

“I Believe in the Holy Spirit”
Isaiah 63:7-64:12
Psalm 104
John 14

February 13, 2022

Every week we say that we believe in the Holy Spirit – the “Lord and giver of life.”
Why do we call the Holy Spirit the “Lord and giver of life”?

At the Creation –
we are told that the Spirit of God hovered over the waters –
brooding over the deep.
And then all that God brings forth came from this “deep” over which the Spirit hovered.

He is the Lord and Giver of life.

Our Psalm of response – Psalm 104:29-30 – points to another part:
Speaking of the animals – the Psalmist says to God,
“When you hide your face, [the beasts] are dismayed;
when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust.
When you send forth your Spirit, they are created,
and you renew the face of the ground.”

The Holy Spirit is not just the Lord and giver of life “in the beginning.”
The Holy Spirit is the “life-giver” of *all life*.

Job reflects on this in Job 33:4 –
“The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life”

All life – human life as well as animal life – is given by the Spirit of God.

He is the Lord and giver of life!

So it should not surprise us that the Holy Spirit is also the Lord and giver of eternal life!
Because when God called Israel “my firstborn” –
and called Israel out of Egypt,
he led him by his Spirit through the wilderness.

The glory cloud – the pillar of fire by night and cloud by day –
that led Israel through the wilderness
was none other than the Holy Spirit himself!

That’s what Isaiah says – “Where is he who put in the midst of them his Holy Spirit?”
(when the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle).
“who led them through the depths...
Like livestock that go down into the valley,

the Spirit of the LORD gave them rest.
So you led your people, to make for yourself a glorious name!”

The same Spirit who gave life at the Creation – and who gives life to all living things –
is the same Spirit who brings the life of the New Creation!

Sing Psalm 104A

Read John 14

Have you been troubled by the last couple of years?!
Does it seem at times as though Jesus’ kingdom will never come?
Things are *not* the way they should be.
We are *not* the way we should be!

Jesus says to you: “let not your hearts be troubled”
The disciples have just heard that Jesus is about to be betrayed.
They have heard that Peter will deny Jesus.

Things are not the way they should be!
We are not the way we should be!

But Jesus says, “Let not your hearts be troubled.”
All of this is part of God’s plan.
Jesus has come for this purpose.

In chapters 13-17 Jesus tells his disciples the things that they most need to hear.
And because you are Jesus’ disciples,
these are the things that *you* most need to hear!
John 17 will make it clear that Jesus is not just speaking to the eleven,
but to you who have believed through their preaching.

Do you think of yourself as one who has believed through the apostles’ preaching?
That is how Jesus thinks of you.

And one of the first things that Jesus says you need to know
is the relationship between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

As we go through the Creed, we have come to the section on the Holy Spirit.

The Heidelberg Catechism asks:

53. Q. What do you believe concerning the Holy Spirit?

A. First, He is, together with the Father and the Son, true and eternal God.

One of the clinching arguments in the Trinitarian controversy
was that Jesus told us to baptize *in the name* (singular)

of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
God does not share his glory with others,
so if God was willing to reveal his *name*
as Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
then the Son and the Spirit must be equal with the Father.

And you can see this laid out in John 14.

John 14 is built around the basic statement that we will always be with Jesus.

“If I go, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”

This prompts three questions from the disciples:

1) Thomas asks “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?”

Jesus replies, “I am the way, the truth and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me.”

The way that you know the Father is through the Son.

2) And so Philip asks, Lord, show us the Father!

Jesus replies, “*whoever has seen me has seen the Father.*

How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?

Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?...

*Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me,
or else believe on account of the works themselves.”*

The Son is going to the Father.

And when he goes to the Father, we will do greater works than Jesus!

Not because we are greater than Jesus,

but because when the Son of God is enthroned

at the right hand of the Father,

then he will do greater works through his church.

So Jesus promises to “ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper,
to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth.”

This “Helper” is in Greek called the paracletos.

It is a legal term for an advocate or counselor.

The Father will send an advocate to help us to do that which is right.

And the Helper is named the Spirit of truth.

The Spirit will open our eyes to the truth,

so that we might rightly see the Father,

and also rightly see ourselves—our sin and misery.

This is a Spirit that the world cannot receive.

The world is blind to its sin.

The world refuses to acknowledge the Father,

and rebels against the commands of Christ.
But this is a Spirit that the church knows,
for he dwells with you and will be in you.
And Jesus says that the coming of the Spirit is the coming of himself.
“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”
The work of Jesus and the work of the Spirit are so interwoven,
that the coming of the Spirit and the coming of Jesus is seen as the same event.

Jesus explains this by saying in verses 19-20:
“Yet a little while and the world will see me no more,
but you will see me.
Because I live, you also will live.
In that day you will know that I am in my Father,
and you in me, and I in you.”

How do we see Jesus?
By faith.
How do we know that Jesus is in the Father, and in us?
By the Holy Spirit.

Jesus refers to “that day.”
“In that day” they will know.
What day is that?

It is the day when they receive the Holy Spirit.
In that day, Jesus will manifest himself to the church.

3) And in response to this, Judas (not Iscariot) asks the third question,
Lord how is it that you will manifest yourself to us and not to the world?

Plainly Judas has not yet understood what is happening.
He still thinks in terms of an earthly kingdom
in which Jesus’ actions will be outward and obvious to everyone.

Jesus replies, *If* anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him,
and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

How is it that Jesus will come to us and make his home with us?
In verse 25 Jesus says,
“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.”

The Spirit is the presence of the risen Christ,
as the Lord Jesus comes to his church through the Spirit.

Jesus says that while he was with his disciples, he taught them these things,
but that once he is gone, the Spirit will remind them of all that he said.
The Father will send the Spirit in the name of the Son to teach them all things.
Just as we are to ask the Father in the name of the Son,
so also the Father gives the Spirit in the name of the Son.
The kingdom of God, after all, revolves around the name of Jesus.
His name, his authority, his power, are at the heart of the gospel.
In his name we speak to God,
In his name God speaks to us by his Spirit.

And in the gift of the Holy Spirit, we receive the peace of God.
“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.” (v27)
The presence of the Holy Spirit brings a peace that is not like the world’s peace.
The peace of Christ is not always a peace of external harmony,
but of internal harmony even when the world around you is all discord.

In showing how the Spirit of God is the presence of the Father and the Son with the church,
John shows us that truly the Holy Spirit is equal with the Father.

But secondly, the Heidelberg Catechism goes on to say:

Second, He is also given to me, to make me by true faith share in Christ and all His benefits, to comfort me, and to remain with me forever.

Jesus tells us that the Spirit is given as “the Helper” – the “Comforter” (v26).
The Spirit is *another* comforter (v16).
Jesus is the first comforter – and the Spirit is another.
And yet, because of the mutual indwelling
of the persons of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit –
the Spirit dwells in you as the presence of the resurrected Christ.

The same Spirit who came upon Jesus in his baptism
is the same Spirit who comes upon you in your baptism –
so that you are united to the life of God by faith.

The coming of the Spirit is the coming of Jesus to dwell with his people –
and through the Spirit, the Father and the Son come and make their home with us.
In other words, the mutual indwelling of Father, Son, and Spirit
now comes to be shared with us.

"I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you."

This is what we talked about last time when we talked about “uncreated grace.”
After all, there is only one who is “uncreated” – God himself!
So uncreated grace is the gift of God himself – joining us to him.

Everything in the Christian life is rooted in this.

You will not comprehend our Father's love for you until you know Jesus –
because when you know Jesus, you know the Father –
because of the *perichoresis* (the mutual indwelling) of the Father and the Son.

And when you know Jesus -- when you know the One who is one with the Father –
then he comes to us in the person of the Holy Spirit –
and we are joined to God himself.

We become joined to the life of the Triune God.

And when you see the Father's love for us –
revealed in his Beloved Son and empowered by his Holy Spirit –
then you love Jesus –
and when you love Jesus, you keep his commandments.

Love and obedience are not really two different things.

If your child says "I love you, but I won't clean my room," what sort of love is that?

If your spouse says, "I love you, but I won't do the dishes,"
that's not really love!

In the same way, obedience without love can be just as hideous:
"I will do what you say (but I despise you!)."

Love and obedience are *supposed* to go together.

Therefore Jesus says,

“Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me.”

This is the flip side of “if you love me, keep my commandments.”

How do you know that you love Jesus?

Because the one that loves Jesus does what he says.

But, you might say, I'm a sinner!

I fail every day!

Does that mean I don't love Jesus?

Yes.

Your biggest problem is that you don't love Jesus!

But this is why Jesus came!

This is what “uncreated grace” is all about!

God knew that left to ourselves we would continue to rebel.

And so he came in our flesh in the person of the eternal Son of God –
so that he might join us to himself.

And Jesus ascended to the Father and sat down at his right hand –
so that one who bears our flesh might be our advocate

at the right hand of God!

And this is why he poured out the Holy Spirit upon us –
so that we might share in the life of God!

And Jesus says, he who loves me will be loved by my Father,
and I will love him and manifest myself to him.

Look back at Judas's question (v22):

Judas is confused. (Remember, this is not Judas Iscariot, but the other Judas).
“Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?”
Plainly Judas has not yet understood what is happening.
He still thinks in terms of an earthly kingdom
in which Jesus' actions will be outward and obvious to everyone.

Jesus replies:

“If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him,
and we will come to him and make our home with him.

This summarizes what he has just said.

But now he adds the negative:

“Whoever does not love me does not keep my words.
And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.”

The one who says that he believes in Jesus,
but does not do what Jesus' says, does not really love Jesus.

If you hear this, and you are thinking, “I don't think that I really love Jesus –
because I don't do what Jesus says...”

Jesus' call to you is to repent!

This is why he came!

He came *not* because we first loved him –
but because he loved us

and gave himself as the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Repent – turn away from your loveless world, and turn to the one who is love!

So when you sin – when you demonstrate that you don't love Jesus –
what do you do?

Repent.

You see, even when you sin, you can still love Jesus.

If you repent of your sins,
then you are demonstrating your love for Jesus.

I keep quoting the Shorter Catechism on Repentance –
because I really hope that all of you will have it memorized soon!!

Repentance unto life is a saving grace,
whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin,
and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ,
does, with grief and hatred of his sin,
turn from it – unto God –
with full purpose of and endeavor after new obedience.

I used to think that the important thing about repentance was asking for forgiveness.
But the Shorter Catechism doesn't say anything about asking for forgiveness!
And then came the day when I realized that by asking my wife for forgiveness,
I was being manipulative!

I was the one who had sinned – but by asking for forgiveness,
I had managed to flip the script –
and now I had put my wife in a difficult spot.
Would she forgive me?!!

How can you love Jesus when you have sinned?

Repent.

Recognize your sin for what it is!
You have sinned against God.
You have sinned against others.
But also apprehend the mercy of God in Christ!
This is why God gave his only begotten Son –
so that whoever believes in him might have eternal life.
And learn to grieve and hate your sin.
When you are repenting, you need to say to God –
“I have wronged you. I have blasphemed your holy name”
And say to the people you have sinned against –
“I have hurt you – I was wrong”

This is why the gospel is incomplete without the sending of the Holy Spirit!
Without the gift of the Holy Spirit –
without the uncreated grace of God's own presence with us! –
there really is *no good news!*

So turn from your sin – turn to God – turn to Jesus –
and by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit,
begin to make right the wrongs that you have done!

Because repentance unto life always includes grief and hatred of sin
“turning from it unto God
with full purpose of and endeavor after new obedience.”

This is why Jesus sent the Helper – the Comforter – the Advocate –
the Holy Spirit.

²⁵ “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ 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. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. ²⁸ You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. ²⁹ And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe. ³⁰ I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, ³¹ but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.

But how is it that Jesus will manifest himself to his disciples, and not to the world?

By the Holy Spirit.

In one sense, as we have seen, the Spirit is the presence of the risen Christ.

Jesus said that he would come, and so he comes through the Spirit.

In another sense the Spirit is *another* comforter.

Jesus says that while he was with his disciples, he taught them these things, but that once he is gone, the Spirit will remind them of all that he said.

The Father will send the Spirit in the name of the Son to teach them all things.

Just as we are to ask the Father in the name of the Son,

so also the Father gives the Spirit in the name of the Son.

The kingdom of God, after all, revolves around the name of Jesus.

His name, his authority, his power, are at the heart of the gospel.

It is in his name that we speak to God,

It is in his name that God speaks to us by his Spirit.

So we’re back to where we started.

“Let not your hearts be troubled.” (v27 echoes v1)

Yes, I am going away.

But that is a good thing.

For if I do not go, then the Helper cannot come.

If you loved me, you would have rejoiced because I am going to the Father,
for the Father is greater than I.

In other words, the work of redemption must reach its final goal
in the outpouring of the Spirit.

So if you love me, keep my commandments.

The reason why Jesus tells us to do this,
is because he did it first.

He loved the Father, and so did what the Father commanded.

Indeed, it is only in this Trinitarian understanding of love that you also find peace (v27).

The peace of Christ is not an absence of trouble,
but a confidence in the midst of trouble.

The passage opens and closes with the same phrase:

"Let not your hearts be troubled" (v1 and v27).

Later in chapter 16 -- at the end of his discourse – Jesus will say,

"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace.

In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

In the gift of the Holy Spirit, we receive the peace of God.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you."

The presence of the Holy Spirit brings a peace that is not like the world's peace.

The peace of Christ is not always a peace of external harmony,

but of internal harmony even when the world around you is a braying din.

B. B. Warfield once told the story of an old man in a bustling town in the old West.

The rowdies were brawling in the street, and the saloons were full of carousing,

but he saw a young man walking tall and erect through the melee.

The old man watched the young man pass by.

Their eyes met.

The old man walked up to the young man

and put his finger in the young man's chest and said

"What is the chief end of man?"

Without missing a beat, the young man replied,

"Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever."

The old man smiled.

"I knew you were a Shorter Catechism boy."

The one who has the peace of Christ etched in his heart by the Holy Spirit
can walk through the chaos of this age without fear.