

John 14:23-31 (Pentecost)
Kaiserslautern Ev. Luth. Ch.
Trinity, Frankfurt/Main
June 5, 2022

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Jesus says: *These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.*

Dearly bought hearers by the blood of Jesus Christ,

Today we celebrate Pentecost, 50 days after Easter, when the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity, was poured out on the disciples. Today is the birthday of the Christian Church. The Holy Spirit filled the disciples, giving them the gifts necessary to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in all the world. In Acts 2 we see that the first gift necessary for proclaiming the Gospel around the world is the gift of tongues, the ability to communicate in the varied languages of mankind. But the Holy Spirit also gives wisdom, fortitude, resolve, love, patience, enlightenment, and many other such gifts for the work of the Church. This morning we consider the work of the Holy Spirit, not only 2,000 years ago at Pentecost, but also how the Holy Spirit has continued working in the Church and how the Holy Spirit will continue working in the Church through God's Word until Christ returns at the end of the age.

In Acts 2, we hear that “suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they [the disciples] were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:2–4). The disciples were not babbling nonsense, as some modern Christians interpret it. There is a temptation to want something completely mysterious and otherworldly from the Holy Spirit. But

this was not incomprehensible, ecstatic speech. No, our God is a God of order, not disorder (1 Corinthians 14:33). At Pentecost, the disciples miraculously spoke real languages of people from the Mediterranean world, from what is today the Middle East, northern Africa, and Turkey. The devout Jews in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven heard the mighty works of God in their own languages.

This first Christian Pentecost was a reversal of the Tower of Babel. In the Old Testament God confused human language because of man's pride. In pride the people wanted to make a name for themselves by uniting all people and ascending into heaven, the ongoing endeavor of fallen humanity to "be like God" (Gen 3). But in the New Testament, God uses those languages of the world for His own purposes, making the languages of the world comprehensible for the sake of preaching the Gospel. The devout Jews from every nation at the first Christian Pentecost heard the mighty works of God in recognizable languages—languages *you* could learn! The Holy Spirit works through human language.

You see, our God is a God who speaks. The Holy Spirit always works through the Word. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. In the beginning, God said: "Let there be . . ." and there was, and it was very good. Hebrews 11[:3] says: "By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God." The Lord spoke all things into existence. And that creating Word was Jesus Christ Himself, the second Person of the Holy Trinity. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). Even today the ascended Jesus "upholds the universe by the word of His power" (Heb 1:3). Our God is a God who speaks.

In the Old Testament God spoke to His people by the prophets, but since the Word became flesh, God now speaks to us in the Word made flesh, the incarnate Lord Jesus Christ. As

Hebrews chapter 1 says: “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He created the world” In the Old Testament God spoke through the prophets and in the New Testament God speaks through His Son, but it doesn’t stop there. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, continues speaking through His Apostles.

When Jesus sent out the seventy-two, He said: “The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects Him who sent me” (Luke 10:16). The voice of an apostle is the voice of Jesus. And the voice of Jesus is the voice of the Father. Of course, the Holy Spirit is also involved. As Jesus says in our Gospel text this morning, “the Holy Spirit will bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” The Holy Spirit does not proclaim something new. The Holy Spirit simply brings the words of Jesus to the mind of the Apostles. All three persons of the Holy Trinity are at work in proclaiming God’s Word through writings of the prophets and apostles.

So after receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit and the ability to proclaim the mighty works of God, what did the apostles do next? They took the Word of God into all the world, from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). And what did those devout Jews from every nation do next? They, too, took the Gospel in their own language back with them to every nation under heaven. With the power of human speech, with the breath of man’s mouth, the Holy Spirit, like wind, blew where He wanted to. And the story of Pentecost tells us where He comes from and where He is going. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. He spoke by the prophets and the apostles and continues speaking in the writings of the prophets and apostles, what we call the Bible, in the languages of people all over the world.

Today, June 5th, is not just Pentecost. Today also happens to be St. Boniface Day, which is a great example to us of how the Holy Spirit continued working in the Church through the successors of the Apostles. St. Boniface is often referred to as “the Apostle to the Germans,” even though he was born and trained in England. His name at birth was Winfrid, but Pope Gregory II renamed him Boniface after an earlier Christian martyr. The Pope sent Boniface from England to continental Europe as “missionary bishop for Germania.” Boniface was to work with Charles Martel and the Carolingians to help convert different Germanic tribes to the Christian faith. He was made Archbishop of Mainz and oversaw the church in all of Germany east of the Rhine river.

According to legend, Boniface felled an oak tree important for the pagan worship of Thor near the present-day city of Fritzlar, in northern Hesse. Boniface began chopping down the tree when all of a sudden a miraculous wind came and did the job for him. The pagans were so amazed Boniface was not struck dead by the gods that they converted to Christianity. Whether or not the legend is true, the point is that Boniface confessed the faith in word and deed for the sake of the German people. Boniface preached the Gospel and did everything He could to drive away the darkness of paganism that hung over what is today Germany, and for that he was martyred. On his last mission to the pagan Frisians, in northwest Germany, Boniface was killed by pagan Germans on June 5 in the year of our Lord 754. His bodily remains ended up in Fulda, Germany, where you can still visit them today.

The example of St. Boniface shows us how the miracle of Pentecost continued and continues throughout the history of the Church. The Apostles were sent into all the world, and their successors followed in their footsteps, going into all the world. The Church moved from country to country, expanding as missionaries went to new lands. St. Boniface was sent from

England to what is today Germany, where he and so many clergy with him preached God's Word of Law and Gospel, baptized whole nations, absolved sins, administered the Lord's Supper, and cared for the poor and sick. Yet it was the Holy Spirit at work the whole time in the Word of God, bringing to remembrance all that Jesus said and did for the salvation of the world. The prophets of the Old Testament and the Apostles of the New Testament, and the missionaries who take God's Word throughout the world do not preach their own word; they preach God's Word, through which the Holy Spirit works to create faith when and where it pleases Him.

Even today, the Holy Spirit is working in the same way—through God's Word proclaimed in the languages of the world. The Gospel is still going out into all the world as the Church expands and moves from place to place. And even as the Church goes out into the world, so also does the Holy Spirit bring the world into the Church. As an example I think of our Ascension service last week. God's people from India, the United States, Germany, Mexico, England, and New Zealand came together to receive the gifts of our crucified, risen, and ascended Lord in His Word and Sacraments. Devout Christians from all over the world were gathered in one place and the Holy Spirit was at work in the Word of God, bringing to remembrance all that Jesus said and did.

Whether it's the Church going into the world or the world coming to the Church, whether it's the disciples proclaiming the great things of God or St. Boniface converting the German people, whether it's gathering together as our little flock from all over the world, or wherever the Lord takes us, it is always the Holy Spirit working through God's Word and Sacraments to make a people for God. As Luther explains it, by our own reason and strength we cannot believe in Jesus Christ our Lord or come to Him, but the Holy Spirit has called us by the Gospel, enlightened us with His gifts, sanctified, and kept us in the true faith, just as He has done for

Christians at all times and places. In this Christian church, the Holy Spirit daily and richly forgives all our sins and the sins of all believers, and on the Last Day He will raise us with all the dead, and give eternal life to us and all believers in Christ. The work of the Holy Spirit begun at Pentecost, the work of bringing the words of Jesus to remembrance, has continued throughout the history of the Christian Church and will continue until Christ returns on the Last Day. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.