

*John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15*

[Jesus said to His disciples:] "When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the **Spirit** of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. 27 You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.

**16:4** "I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. 5 But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' 6 But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts.

7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. 8 And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 about sin, because they do not believe in me; 10 about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; 11 about judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

12 "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. 14 He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. 15 All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

*John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15*

Today we remember, we acknowledge and we celebrate the work of God through the Holy Spirit,

And in particular how the Holy Spirit has worked in John Parker and his family during his time of faith formation as he has grown up in the church and now completed his catechetical instruction.

In our lesson from Acts we hear the remarkable story of the fulfillment of Jesus' promise as the Holy spirit comes with the rush of a violent wind,

and divided tongues as of fire appearing and resting on each of the disciples.

And all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit!

After that they preached in many different languages and thousands came to believe in Jesus Christ that day.

Our gospel lesson today, rather than telling the story about the coming of the Holy Spirit, describes the work, the function of the Holy Spirit.

It also challenges us to see the Spirit at work in the world.

Jesus is very clear about first that the Spirit will work among those who don't know Him or believe in Him, proving the world wrong about sin, righteousness and judgment.

In the gospel of John unbelief is a sin, perhaps the greatest sin,

and unbelief keeps the unbeliever outside the community of faith.

Not by God's will or design but by the person's own not knowing about Jesus, or rejection of him.

The work of the Spirit then is to continue to bring the presence of Jesus into the world, to confront the world with His presence;

That He has been here; that He was killed and raised for them.

This fulfills the function of witness of the Holy Spirit in John 15:26.

But, the Spirit witnesses to the presence of Jesus within the community of faith also, leading the community in the way of truth as we read in chapter 16 beginning at verse 12.

The Spirit will proclaim Jesus' own teachings in the new and changing circumstances the community will face when Jesus is gone.

They will face many circumstances that will require that they follow the Holy Spirit in new directions.

We heard about a perfect example of one of those circumstances in last week's lessons with the household of the Roman Centurion, Cornelius,

Remember that Jews were not supposed to be socializing with Gentiles and Romans let alone going into their houses.

But, Peter was called by the Holy Spirit to go to Cornelius and was astounded that as he told them about Jesus and proclaimed the gospel to them Cornelius and his entire household received the Holy Spirit.

What could he do then but baptize them?

And this event began a change the hearts and minds of the church leaders who were all Jewish about the standing of Gentiles and Romans in the eyes of God

And so in the church.

As the Spirit works outside and within the community of faith He bridges the gap between the two.

Today this is important to understand because we have a young man who is taking on the responsibility for the faith his mother and father had him baptized into long ago.

John will, along with all of you, profess his faith in the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

These are the ways God chooses to be with us;

through His creative work,

and then through the presence of Jesus in the world including his continued presence through the church we call the body of Christ,

and now in the work of the Holy Spirit.

Given our understanding of the Spirit I have described, John, whether he realizes it or not,  
has experienced the work of the Spirit even in the last couple of months.

Kellie took our youth group to visit the Family Renew ministry in Holly Hill a couple of months ago.

You could say that happened by accident I suppose, but I think not.

While there our youth got to see the way others less fortunate than they live, became familiar with the challenges they face in their lives,  
saw how little they get by with.

They were moved by what they learned that day, and they came back here and proposed to the council that we designate a month of Change for Change to that ministry, and we did.

Were there people there who don't know Jesus? Were there people there who were non-believers?

We don't know specifically.

But what we do know is that the Spirit called our youth to a place and taught them something about the reality of the world they live in,

and they responded graciously and out of love and care for others.

In their efforts they became Jesus' presence in the world for a few people who may have needed to experience Him at that moment.

The Holy Spirit bridged a gap between two parts of the world we live in to build community;

to restore faith that may have been fractured, to nurture belief that had been worn by the difficulties of life,

and to teach the hearts and minds of those young people, our youth, who are learning about faith and growing in belief.

John, God's Spirit will continue to be with you, to live within you, to work in you and through you to hold you in the faith and to change the world.

From Luther's Small Catechism we also learn about the Holy Spirit.

I can not by my own reason or strength come to our Lord Jesus Christ, or believe in him, but the Holy Spirit calls us through the gospel,

enlightens us with Her gifts, sanctifies us (keeps us Holy) and keeps us in the one true faith.

This is a promise made by God so that you may continue to grow and mature in your faith,  
and spend your lifetime, this and the next, in His presence.

