

COME, HOLY SPIRIT!

Pentecost
May 23, 2010
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
Hecla, SD

Text: Ezekiel 36:22-28 *“Therefore say to the house of Israel, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name’s sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD,” says the Lord God, “when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of the countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.””*

Theme: WHAT A DIFFERENCE THE HOLY SPIRIT MAKES!

He takes us from:

- a stone hearts to flesh
- filthiness to cleansed
- profaning God’s name to hallowing it

Dear fellow redeemed in Christ Jesus who have been called, enlightened, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit working through His Word in your heart,

They are known as difference makers. In basketball, it might be the sixth man off the bench. The one who can contribute a few points and rebounds while the starters rest. That sixth man can make all the difference. Though he is not the leading scorer or leading rebounder on the team, his contributions can mean the difference between a win and a loss.

When you compare the apostles of Jesus during His ministry and the apostles after Pentecost, there is a great difference, isn’t there. Before Pentecost Peter was offended at the thought of Jesus suffering and dying on the cross. On Pentecost, Peter expounded on the necessity of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Before Pentecost, the Apostle’s cowered in fear in the upper room, afraid of what the Sanhedrin might do to them after the crucified Jesus. After Pentecost, those once cowardly apostles boldly witness of Jesus before the Sanhedrin, Roman rulers, and even Caesar himself!

What was the difference maker for the apostles? The Holy Spirit who was poured out on them on Pentecost. This is precisely what Jesus promised when He told His apostles, **“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 things that I said to you.”** (Jn 14:26) The Holy Spirit made the difference. These men went from uneducated fishermen to bold spokesmen for the Lord, because of the Holy Spirit.

On this Pentecost Sunday, let us consider what a difference the Holy Spirit has made for us! How He has removed our heart of stone and given us a heart of flesh. He has cleansed us from all our filthiness. And He has taken us from those who profane God's name by our words and actions, to those who hallow it. May the Holy Spirit be with us and strengthen us by His holy Word. Amen.

FROM A STONE HEART TO FLESH

Many of you will remember the account of Jacob fleeing for his life. Jacob had tricked his father, Isaac, into giving Jacob the birthright and blessing that, by right, belonged to Esau the older of the twins. When Esau found out what had happened, he tried to kill Jacob. Thus Jacob fled for his life, eventually going to the home of his uncle Laban. But one thing that has always struck me as odd about that account. Remember what he used as a pillow that first night he fled? A stone! What an odd choice of an object for a pillow to rest your head on at night! A stone is hard, cold, and uncomfortable, we usually want something soft and comfortable to rest our head on at night.

Born steeped in trespasses and sins, each one of us had a hard, cold, and uncomfortable heart of stone. A heart that was cold to God and hardened against His will. We were at enmity with God. We saw God as an angry judge with many rules and regulations. Our hearts were opposed to God. We felt as though God's commandments existed only to keep us from having fun and doing what we wanted to do. Unless someone did something about our hearts of stone, we would have been eternally separated from God. He would have been in heaven and our stone-cold hearts would have perished eternally in hell.

What a difference the Holy Spirit makes! Listen to verse 26 of our text, ***"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."*** Because we had a heart of stone we had no ability to change our condition. We were dead in trespasses and sins, unable to save ourselves. But God says, ***"I will do this."*** I will put a new heart in you. I will put a new spirit in you. I will take the heart of stone out and give you a heart of flesh.

This is conversion. This is the Holy Spirit making a believer out of an unbeliever. The Spirit working through the Word gives us a new heart and a new spirit - one that no longer views God as an angry judge, but a loving Father. One that no longer flees away from God, as Jacob was fleeing from Esau, but one that flees TO God in good times and bad. When the Spirit works faith in the heart, He removes that heart of stone and gives a heart of flesh. What a difference the Holy Spirit makes!

FROM FILTHINESS TO CLEANSED

"Your room is not going to clean itself!" I think we all heard those words at one time or another as we were growing up. Our room was filthy and we knew it. We also knew that Mom wanted us to have a clean room. But somehow, we hoped that magically all that clothes would end up in the clothes basket by themselves, our bed would make itself, and the popcorn in the carpet would disappear. But deep down we knew that our room was not going to clean itself. What we were REALLY hoping for is that Mom would see how messy it was and clean it for us.

Spiritually we are the same way, aren't we. Our hearts are just like our messy rooms. Our hearts are full of all sorts of rubbish and garbage. Isaiah writes, ***"We are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our***

iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.” (Is 64:6) That foul language we use, those unloving thoughts we have, that anger, wrath, and losing our temper all come from our sinful, filthy hearts of sin. And like our rooms, we cannot cleanse ourselves. We need a cleaning crew to come in and cleanse our hearts from sin.

Behold what a difference the Holy Spirit makes! Better than Mom coming into our room to clean it, the Holy Spirit comes and cleanses our filthy hearts. Verse 25, ***“Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.”*** As God promised to give us a new heart of flesh, so too God promises to sprinkle clean water on us and cleanse us from all our filthiness.

The clean water we have had sprinkled on us to cleanse us was given in our baptisms. Paul writes to Titus, ***“But according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.” (Tit 3:5)*** And Peter writes, ***“There is also an antitype which now saves us -- baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” (1 Pt 3:21)*** In our baptisms all the work of Jesus was credited to us. ***“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ,”*** Paul writes to the Galatians. (Gal 3:27) When we were baptized the Holy Spirit came into our filthy hearts and cleaned it out. Having been baptized into Christ, God no longer see the filth of our sin but the righteousness and holiness of His Son Jesus! This is what the Holy Spirit does - cleanses us from our filth. What a difference the Spirit makes!

FROM PROFANING TO HALLOWING

The first two differences we considered are difference the Holy Spirit makes within us when He brings us to faith and cleanses us from our sin. These are internal differences. The third difference we want to talk about is, an external matter. Having been brought to faith in Christ, Scripture speaks of us as ambassadors of Christ. We are His representatives in the world wherever we go. So what kind of job are we doing as ambassadors of Christ?

The Children of Israel were to serve the same purpose in the Old Testament. They were the covenant people of the LORD God. They were His representatives to all the other heathen nations. What kind of job did they do representing their God? The first two verses of our text tell us. God says that the Children of Israel ***“profaned”*** His holy name ***“among the nations wherever you went.”*** They had profaned His great name in the midst of the heathens. You only need to go to Mount Sinai to see how they profaned the LORD’s name. Moses had no sooner gone up Mount Sinai to receive the 10 Commandments than the people began to make a golden calf and worship it. They profaned His name by worshiping other gods. They profaned His name by living immoral lives. The other nations knew that the Children of Israel claimed the LORD God as their God. When they behaved in such an openly sinful way, God’s name was profaned among the nations.

How many people know that you are a Christian? Living in small towns as we do, most everybody knows everybody else’s business. Most people not only know you are a Christian, they probably know you are members of this church. And because of this they pay attention to what we say and what we do. When we use foul language, when we curse and swear, when we lose our temper, when we drink too much, when we tell dirty jokes, when we spread rumors and gossip about other people, we profane God’s name. Unbelievers hear us talk and see how we act and think, “Why would I EVER want to be a part of that?!” Or they are emboldened to imitate

such sinful behavior. “Well if they are doing it, it must be okay.” As such, God’s name is profaned by us and among us.

On the other hand, we are taught in our catechisms that God’s name is hallowed when His Word is taught in truth and purity, and we as children of God lead a holy life according to us. This, again, is the work of the Holy Spirit. This is the difference the Holy Spirit makes in us. Verse 27, ***“I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.”*** This is sanctification - the Holy Spirit working in us to do God’s will. On our own, we will profane God’s name by our words and actions. But the Holy Spirit makes all the difference as we hallow God’s name by keeping His commandments and living according to His will.

On Pentecost we see what a difference the Holy Spirit made in the lives of the apostles. They went from cowering in fear, to boldly testifying about Jesus Christ as the only Savior of the world before princes and kings. What a difference the Holy Spirit has made in our lives too! He has removed our heart of stone and given us a heart of flesh that believes in Jesus as our Savior from sin. He has cleansed our filthy hearts from sin through baptism. And it is only by the Holy Spirit working in us that we hallow God’s name in our words and lives. Praise be to God the Holy Spirit who makes all the difference in our lives as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies us with the whole Christian Church on earth. Amen!