19), who tried to wash his hands of the problem (Matt. 27:24), but who sent the King of the Jews, the Savior of the world, to the gallows to die. But thanks be to God: *“it was not possible for him to be held by”* death. *“God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death”* (Acts 2:24).

And because Jesus lives, we have a living hope. We get to drink from Jesus, who gives living water, because “Christ has triumphed; He is living”; He is the source of life. In Him is life (John 1:4); He is the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25); He is the Way and the Truth and the Life (John 14:6). Jesus is the spiritual Rock from which our spiritual drink flows. Out of His heart flow rivers of living water.

On the other hand, we also confess that the Spirit is “the Lord and Giver of Life...” (Nicene Creed). Jesus said, *“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh [that is, our sinful flesh] is no help at all”* (John 6:63). The examples given bear witness: living waters do not find their source in us or in our hearts. You know what bubbles up from the hearts of man — *“evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander”* (Matt. 15:19). You don't want to drink from that polluted stream. No, our flesh is no help at all. Jesus is the source of life: *“The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life”* (John 6:63).

Therefore, let us drink deeply of the living water that flows from the heart of Jesus, for then we will bear much fruit. When we partake of Christ and His word — the words by which He brings eternal life, the words given the Spirit by the Father to bear witness to the Son crucified for sinners, raised for our justification, the word connected with the water pouring from Jesus' side and poured over us, the word spoken over bread and wine that invite Jesus to come to us with His body and blood — when we partake of this word, the Spirit comes to us and works faith in us as it pleases God, and He justifies us, and He brings forth the fruit of good works in us. It's as the Psalmist says: when we delight in God's word (I would say also that means His visible word, the Sacraments), we are *“like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all*

*that [we do], [we] prosper” (Ps. 1:3). That is, when the Holy Spirit calls us to faith in the Son, something else happens. We become good trees that bear good fruit, or again, we become branches of the True Vine bearing fruit, as Jesus said, “Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).*

Dear believers in Christ, Jesus surely has ascended to the Father, but you may still come to Him and drink. His word, the Spirit’s sword (Eph. 6:17), still proceeds from His mouth (Rev. 1:16), and from His side still pours forth water and blood (John 19:34; 1 John 5:6). These are still delivered to you by His body, the Church, from which now flow these rivers of living water in proclamation and sacraments, in creeds and hymns and prayers, in works of love and mercy—rivers of living water all bearing witness by His Spirit, to the Son, Jesus Christ, our life.

Indeed, by all these, the promise of Pentecost is fulfilled in us. We have been given the Spirit; power from on high has been poured out on us. We are now His witnesses. Drink deeply from Him that the living waters from Christ may flow through us and into the world.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.