

Count it out on the calendar and you'll find Easter was fifty days ago. Not quite two weeks ago we were celebrating Christ's ascension. That was forty days after Easter. Today, after seven 'sevens' the church year starts a different focus with a celebration. It's been seven weeks of celebrating the living hope we have in our Savior's resurrection. Now it's the celebration of Pentecost.

We're once again back in time before Jesus died and rose, listening to Jesus speak words about his departure. Its back before Jesus' crucifixion with the disciples in the upper room on the night he was betrayed. The disciples are fearful and anxious because of what's happening around them and also because of what Jesus is telling them. He talks of leaving. They can't figure out where and they can't figure out why. Really they don't want to know the details, they'd rather not talk about it at all. It's depressing.

The world is not counting days since Easter. The calendar reflects the start of summer soon, the passing of another work week, even a day of sleeping in. But there isn't much care about Jesus, much less what he shared with his disciples that night long ago. Sinful people still deny his work and they feel if they're called upon by God to answer for what they've done they'll be just fine. There's a pretty good feeling they'll be okay in the end. That's why Jesus was leaving. His work was done and another's needed to start. In the gospel Jesus speaks of his departure and...

**Jesus sends the Holy Spirit  
To convict the world  
To counsel his Church**

I wasn't so good at running the individual track events in high school. I wasn't fast enough for the sprinting and I had no endurance for running long distance races. I competed in a couple individual races, but didn't accomplish much. In relays is where I had the most fun and was most competitive. In the 1600 meter relay, a race in which four runners each run once around the track I was the lead runner on our team. With the baton in my hands I would run my lap. At the start/finish line I had to pass the baton from me to the next runner without dropping it. If accomplished successfully that handoff meant we could continue in the race.

Jesus was nearing the time for him to pass the baton to another in this world and he was making preparations. A lot happened that night in a short time. Soon he'd be dead and buried. Three days later he would live again. Jesus was telling his disciples before it all happened what the near future would hold. **"Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief."** Jesus was passing the baton and was on his way out. It's not like he left his sad disappointed disciples without hope or a promise. **"But I tell you the truth; it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you."** The baton would be passed from Jesus to the Counselor, the Holy Spirit.

Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to convict the world. Not have a trial and get a conviction. This was more along the lines of convincing. Put out the truth and bring people to understand. **"When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment."** Call it sinful arrogance or pride, the world apart from God working on their hearts doesn't know God and doesn't know they're sinful. If they think they're not sinful then righteousness before God is achievable. Self-righteousness and work righteousness are the ways of the world. Even if it's just a tiny shred of ability to earn God's favor they'll be insistent they have a little righteousness in them to start with. God must see something in them that's good. Yet overall it seems Christians are losing. Numbers are shrinking and evil seems to win. Satan seems victorious.

Convincing and convicting the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment is the Holy Spirit's alien work. It isn't natural. And if it's alien to the Holy Spirit, it's certainly alien to us. We work hard to convince ourselves sin isn't that bad. I know when I mention sins to people many, if not all, shake their heads yes. They agree people are sinful. But tell them they are sinful, and the excuses come. Maybe for you too. In general we agree we're not perfect. But if I asked you specifically you'd claim you were trying to do the best you could. You'd point to your giving. You'd point out how considerate you are. You and I could both make claims of being better than others. Maybe we even started that way. God may have seen something in me or you that caused him to pick us. We claim some shred of righteousness in ourselves. It's easy to do. I haven't rejected God my whole life. I don't swear. I keep hate in check. I have redeeming qualities God finds attractive. Even as Christianity shrinks and it looks like I'm on the losing side I still hold on. That's got to count for something in God's judgment.

The alien work of convicting must be applied to our hearts. The Holy Spirit works on us because we don't know our Savior naturally. We reject him naturally. The Holy Spirit must preach law to us so we know what God says. **"In regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned."** The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sinfulness, convinces us we aren't righteousness before God, and convinces us that to follow Satan will have us judged and in hell.

Jesus sent the Holy Spirit after he went away. Going away meant he completed his work. Jesus suffered and sacrificed, he made the payment, and accomplished everything in order to return to heaven. Then he sent the Holy Spirit to do his more natural work, which is proclaiming this finished work of Christ called the gospel. To work invisibly in people to bring them to trust Christ. To work in peoples' hearts an understanding of their new life with forgiveness of sins. To convict people of their sins but convince them of their Savior. To show them his love in coming to the cross. To describe his promises of a glorious return on the Last Day. To show people the righteousness earned for them by Christ and freely given to them as a gift. This is the Holy Spirit's work, he counsels those who now belong to Christ. He counsels his Church.

Christ sent the Holy Spirit, but not with his own message. **"But when he, the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come."** The same truth Jesus claimed to speak, so the Holy Spirit would speak. Jesus and the Holy Spirit are at the same level. They share the same truth. They both point to Christ's glory. The Holy Spirit would make known to people the glory of Christ, the accomplishments of Christ, and do it for the Church of all believers.

We could get very sad and very depressed about Jesus not being here on this earth. The Savior isn't here for us to speak with face to face. Does that mean we're alone? And if we're alone doesn't that mean we're left to figure this all out for ourselves? Life is challenging enough already, but what if we were trying to figure out a future we didn't control in a world that was growing more dangerous by the day? That would be cause for sadness. We might be disappointed God didn't offer any more help or direction. Why set things up and then just leave? That doesn't seem very loving.

Christ sent the Holy Spirit to act invisibly in the world to accomplish what Christ won. That's where the Holy Spirit works through us. He leads you to the message of Christ and then leads you to want to share that message. He shows you what Christ did and then uses you to show others what Christ did. When you speak of your faith you point to the glory of fulfilled promises. When you invite people to come to church with you its inside of that invitation the Holy Spirit is working. Jesus' promise of a counselor, one who would guide and defend the Church, encourage and support it, is happening inside of you. The works of Jesus, the cross, the free payment, the life everlasting we have, all of that is proclaimed through your own words, in your own style, with your own emotions. And all of it is counseled by the Holy Spirit.

Today we celebrate the work of the Holy Spirit. Through faith he unites us to our Savior with all believers of all time in one holy Christian Church. Through confession of our sins he enables Christians to recognize each other and gather as groups. He leads the Church to strengthen each other by confession of faith and acts of worship. This Christian Church founded on Christ's love and furthered by the Holy Spirit's work is brought into a fellowship of oneness, a common faith, a trust in Jesus for heaven. The Holy Spirit has convicted the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment and now is counseling the Church to remain in Christ till the end. That's why Jesus sent the Holy Spirit.