

**John 16:5-11** *But now I am going to him who sent me. None of you asks me, 'Where are you going?'<sup>6</sup> Rather, you are filled with grief because I have said these things. <sup>7</sup>But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. <sup>8</sup>When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: <sup>9</sup>about sin, because people do not believe in me; <sup>10</sup>about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; <sup>11</sup>and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.*

Dear friends in Christ our Savior,

How many of you would feel comfortable driving a bulldozer? The little boys would all say, "Cool!" But my guess is that while it is cool and would be fun, most would be a little tentative to drive it, at least at first, because it has so much power. Think about all the power a bulldozer has. It has the power to move large mounds of dirt. Having all that power at your fingertips can be a scary thing.

The Festival of Pentecost which we celebrate today is all about power. Today we celebrate the power that is at our fingertips which is even more than what a bulldozer or earth mover or front end loader would have. This is the power that brought us to faith. This is the power that works through us as we carry out the work of Jesus to make disciples of all nations. This is the power of the Holy Spirit that works in us and through us. Today, we celebrate the blessing of the Holy Spirit whom Jesus sent from his throne in heaven. As the Spirit has been given to us and continues to come to us through God's Word and sacrament, we are renewed with spiritual energy and strength to live as God's people and are emboldened to carry out the work of proclaiming this Word to the world. While both of these can be a little scary at times, God today reminds us: ***You've Got the Power!***

We see just how powerful the work of the Holy Spirit is as we look at the effect the Holy Spirit had on Jesus' disciples. The disciples we see here in this text are much different than the ones we see at the first Pentecost. The words of our text were spoken by Jesus on Maundy Thursday, the night he was betrayed by Judas and the night before his death. Jesus tells us the disciples were filled with grief over the things he had said to them. They were sad, worried, full of anxiety. In his discourse as they ate the Passover meal, Jesus had told them the world would hate them because of him and they would face much difficulty because of him. While these words were bad enough, these were not the words which caused them grief. Jesus also told them what was about to happen and that he was going to go away from them. This is what concerned them. Both Peter and John had asked Jesus where he was going, but they weren't focused on where he was going. They were more worried about what was going to happen to them when he was gone. They were filled with anxiety about how they would get along and face all of this difficulty and persecution without Jesus right there to help them.

We can understand their grief. How much of our grief comes from focusing on the world we live in rather than on what God has waiting for us in Jesus? We live in the same world of sin which the disciples lived in. We face the same kinds of trouble and difficulty for living as God's people and spreading his word. It's easy to feel all alone when we face these troubles. We might find ourselves voicing concerns that were along the same line as the disciples: "Jesus, if I could just see you it would be so much easier to face these troubles!" We can all too easily focus on ourselves as we face trouble and difficulty and accuse Jesus of leaving and abandoning us. In the troubles we face in this sinful world, it is very easy to doubt God's care and be full of fear as we worry about the outcome. We can get so focused on the here and now that we lose sight of the bigger picture and fail to trust in God. That's exactly where the disciples were. Their grief was focused on Jesus leaving and not on where he was going.

Jesus shared these words to bring them comfort concerning what they were going to face. He was going to leave them physically, but he wasn't going to abandon them. He promised he would send the Counselor, the Advocate—the Holy Spirit—who would lead them into all truth. They wouldn't need Jesus physically with them. They would have the Holy Spirit and his power as they faced these challenges. First of all, the very act of Jesus leaving would make it possible for the Holy Spirit to come. The Holy Spirit could not come until Jesus was glorified. His work would have no purpose without the saving work of Jesus completed. Without Jesus death and resurrection, the Holy Spirit would have no means for working saving faith. His work would mean nothing if Jesus did not continue on the path which he was taking. For him to be glorified, he needed to suffer, die, rise from the grave and ascend to the heavenly throne. Only then could he send the Holy Spirit to his disciples.

What a change we see in the disciples from this night of our text. Disciples who were filled with grief and anxiety on this night would boldly stand and proclaim the message about Christ in the Temple on the day of Pentecost. The same disciples who hid in the upper room out of fear would courageously accuse the people of killing the Messiah and direct them to him for the forgiveness and salvation which he won. Here we see the power of the Holy Spirit. The difference is they received the Holy Spirit Jesus promised to send them. The Holy Spirit led them to an understanding of what he did for them. He convicted them of the depths of their sins and convinced them of the righteousness which Jesus freely gave to them. He proved to them that the devil had been defeated and no longer had any power over them. He not only enlightened

them to see the full truth of Jesus as their Savior but he also emboldened them to carry out the work he gave to them to be his witnesses to the world.

You've got the same power working in you. Just looking around this sanctuary today helps us to see the power of the Holy Spirit. Without the work of the Holy Spirit, there isn't anyone of us who would be here today. The fact that any of us believe in Jesus as our Savior gives testimony to the tremendous power of the Holy Spirit. Here's a hard truth which helps us to better see the power of the Holy Spirit. Scripture tells us that we are all—every single one of us—born into this world as sinners. That's a hard truth. We like to think little babies are born into this world innocent and pure. This may be true when it comes to how they look but it is not true when it comes to their status before God. We are sinful from the time that we are conceived and born into this world spiritually dead. There is nothing that any of us can do to save ourselves, to know Jesus, come to him or believe in him. We can do nothing. It's only when Jesus sends the Holy Spirit through his Word as it is shared with us or through the sacrament of Baptism as the water is poured over us that we are brought to spiritual life. What power God displays! Already in us, he has brought the dead to life. He breathed into us the spiritual life that we have which leads us to know and trust in Jesus as our Savior.

That same Holy Spirit continues to come through Word and Sacrament to strengthen and renew us. It is the Holy Spirit working through the Word who leads us not only to come to worship once, but to continue coming week after week. It is the Holy Spirit working in us that gives us a love for our Savior and leads us to reflect his love in our lives. It is the Holy Spirit working through Word and Sacrament who leads us to see everything that we have as a gift from our heavenly Father to be used to his glory and to carry out his work. It is the Holy Spirit who leads husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church and who leads wives to respect their husbands and work alongside of him to the benefit of their family. It is the Holy Spirit that leads us to work together and give of our time to serve each other with God's Word in all stages of life and to reach out with that word into our world today. Every person you see in worship, every minute and dollar which people give in support of God's work, every ounce of talent and service given to serve God and others comes from the power of the Holy Spirit. You've got that power working in you!

You've also got that power working through you. Peter stood up on the first Pentecost and proclaimed God's Word in the Temple as we heard about in the Second Lesson this morning. Did you hear the results? That day 3,000 people came to believe in Jesus as their Savior. Peter didn't argue them into faith. He didn't win a debate or beat them into submission. He simply shared the word of God in a very blunt way pointing out their sin and in a very loving way directing them to their Savior and 3,000 people came to faith. This is the power of the Holy Spirit. He's the one who did the work of convicting the people of their sin in general and of their sin in particular of crucifying the Christ. He convicted them that they deserved damnation for their sin. It's the Holy Spirit who convinced these people of the righteousness which Jesus won for them. He convinced them that the righteous status which they need to stand before God is not something they can earn on their own but comes from Christ's death and resurrection. He's the one who proved to them that the devil had been defeated when Jesus rose from the grave and assured them of the eternal life waiting for them. And that day 3,000 people came to know their Savior. Talk about power.

Sometimes we might think it would be nice to have the same power in our own words. Well, you do! You may not have the opportunity to preach a sermon which brings 3,000 people to faith at the same time, but that same power is flowing from your lips when you share a simple story with your child or grandchild and tell them that Jesus loves them. The simplest Bible story in Sunday School is used to equip those young hearts for lives of service. A faithful father, explaining the perplexities of life with maturing children in the light of God's word holds the same power. This is the Holy Spirit working through you. A simple devotion presented to one who is sick or hospitalized or with someone who is troubled has the power to lift spirits and bring comfort. God has given you the same power which Peter displayed on Pentecost. It wasn't Peter's power at all. It was the Holy Spirit working in Peter to give him the strength and courage to boldly proclaim God's Word and it was the Holy Spirit working through Peter and the message he shared which brought such a response in the hearts of those who heard.

Perhaps a little understanding of the situation helps to put some realism into this story. It's quite a feat to hear that 3,000 believed. But when you consider that 1-2 million people were in Jerusalem for this festival we recognize that 3,000 people doesn't represent a great percentage. This may give us some comfort when we don't always see big results from our working for our Savior. It also reminds us that every single soul is important to our Savior. We baptized 5 people this morning and were able to witness the Holy Spirit at work in their lives! That is powerful. Every soul is important. Two ladies will step forward to publicly confess their faith. That is powerful. Every soul is important. This has nothing to do with you or me or the work which we did. This is the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through the lives of his people. This is God who cares about each every individual soul. This is the power which God has given to you.

My question is: what are you going to do with all that power? Don't let it scare you or frighten you. Put it to action and let it work in the hearts and lives of more people. Jesus gave us the commission to go and make disciples of all nations. He told us that we are to be his witnesses and tell the world how much he loves each individual soul. He hasn't left us alone to carry out this work. He sends his Holy Spirit to us and through us. Let's immerse ourselves where the Spirit is and works—in God's Word and Sacraments. With confidence in God's promises, let's go forward boldly in ministry to proclaim the message that alone brings true peace and joy. Let's go do our job of sharing the word so the Holy Spirit can do his job of working and strengthening faith through it. ***You've Got the Power.*** Amen.