

All That We've Waited For – Pentecost – May 23, 2010

Why are you smiling today? What are you so filled with joy? I know it is because it is Pentecost. It is because you have the Spirit, the Holy Spirit.

Jesus commanded His disciples to go to Jerusalem and wait for power from on high. They were to wait for the Holy Spirit. What we will see today is that the Holy Spirit is all that they/we could have hoped for and all that we've waited for.

It is illustrated in the story told by Bishop Bob Morgan in his book *Who's Coming To Dinner?* It is the story about a Dutch pastor and his family who during the second World War got into big trouble with the Nazis. The Dutch pastor and his family had been hiding Jewish people in their home to keep them safe from Hitler's forces. They were eventually found out. And one night in the darkness, they heard the sound of heavy boots and the loud impatient knocking on the door. They were arrested and loaded into a cattle car to be taken to one of the notorious death camps. All night long the Dutch pastor and his family rode along in heart-breaking anguish, jostling against one another and against the other prisoners who were jammed into the train cattle car. They were stripped of any form of dignity and absolutely terrified. They knew they were being taken to one of Hitler's extermination centers. But which one? Would it be Auschwitz, Buchenwald, or Dachau?

Finally, the long night ended and the train stopped. The doors of the cattle car were opened and light streamed into that tragic scene. They were marched out and were lined up beside the railroad tracks, resigned to unspeakable pain, as they knew they would be separated from each other and ultimately killed. But in the midst of their gloom, they discovered some amazing good news... good news beyond belief. They discovered in the bright morning sunlight that they were not in a death camp at all, not in Germany at all. Rather, they were in Switzerland!

During the night, someone through personal courage and daring had tripped a switch... and sent the train to Switzerland... and to freedom. And those now who came to them were not their captors at all, but rather their liberators. Instead of being marched to death, they were welcomed to new life. In the midst of his joy and relief, the Dutch pastor said, "What do you do with such a gift?" James W. Moore, *What Do You Do With Such A Gift?*

Today is a major festival just like Christmas or Easter but it is hard to tell. The world hasn't crowded in on this day. There is no Santa Claus. There are no Easter bunnies.

It is a major festival because it has everything to do with our salvation. The Holy Spirit is the One Who gives us faith to see that Jesus came not to condemn but to rescue. The Holy Spirit brings Light into the darkness. The Holy Spirit is the Lord and Giver of life. When the Spirit does His work in your life it is like finding yourself in Switzerland instead of Germany. You've got reason to smile.

We are going to look at the Holy Spirit and His work today by looking at the hymn, "To God the Holy Spirit Let us Pray." The Hymn title makes clear that the Holy Spirit is God and He is worthy of our worship.

Why is this a day for celebration? The hymn begins, "To God the Holy Spirit let us pray For the true faith needed on our way. That He may defend us when life is ending And from exile home we are wending. Lord, have mercy.

How often is our first prayer request for true faith. We are good as asking for a new job, a dream vacation, good health, a victory for our team but how often do we pray for a true faith? True faith is the one thing that takes us to heaven. True faith is the one thing people can take with them to heaven. All the other things we scratch and claw to get we leave behind. True faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

The verse continues, "That He may defend us when life is ending,
What more could we ask for, God Himself watching out for us, defending us so that we arrive home safely. **We sing v. 1**

The second stanza – O sweetest Love, Your grace on us bestow; Set our hearts with sacred fire aglow. That with hearts united we love each other, Ev'ry stranger, sister, and brother, Lord have mercy.

Holy Spirit Your grace on us bestow. The verse suggests that it is grace that sets our hearts on fire. What does it mean to you that despite your unholy thoughts, your lying, your hypocrisy, your hurtful words that you are loved.

The Spirit make grace understandable by opening our eyes to see Jesus enduring our punishment. The Holy Spirit shows the open tomb and makes clear that it means our tomb will one day be empty. That is why the fruit of the spirit is joy and peace but it also love.

Notice the result of God's grace. Our hearts are united with love for each other, that is ev'ry stranger, sister or brother.

What a picture of heaven where people from all races, social strata, and economic backgrounds kneel side by side. **We sing stanza two.**

Transcendent Comfort in our ev'ry need, Help us neither scorn nor death to heed That we may not falter nor courage fail us when the foe shall taunt and assail us. Lord, have mercy.

Transcendent Comfort., that is what the Holy Spirit is and what He does.

It is not reflected in this hymn but the first thing the Holy Spirit does is confront us or convict us. When the Word was preached on Pentecost the people were cut to the heart. The people asked, "What shall we do?" The Holy Spirit humbles us leading us to acknowledge that we have offended God and earned a place in hell. This Jesus, Peter said, whom you crucified.

So where's the comfort? This Jesus whom you crucified will not hold your sins against you. Through the preaching of the Word, Baptism and His Supper the Holy Spirit creates in us a childlike faith in us. A faith that Recognizes, "This Jesus Whom you crucified was crucified for you. The Holy Spirit's brings comfort through the words, He is not here He has risen!

The question has often been asked, "If you were to die tonight do you know for certain that you would go heaven?" The Holy Spirit comes to us that we may not falter nor courage fail us.

When the foe taunts us and assail us where do we find courage? When the devil tried to get Luther to question God's love for him to doubt his salvation, Luther would simply say, "But I am baptized." Luther was saying, I have been buried with Christ and raised with Him. Our courage always comes from Jesus Christ. **We sing stanza 3**

The final stanza says, "Shine in our hearts, O Spirit, precious Light; Teach us Jesus Christ to know aright. That we may abide in the Lord Who bought us, Till to our true home He has brought us. Lord have mercy.

We plead with the Spirit to shine in our heart with the precious light – then the verse makes clear Who the Light is – teach us Jesus Christ to know aright.

What a prayer. We beg the Holy Spirit to give us a clearer vision of Christ. That is what happens as the Word of God is proclaimed and the Spirit does His work.

This is the chief work of the Holy Spirit – to reveal Jesus Christ, God's love in action for us on the cross, Jesus suffering and dying in our place, Jesus' righteousness traded in for our sins. Jesus did all of that so that He might bring us to our true home. So that the train door might slide open and we find that we arrived not at death but at life.

Keep smiling. Keep celebrating for today growth happens, courage happens, comfort happens, grace is given, unity is strengthened, fruit is produced. It happens every time the Holy Spirit makes Jesus Christ known. Amen.

We sing v. 4