

Easter 5C, 2010

Text: John 16:12-22

Title: The Holy Spirit is Coming

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The Holy Spirit is coming. In three weeks He will show up on the scene in a big way- with fire and wind and folks speaking in different languages.

Here, in John 16, Jesus promises His disciples that the Holy Spirit is coming.

How do you know when the Holy Spirit shows up? How do you know if you have received the Holy Spirit?

Will there be tongues and fire and wind like the first time? Will there be miracles and prophecy? Will there be excitement and enthusiasm? Will people sing and dance and throw their hands up in the air?

Sure, the Holy Spirit can and does do these things. But that none of those things are proof of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit could be there, but then again, He could not. How do we know for sure when the Spirit shows up?

Look at how Jesus describes the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. He takes the things that are of Jesus, which are the Father's things, too, and delivers them to the disciples. That's what the Holy Spirit- speaks the truth and delivers Jesus.

Sometimes when folks are filled with the Holy Spirit, they may act a little nutty. Sometimes it happens, sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes we see this external evidence of the Spirit. Sometimes we don't.

The big thing about the Holy Spirit is not emotion or enthusiasm. The big thing about the Holy Spirit is the truth. You know the Holy Spirit is there when the truth about Jesus is proclaimed. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth.

Now that's not always the most exciting. We like to look for the Holy Spirit in the loud and exciting and the joyful. We like the big and spectacular- yes that's where the Holy Spirit is, we think. Spirit-filled churches are those that are loud and energetic and overflowing with people. That's where we look for the Spirit.

The Spirit could be there, and again He might not. But we know the Spirit is there when God's Word is proclaimed in all of its truth and purity- not mixed with any of our bright ideas on how God ought to do things.

The Spirit is truth. It's not true because we have the archeological evidence to back it up. It's not true because it's logically compelling. It's not true because we can somehow prove it. It's true because the Spirit bears Jesus and Jesus is the truth.

Jesus sends us the Spirit, so that in the midst of all the lies that swirl around us, the truth might still make it through.

Jesus sent the Spirit because He has returned to His Father. He is not with us in a way that we can see. He is with us, but not in the same way that He was there with His disciples. So Jesus sent us the Holy Spirit as a messenger- to bring all of Jesus' things to us, to bring us the life and forgiveness that comes only from Jesus to us.

The Holy Spirit works through the Word. That's the means that He uses to deliver Jesus to you. Spirit is breath is Word.

When you hear the words of Absolution- "I forgive you all your sins," that's the Holy Spirit bringing you Jesus.

When you hear the words of the Gospel, when you hear promises like, "No one will take your joy from you," that's the Holy Spirit bringing you Jesus.

When you hear the words of distribution, "Take, eat, this is my body;" "Take, drink, this is my blood." That's the Holy Spirit giving bringing you Jesus.

It might make you excited and enthusiastic. It might make you sing and dance for joy. Then again it might not.

Jesus says that while we wait for His return, we will be in mourning. There are certainly periods of joy, but in general, as Christians, our lives are characterized by mourning.

There are plenty of things around you that cause grief and mourning.

First there is your own sinfulness. You look in the mirror and you see a sinner, someone who does not love God with your whole heart, or your neighbor as yourself. Someone who hurts some people and fails to help others. When you consider your all failures and your mistakes, you're going to be sorrowful.

Beyond your own sinfulness, you mourn over the brokenness around you. People who can't agree and work together. Folks who call each other names and worse. Violence, wars, shootings, divorce, abuse, greed. You see sin not only in yourself, but in the people around you. It should make you sad that we can't live peacefully with one another.

All around us we see a world that is not how the Lord made it to be. We see how our sinfulness has ruined things. We see that things are no longer "very good." And that causes us to mourn. We see how our sinfulness has resulted in sickness, pain and death.

But most of all we mourn as Christians because of the cost of it all. There was a price to be paid to clean up this mess. And that price was Jesus' life.

So often we ignore the cost, the price paid as a result of our sin. Because of our sinfulness, Jesus died. [story or illustration]

But in the midst of all this mourning, we have a comforter. That is the role of the Holy Spirit- to comfort and encourage us along the way.

He comforts us by bring us Jesus, by bringing us all the things that He gives to us.

When we were growing up, it was the job of either my sister or me to hand out the presents under the Christmas tree- to read the tags and give them to their recipient. That's what the Holy Spirit does- He gives out the gifts that come from Jesus and from His Father.

His greatest gift and our greatest comfort in the midst of all this mourning is the hope we have of our future with the Lord. We will see Him, we will be with Him, and no one will be able to take that joy away.

Our epistle describes the joy that we will have with the Lord. It's the sort of joy that a husband and wife share on their wedding day, as the Lord joins them together.

God will dwell with you and you will be his people and God Himself will be with you as your God. He will wipe away every tear from your eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.

All the things that have caused you pain, all the things that have caused you grief, all the things that have brought tears to your eyes will be gone.

That is the truth. That is what Jesus has for you. That is what the Father has for you. That is what the Holy Spirit delivers to you.

This is what Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to you to do- to put these promises in your ears and in your hearts, so that you find joy in this truth.

The Holy Spirit is coming. He is here with us today, He'll be here again next week, and on Pentecost He'll be here in a big way.

You know that the Holy Spirit is here when the truth of Jesus is delivered to you and you receive the comfort of the gospel. You might get excited. You might not. But either way, you've received the Holy Spirit.