



# Pastor Ken's Sermon

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**SERMON – PENTECOST SUNDAY**  
**JOHN 15:26-27, 16:4B-15**  
**MAY 23, 2021**

## **“THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH”**

Any discussion of the church cannot be had apart from an understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit. This is Pentecost Sunday – the Holy Spirit’s “big day.” If we think of God the Father as creator of heaven and earth and God the Son as author of our salvation, then we best think of God the Holy Spirit as author and creator of the church. The Holy Spirit is given top billing in our Acts lesson today – gushing forth from the disciples who can’t restrain the Spirit’s enthusiasm for telling the “wonders of God.” But just what are the “wonders of God?”

In John 15 and 16 Jesus paints a picture of a remarkable chain of communication - the Spirit listens to what God the Father says and the church listens to what the Spirit says. The Bible can be read for lots of reasons, but Jesus says that the Spirit talks to us about three things in particular, all of them wonderful things. First –concerning sin. It may seem to many of you there is nothing so near and dear to a preacher’s heart as SIN! But if we are listening as we ought to the Spirit – we will hear about sin from the Spirit. Our Lord is remarkably succinct in supplying a definition of sin – it is simply “unbelief.” Martin Luther said all sin is basically a breaking of the 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment – “*I am the Lord your God, you shall have no other gods.*”

Everything we trust in, defer to or desire is another “god.” You and I know perfectly well then that we sinners cannot, not sin! Does the Spirit simply rain on our life’s parade – function as a cosmic “hall monitor.” We’ll get to the question of behavior in a minute – but as to what Jesus said – sin is not believing in HIM! The Spirit does not ignore our failings, but God is chiefly concerned with winning our trust. God abhors our sin – and wants us to forsake it. But God will take a sinner everyday who in spite of their sin still says, “I believe.”

Next, the Spirit speaks to us about righteousness. Some might say, ah, now comes the “to do list” the spiritual “time out time” when I have to write 50 times “*I will be a better person.*” Righteousness is “living the right way” – that is true. But without wanting to sound like a broken record, our righteousness is to be understood as “the righteousness of Christ.” To a young man who once addressed him as “good teacher” – Jesus said, “*why do you call me good – there is no one good but God alone.*” What our Lord was asking him was simply “*do you believe I am God...do you believe I can and will do only good to and for you.*”

Jesus talked about the Spirit “convicting us of righteousness” because he (Jesus) was “*going to the Father, and the world will see me no more.*” The Spirit, who Jesus says “will come to us” shows us how to be righteous – but not by making us “better versions of ourselves” or “a little less like ourselves” but by uniting us to Jesus who is ascended and coming again in glory. Our “righteousness” is our faith – “*blessed*” Jesus would say to Thomas, “*are those who do not see and yet believe.*” You are proof of that.

You have not seen and yet you believe. And what you must believe is that you have been implanted into the perfectly sinless life Jesus led! The Spirit speaks righteousness to us because as hard as it might be for us to believe in the forgiveness of our sins, it’s even harder, as Paul says in Colossians 3:3 to believe that “*you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*”

When God sees you, he sees a sinless life - all he sees is your Savior. When I was a little kid playing hide and seek if I couldn’t find a good place in the house to hide, I’d just grab a blanket, cover myself and pretend that if whoever was looking couldn’t actually see me then I wasn’t there! It didn’t work. But that is what the Bible says – when God your judge calls your name in death, all he will see is another person “hidden in Christ.”

The third way the Spirit of Truth uses the Bible, is to remind your enemy Satan of the first two things he says to us – and therefore his gig is up. Make no mistake - your sin is sinful. You are responsible for it and you need to repent of it and ask God to forgive and lead you so that, “*you delight in God’s will and walk in his ways.*” But your righteousness is Christ – and so long as you cling to him and don’t confuse any goodness you muster for his you will be “walking in God’s ways.”

This is how “*the prince of this world now stands condemned.*” He’s got nothing left to throw at us! There is much more we could say about how evil finds opportunities in this fallen world – ruining the lives of its victims and souls of its perpetrators. The debate will ever rage over the origin of evil and whether Satan can impose it. What Satan can do is confuse – fling rhetorical questions like “*did God really say*” our way. The Spirit of Truth that Jesus gives helps us overcome ambiguity about goodness and badness by reminding us precisely what God has said.

The Apostle Paul once called himself “the foremost of sinners” and he meant it. The Spirit gives clarity – children of God know what they are, but they also know Jesus loves us anyway. That sort of clarity the evil one can’t stomach for a minute! Pentecost is a rather “noisy” story – whereas the quieter work of the Spirit of Truth Jesus describes can get lost in comparison. But when the Spirit helps you detect the depth of your sin yet see the heights of God’s grace – I’d say he’s declared the wonders of God yet again. Here’s hoping you believe them. AMEN