

In the name of ✠ Jesus.

“Come, holy Light, Guide Divine, Now, cause the Word of Life to shine! Teach us to know our God aright And call Him Father with delight ...” (LSB497:2).

Today is Pentecost, the Church’s celebration of the coming of the Holy Spirit. As part of that celebration, today we sang this prayer to the Holy Spirit calling on Him to come and cause the Word of Life to shine upon us. We prayed that He would teach us to know our God aright, that is, to preach to us the message He caused Peter and the disciples to preach with the sound of the rush of wind and with tongues of fire.

The Spirit’s message is the message of the church; it is the message of the Gospel; it is the message of Jesus, crucified and risen on the third day. “[C]lothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49), Peter preached that *“this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men”* (Acts 2:23). Other hands may have driven the nails; other men may have lifted Jesus up on that cross; but your sins put Him there. He was crucified because of you, Peter told the festival goers.

The accusation applies to us, too, for our sins necessitated His death. As St. Paul says, *“Christ died for the ungodly ... God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Rom. 5:6, 8). We crucified Jesus by our sins. To say otherwise is to say that Christ is not for us.

But the Spirit’s message does not stop with death and the grave. It continues with what has been proclaimed for the last 50 days of Easter, and what has been proclaimed at the flood of funerals here at Zion this season: that *“God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it”* (Acts 2:24). And this message, too, applies to us, for Jesus’ victory over death is also our victory: *“The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law, but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Cor. 15:56). Resurrection lies ahead for us in Christ ... resurrection and life.

The Spirit, who manifested Himself today in this great theophany, is all about life. It was so in the beginning, with the hovering Spirit of God giving birth to creation. In the beginning, the Spirit blew the breath of life into the lifeless man, and he became a living being. Thus, Job was right when he said to the Lord, *“You have granted me life”* (Job 10:12). *“The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life”* (Job 33:4).

But this life was soon replaced with death. In the day that you eat of the forbidden tree, you will surely die. The man and woman ate. They sinned, and they died. And they passed this ancient sentence on to all their progeny. We are their sons and daughters — the children of sinners and sinners ourselves. We are their

sons and daughters, entering into this world alive according to the flesh, but dead according to the spirit. Our flesh soon wears down and degenerates, and we soon die — not because of the work of the Spirit for the Spirit is life, but because of sin, because our flesh has been corrupted by sin.

But God would not let sin and death nor the serpent have the last word. He had a word to give — a word of life. Moses said, *“Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, ... For it is no empty word for you, but your very life, and by this word you shall live”* (Deut. 32:46-47). And you know that in the fullness of time this Word became flesh, the Word who was in eternity with God and was God, very God. He was sent from God as the seed of woman to crush the power of the unholy trinity of our enemies: sin, death and Satan.

*“How can this be?”* we ask. *“How can this be,”* asked also a lowly, virgin handmaid of the Lord, *“since I have not known a man?”* (Luke 1:34). Enter in the “Holy Ghost, God and Lord” (LSB497:1). *“The Holy Spirit will come upon you,”* the angel said, *“and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God”* (Luke 1:35). By the work of the conceiving Spirit was the Savior of fallen man brought to life.

The ministry of Jesus, too, was a life-giving ministry, begun as the Holy Spirit came down from heaven and anointed Jesus with power as the Christ, commissioning Him for His task of seeking and saving the lost. And this He would accomplish by His Spirit-filled words of life: *“The words that I have spoken to you,”* Jesus says, *“are spirit and life”* (John 6:63). There is nowhere else to turn for life. *“To whom shall we go?”* Peter asked and answered, *“you are the Holy One of God.”* *“You have the words of eternal life”* (John 6:68-69).

This is another great confession of Peter, spoken as words inspired by the Spirit — they’re not just any words; they bear witness to Jesus. Not just Jesus’ words, but Peter’s words are recognized as Scripture. In all of them is life.

You know that the Bible has been misused by many people for various reasons, sometimes sinister, sometimes merely misguided, but misused nonetheless as they move our gaze off of Jesus. These people *“know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God”* (Mark 12:24), for Jesus Himself said, *“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life”* (John 5:39-40).

That’s what the Holy Spirit is all about; that’s what His work is to this day; that’s why the Father sent the Helper to us in Jesus’ name: to *“bear witness concerning Jesus,”* to *“teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all*

*that [Jesus has] said to you,*” that through His words you may be made alive, that you might look to the Son and believe in Him, and have eternal life.

On that first Pentecost, many who heard the disciples’ preaching were cut to the heart. They repented, were baptized, received a new life by water and the Spirit, dying with Jesus and rising to life again, passing from death to life, as they received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Our own baptisms are gifts, too, for by this water, the Holy Spirit was given us and He has granted us new life in Christ — life from the life-giving Spirit ... life breathed out of the Crucified and Resurrected Jesus in words of Spirit, forgiveness, and peace, onto the disciples first, and through them onto us born dead in our sins and trespasses ... life flowing out of the wounds of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life ... life won by His blood shed ... life given by His word heard, His body eaten, His blood drunk.

Friends, this is what Pentecost is about — the Spirit at work in us to bring us life ... begun in us when the Spirit-filled waters poured over us ... at work in us when we hear the message of resurrection and life in Christ Jesus ... at work in us when we eat and drink the Spiritual food of Jesus’ flesh and blood. In this way, God’s Spirit dwells richly in us, to the end that we may “*set [our] mind on the things of the Spirit,*” and “*live according to the Spirit*” (Rom. 8:5) — that we may live in the hope of life, for “*If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you*” (Rom. 8:11).

“Come, holy Fire, comfort true, ... And to our weakness strength impart That bravely here we may contend, Through life and death to You, our Lord, ascend. Alleluia! Alleluia!” (LSB497:3)

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