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Pentecost – John 14:25-27 – Learn What the Holy Spirit Teaches
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Jerusalem was packed with people from all over the known world. It was one of the three times per year when every Jewish male had to come to the temple in Jerusalem for a major feast. The feast going on at this time was called the Feast of Weeks, or as it came to be known by its Greek name, Pentecost. This was from the time of Moses a festival of joy and thanks to God for his blessing of the grain harvest, but Jesus had in mind to give it a fuller meaning. Jesus meant for Pentecost to commemorate not just a harvest of grain, but a harvest of souls.

The disciples just didn't realize it quite yet. There in Jerusalem they sat and waited, because Jesus told them to stay in the city after he ascended. He promised them a gift, but they had no idea what it was or when it was coming. The fear and doubt of Good Friday were long gone, but now that Jesus had ascended back to heaven, the disciples must have come to a sobering reality: what do we do now without Jesus here with us?

They didn't know what to do, so Jesus did something for them. When the disciples were all gathered together on that day of Pentecost, suddenly the Holy Spirit came in the sound of a violent wind and tongues of fire and filled each one of them with the gifts they needed to be Jesus' Apostles to the world. Jesus made good on the promises he had made to his disciples way back in the upper room on Maundy Thursday. He promised that he would never leave them on their own, and that the Holy Spirit would teach them everything they needed to know about Jesus and his plan of salvation in order to do their work. And this gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost wasn't just for them; it's also for us. So people of God, do as the disciples did: learn what the Holy Spirit teaches.

Yes, the disciples really had it good while Jesus was here. He protected them and guided them, and everything he said carried real authority. The disciples knew they could trust him and lean on him. But when he left, they only felt lost and helpless, probably a lot like baby birds pushed out of the nest for the first time and expected to fly. I mean, how were such ordinary, mostly uneducated men supposed to carry out such a monumental task as Jesus' Great Commission to make disciples of all nations *on their own*?

Well, the answer was that they wouldn't have to do it alone. The Holy Spirit would be right there next to them, comforting them, counseling them, and working through them, just like Jesus promised: "*But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*" You know, it's not like the disciples had never done this before. Twice during his ministry Jesus sent them out to preach and share the Gospel message, and both times they came back rejoicing at the things they were able to accomplish. But while they were mostly just amazed back then at the power of the *miracles* the Lord worked through them, what Jesus really wanted them to learn was the power of the *Word* they shared, because that didn't just heal bodies for right now; it healed hearts and lives and souls. No, Jesus wouldn't be with them going forward – not that they could see at least – but he would be in his Gospel message. So from now on, just as Jesus spoke with divine authority, they would too as his representatives and his mouthpiece, who would share his Word faithfully with this world. Jesus spoke *to* them throughout his ministry and now he would speak *through* them by the power of the Holy Spirit. They may not have known what was coming, but when the Holy Spirit filled the disciples at Pentecost, he was giving them the authority and the powerful tools they needed to carry out their work faithfully and effectively. That meant they had the backing of God himself, and that made all the difference.

And it makes all the difference for us, too. Even though Jesus hasn't walked this earth in almost two thousand years and all the apostles are dead and long gone, the Holy Spirit still works among us to teach us about Jesus and remind us of what he said. That's because we still have the Scriptures they passed down to us that carry the same authority and power to change hearts and bring sinners to faith, because the Holy Spirit still works through them. After all, we don't call the Bible the Sword of the Spirit for nothing! No, since the Holy Spirit works through it, that same power and authority is present here among us in God's house and here in our hearts every time we use God's Word.

So learn what the Holy Spirit teaches, friends, because that Gospel message is too good not to be cherished and not to be shared. See, when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, he revealed Christ in all his grace and glory, and he brought forgiveness and eternal life and everything Christ won for us. The Holy Spirit came to teach us what we can't know by

nature: that salvation is free by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Our Savior-God came to die to take away our sins and rise again from the dead to win eternal life in heaven for us. And the Spirit came to remind us that this was always God's plan and what he's always been working toward, that even when your life is in a rut or a freefall Jesus is still in control and he always has you in his hands, and that Jesus is in heaven right now preparing a home that he's going to come back and take you to one day. That changes everything, and it's why Jesus assured his disciples that night and still assures you today: *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."*

When Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, he wasn't just *hoping* that peace would go along with it. That wasn't just a nice wish. No, the Holy Spirit coming at Pentecost is what *delivers* peace to us unlike any other anyone has ever seen in the world. This is *my* peace, Jesus said – the peace only I can give. This world's peace is hollow and shallow, just meant to numb the pain for a while and hide what's wrong with us, like a Band-Aid. But Jesus' peace doesn't depend on harmony between countries and tranquility in families. It isn't as fragile as the next military flare-up or political power-grab. It isn't disturbed by plans gone awry. It isn't as superficial as physical rest and pleasure and worldly wealth and prosperity. It isn't like this world's peace – because this world's peace is really no peace at all.

If this world's peace were all the disciples had, they would have had good reason to be troubled and afraid as they faced rejection and persecution and even martyrdom for their faith. But when the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost, he gave the disciples and all of us the blessing of Jesus' peace, based on our unshakable relationship with him as our perfect Savior. He gives us that peace when he works through the Gospel, opens our hearts to Jesus, and makes them his home through faith.

So let's not lose sight of that peace, friends, and let's not lose touch with why we have it. The Holy Spirit works that peace through the Means of Grace, so let's not get lax about using God's Word and Sacraments at worship and Bible study here in his house, or at our own houses with personal devotions and Bible reading. And if the world can't touch that kind of peace, let's not let things like money or personality differences or past grudges and disagreements take it away from us.

No, Jesus' peace may not mean freedom from trouble in this world, but it does mean that we can have calm hearts through it all because we know we're in his hands. See, Jesus isn't just Christian Prozac. He doesn't just mean to give us a nice, warm feeling inside or blind us to what's wrong around us. He gives us the kind of peace that means that no matter what happens in this world, all is well with my soul and I'll be with Jesus in heaven someday. We can live our lives and carry on our work as Christians, because no matter what happens or who tries to get in the way or how the devil tries to hurt us, Jesus has given us the gracious gift of the Holy Spirit. That means we have peace that transcends all understanding, *real* peace that lasts – from the earliest believers, down to us, and through all eternity.

No doubt, the disciples never could have imagined what a fabulous gift Christ gave to his newborn Church on the day of Pentecost. But Jesus had given his disciples a promise they could rely on, and he put all their fears to rest when he sent the Holy Spirit to bring 3,000 people to faith that day, and billions ever since. The Spirit came in the sound of wind to remind us of his presence all around us – even if we can't see him. He came in tongues of fire to remind us of his power to cleanse us of our sins for Jesus' sake and refine our lives to his glory. He came sharing the gift of all those different languages to remind us of our purpose to preach the Gospel of Christ to all nations. And so every year from then until now, 50 days after Easter, Christians around the world have celebrated not a harvest of grain, but a harvest of souls. This festival is all about thanks for the gracious working of the Holy Spirit in our lives, who teaches us through his Word that Jesus Christ is our risen Lord and Savior and so also gives us a real sense of peace that the world can never give and never take away. It's the peace of knowing that our work here will be blessed, that heaven now stands open, and that our Savior is waiting there for us with open arms to come home. So let's join with Christians across the world and across the ages to say: teach us, Holy Spirit. Your people are eager to learn. Amen.