

THE FEAST OF PENTECOST

Text: St. John 14:23-31

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Our LORD JESUS was not speaking anything new; the Word He spoke to His chosen apostles is the Word of His FATHER, and was, therefore, the Word spoken before the creation of all things, for *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He (that is CHRIST) was in the beginning with God.”* JESUS does nothing apart from the will of His FATHER, and the Word He speaks is spoken by the authority of His FATHER who sent Him.

Therefore, to love the Word, and all He commands, is to love God, FATHER, SON, and HOLY SPIRIT. When you receive One, you receive all; when you love One, you love all. More significantly, when you are loved by One, you are loved by all. Therefore, all who receive Him are given the right to become the children of God with whom God, FATHER, SON, and HOLY SPIRIT, makes His home.

But what does our LORD mean when He answers Judas, *“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word... ”*? Does loving CHRIST not mean to *“love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind”* and are you not also to *“love your neighbor as yourself”*? Are you not to love the LORD your God even as He loves you?

Thus, to love our LORD God is to have a personal and intimate relationship with the Word of God, for to love God is to love and keep His Word so that the Word may take up residence in one’s heart, making His home within you.

Therefore, to keep the Word of JESUS is to keep the Word of the HOLY SPIRIT who proceeds forth from the FATHER and the SON, even as we have just confessed in the words of the Nicene Creed. For JESUS speaks the Word of the FATHER who sent Him, and the HOLY SPIRIT speaks only that which He hears, and without whose speaking we could know nothing of the FATHER or the SON. He speaks to open the ears of sinners so that they can hear the Teacher. He speaks only what He hears that you may know the Father, *“the only true God, and JESUS CHRIST whom [the FATHER] has sent.”*

For this reason, one cannot reject and refuse the Word of CHRIST, and keep the FATHER or the HOLY SPIRIT. To do so, that is, to reject or refuse CHRIST’s Word is to reject God and His love. To reject JESUS’ Word is to reject any benefits of His sacrifice, without which there is no hope of salvation.

Such a tragedy applies equally to one who would cherry-pick which parts of JESUS’ Words one will receive and believe or keep. The Words of our LORD are of one piece. That

means that they are not pithy sayings or axioms of some long-dead philosopher which one can pick apart, keeping those things of which one approves, and discarding the rest. To discard even one Word, one jot, or one tittle, weakens the whole and jeopardizes the rest. One's faith is then left to the whims of worldly wisdom and flawed human understanding, and world history is full of examples of where such wisdom and the understanding of men lead us, as even today, we honor and remember the nearly 660 thousand Americans who bravely sacrificed their lives in battle as a result of worldly wisdom and flawed human understanding. Such tragic deaths are certainly not the result of loving God and keeping His Word but are the result of hubris, arrogance, and the sinful pride of evil men. They are the terrible consequence of lovelessness for both God and neighbor.

Thus, if we are to live as God intends, our eyes must be opened to see, our ears to hear, and our hearts to believe. We must keep CHRIST's Word even as did His virgin mother, St. Mary, who pondered in her heart the things she heard and witnessed. We must continue *“steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in prayers.”* To do so, is to love God and keep His Word as JESUS said.

Such is the work of the HOLY SPIRIT, the PARACLETE, the COMFORTER, *“whom the FATHER... send[s] in [JESUS'] Name..., [to] teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that [JESUS'] said to you.* It is through the HOLY SPIRIT that JESUS establishes His peace with His apostles, disciples, and Church, in Word, water, bread, and wine, body, and blood. This peace, JESUS gives to you this very day and every day unto the end of the age as a precious gift of God's grace and mercy.

So it is, that the peace given you by our LORD is not just any peace; it is not of this world. The peace of the world is empty and transitory, lasting for only a moment and then it is gone. There is nothing permanent about it in any way. The peace of our LORD, however, conveys what it promises, that the FATHER has kept His promise and provides for all humanity a way of salvation, freedom for those enslaved by sin, and victory over Satan and the grave. Having received the peace of the LORD, we can cast all fear aside. Not that we will never suffer in this life but that JESUS has overcome the world, and in Him, so too, do we.

For this reason, Christians rejoice, and all fear, suffering, and despair pass away. For who is greater than our God? Who or what can He not overcome? Who can defeat Him? There is no power that can stand against Him! No! All must bow the knee before, and submit to Him. For us, He is our all. Those who do not love Him have nothing in Him.

Here, in this place, we live with God and He in us. Here, the HOLY SPIRIT makes known the WORD of God and His saving deeds. Here, in this place, the WORD, the FATHER, and the COMFORTER come down from heaven to make their home within our hearts reminding us of all things which the WORD has taught us and all He has done for us. Here, Heaven comes down to kiss the earth, and we, with angels, archangels, and all the company of Heaven, sing out the honor of God's Name, praising and celebrating His grace and mercy, and receiving His peace. Here, the WORD releases us from sorrow, affliction, and despair and fills our hearts with the joy of our salvation.

Let us now come to the altar to receive the WORD OF GOD whose Flesh saved us and whose Blood released us from eternal death. Let us receive in love Him who first loved us and gave His life for us that we may live. Let us be at peace with God, the FATHER, God, the SON, and the God, the HOLY SPIRIT and receive from Him that peace which passes all human understanding. Let us put aside all fear and live in Him who died to give us peace.

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

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