**Three-Fold Conviction**

**John 16:5-11**

*Cantate – 5th Sunday in Easter – 05.15.2022*

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

At the end our Gospel, Jesus tells His disciples, “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for He will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that He will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

Have you ever come to a point in a situation that you must admit you have done as much as ***YOU*** possibly can to accomplish something, and it is now time to pass it off to others?

Teachers working with students come to a point where they have done their part, they are passed on to the next grade, or the next level. They are declaring they have done all they can do.

Illustrations fail, for they do not fully convey what Jesus is doing. In our text, He informs the disciples that the Holy Spirit is now going step up.

Jesus, having successfully completed His task, announces that He will soon depart from their presence. He declares that He will send the Helper – the Counselor – who would continue the work He had begun. He declares that in this world, the Holy Spirit would continue Jesus task by convicting the world – by convicting ***all*** in a three-fold manner – in regard to sin, and righteousness, and judgement.

Yes, the Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin. True faith does not exist in the presence of impenitence – that is, in a defiant sinful lifestyle which desires not to change. Some people claim that it can. Look at all the life choices being made today which Scripture declares are sin. How many want to claim they are Christians, even when their choices directly violate the Word of God.

Furthermore, when their sinfulness is pointed out to them, they refuse to repent and bask in Christ’s forgiveness. Instead, they excuse their choices as acceptable. They even cite other churches which claim to be Christian, which teach in support of such sinfulness. Such churches claim they have adapted to our evolving world – as if God somehow changes and adapts to today’s culture. This is nothing more than impenitence.

Impenitence is a defiant slap in God’s face. Those who claim they are not sinning, while indeed acting against the will of God are liars. By their defiant impenitence, they have effectively removed themselves from the Christian faith they claim to hold. They remain unconvicted of sin, impenitent! Impenitence, as long as it continues, is unforgiven.

This is why Christ promises the Helper. Only the Holy Spirit can change a person’s heart, convicting it of sin, turning impenitence into repentance. Only the Holy Spirit can convict a person of sinfulness, leading to repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

This leads deeper into our text, for Christ says the Spirit will convict the world not only of sin, but also of righteousness. As Christ leaves the earth visibly, the Holy Spirit’s arrival was God’s proclamation that Jesus had completed His work of redemption. Christ’s life, suffering and death had purchased forgiveness - all sealed by His resurrection on the third day.

Christ faced a society that demanded things of Him, things contrary to God’s will. He could have gone along with the cultural mores of that day. Jesus could even have fought against the changeless will of His Father. He was, however, without sin.

Jesus could have said, “Father, you want me to give my life for people who spit on me, beat me, laugh at me, and call me a liar – AND – are disobedient to You? I have a better idea! They think their capable? Let them do it themselves!” Instead, He chose to abide by His Father’s will, and allowed His life to be taken from Him. He sacrifices Himself for the sins of the whole world – to purchase forgiveness.

Again, we need to be convicted. Seriously! Who really wants to believe and trust that it is all accomplished for us? Who wants to say, “I am helpless! My righteousness must come from somewhere else! I cannot do it myself.” I don’t! I want to believe that I am a man in control of my own life and destiny. It is human nature to believe my works are necessary, counting toward my getting into heaven. But that is my sinful flesh talking!

I need a change of heart.

Only the Holy Spirit changes hearts.

The Helper convicts the world that righteousness has triumphed over wickedness. Only by the Spirit’s work can you and I see Jesus by faith as the One who has accomplished what we cannot. The Spirit opens our “eyes” to see Christ come in Word and Sacrament as our righteousness.

Many saw Jesus walk this planet physically – few trusted Him for their salvation. So it is today! Only the Helper convicts you of righteousness. Only the Spirit moves you to see Jesus as ***your*** righteousness – granting you faith to cling to what Christ gives you freely.

Finally, the world is convicted of judgement. The prince of this world stands condemned as a liar and a charlatan. He tempts you to believe you can do it on your own. Or, he tempts you to believe that you are so vile that there is no way you can escape judgement.

That is how the Father of lies works. First Satan tempts you to sin. Not a difficult task.

Next, he seduces you to believe that your sins are not that bad, and that you are doing fine on your own – your heart would never deceive you.

If that idea doesn’t work, after tempting you into sin He leads you to despair. That’s what he did with Judas. He’d like you to believe that you are beyond forgiveness.

Listen very closely: you are the dearly beloved of God. Christ has sent the Helper for you.

Although you are convicted of sin, you are also convicted of righteousness.

Yes, you have not lived your life as God’s will demands – you are a sinner.

Christ purchased your forgiveness and gives you His righteousness in a number of different means.

His forgiveness washes you in a flood of water at His command and by His Word.

He opens your ears to hear His Word of peace – secure in His righteousness.

He places His righteous flesh into your mouth, giving you to drink His holy precious blood.

The Spirit works peace with God through these miraculous means. You are convicted that you are judged by God to be righteous. Nobody – especially not the old evil foe –can convict you of any guilt, for it is gone – not a spot or stain of sin remains. In Christ, you are righteous.

Every week I look out at you I wonder, “Will my words make a difference? Will they be moved? Is there any way I can convict them of their sins and lead them to repentance? Is there any way that I can move them to understand that they are freely and fully forgiven, righteous before God in the blood of Christ? Is there any way that I can convince them that each and every week they are granted peace which surpasses all understanding? Can I convince them to regularly gather in God’s house, because here the Spirit builds their faith - even as Jesus promises in our text?”

As much as I’d ***like*** to do that, I cannot. I must admit, as must every pastor, that the Holy Spirit needs to do the work of convicting. I must confine myself to simply speak the Word. But Jesus promises that the Spirit ***WILL*** convict the world of sin, and righteousness, and judgement. ***I*** need to trust Christ at His Word. Christ’s Helper needs to change me as well.

Pastors are sorely tempted to do whatever they can to fill the pews and keep the people happy, oftentimes tempted to speak more nicely, or do fun things to make that happen.

But it has ***nothing*** to do with me. This is a great text! In this text, I am convicted of the sin of pride and arrogance. I am convicted that I am completely forgiven of that sin in the blood of Christ, and am righteous. I am convicted that judgement holds no terror for me - I am Christ’s. All this is because the Spirit convicts me of these three truths.

Today, you hear the Word of God and are convicted. The Counselor is at work in that Word. He has convicted you of sin, and you bowed your head in repentance. He convicted you of righteousness as you hunger and thirst for the forgiveness Christ Himself sets on His table before you, and in Him you are completely righteous before God.

Hearing, eating, and drinking of Christ, the Spirit convicts you that judgement holds no terror for you. The prince of this world stands condemned in the cross of Christ, confirmed in the confession of your sins as your righteousness is sealed by faith in Christ. Let us rejoice that Christ has sent His Spirit, the Helper, and gathered us to Himself – now and forevermore. Amen.