

February 4, 2024
The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
Pastor Matt Duerr

The Confessional Church-With Power!

Grace, Mercy and Peace be to you from God our Father from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. As we continue our sermon series on “A Confessional Church” which is what we are, we weekly confess what we believe. We've been looking at exactly what we do believe. The first week we saw that we believe in an almighty God. A God who is omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent; yet gracious, loving, merciful and holy. So holy that He set Himself apart to save us.

Which brings us to the second and third weeks in the series where we focused on Jesus. Jesus who told us that we can call God the Father, God Almighty, our Father in Heaven. Jesus who John reveals to us that is the Logos, the Word, the Final Word, the Ultimate Word, the Answer to everything in life. He's the only begotten of the Father, literally God of God, Light of light, very God of very God. Amen God of Amen God. Yes, it is so. Jesus is God. He is the only one that has, shall we say, the gene pool of God.

And because of that He and He alone can be our atoning sacrifice, which was prophesied hundreds of years in advance, describing a death that wasn't even known at the time. And we saw that death could not hold Him. That He rose, He ascended into heaven. Where He is our Intercessor or our High Priest, going before God the Father on our behalf. And that same Jesus, totally understands the challenges we face in this world today as His Church because He literally walked with us, with mankind, and He literally dealt with us and our corrupt and sinful, nature. Jesus totally understands it and He knows exactly what we need because He has been there already.

And so now when we turn to our New Testament reading this morning, we see Jesus, and He “ordered them (his disciples) not to depart for Jerusalem,” but I quote, “to wait for the promise of the Father.” What promise would that be? Well, I'm glad you asked, because Jesus continued and answered it. He said, again, I quote “You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” Now, what does that mean to be baptized by the Holy Spirit? Well, again, I'm glad you asked, even if you didn't ask, because He continues on and again, I quote. “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem... (right here in the city where I was condemned and crucified.) You're going to be my witnesses in Jerusalem. My witnesses in Judea. That was the whole surrounding area. It would have been like Him saying you'll be witnesses in Lodi and in San Joaquin County. But He didn't stop there. You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria. Samaria was the northern area, the northern tribes, the northern part of Israel that had interbred with the people that were brought in by the Babylonians and the Persians. They were seen as half breeds. Remember Jesus and the woman at the well, She was a Samaritan woman, and she was like, how is it that you're talking to me a Samaritan? The Jews did not like the Samaritans. The Samaritans did not like Jews. And yet Jesus says you're going to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, then Judea, then you're going up to Samaria. And then to the end of the earth. Which was a phrase that was used specifically of a particular city called Rome.

Last week we saw a little introduction to that power that Jesus was talking about. We saw that Jesus, the Son of God, had to deal with the earthly power, man's power, man's government, man's rule, which was totally against Him and had Him killed. But that also introduced us to the power, the rule of God and His Kingdom as Jesus rose. And we now live in the light of that resurrection, knowing that this is what God has done and will do. But picking up on that power, the real power of God. That's how the Holy Spirit is described. You will receive power.

And Jesus prepared his disciples for it. In John chapter 14, it's a chapter I encourage you to read because we get so much out of it. It's

right before Jesus is arrested. And He says to His disciples, "Let not your hearts be troubled, believe in God, believe in me." And that's where he continues on and says, "In my Father's house there are many rooms and I go to prepare a place for you." "I will come again to take you to myself that where I am you may be also." And then He says, "you know the way to where I am going." And Thomas, who we called doubting Thomas; he was just very honest with Jesus. 'Jesus, we don't know where you are going. How can we know the way?' And Jesus comes back with one of those great "I am" statements using the name of God, Yahweh. 'I am the way, Thomas. I am the truth. I am the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'

And that takes us again back to last week, where Phillip says, "Show us the Father" and Jesus comes back and says, "If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father. I and the Father are one." And now comes the part where we really start hear about the power that's coming. Consider what Jesus says. "Truly, truly," literally again it is "Amen, Amen." "Yes, it is so. Yes, it is so!" It's the way of making an emphatic exclamation. "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever, believes in Me will also do the works I do." Also, will *also* do what Jesus did. But if there's also, it means there's more. More what? Jesus continues, "Whatever you ask in My name, this I will do." Now before you look at that and say, 'yeah, I've heard that before, but I've asked Jesus that I could win the lottery and be a gazillionaire and he said no, I didn't get it, He didn't do it.' Oh no, no, no, we have got to listen to everything He says. "Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do so that the father may be glorified." If you're asking for something that's not going to glorify God, Jesus isn't going to say 'yeah, I'll get that for you, give that to you.' Because we will miss use it. But we will do the works that He does, and if we are praying to Him so that God may be glorified, He's going to hear those prayers. He's going to answer them.

But He continues now, and kind of addressing that whole concept of is it about us, or is it about Him? "If you love me, you will keep my commandments and I will..." (This is Jesus) He will "ask the Father." That goes back to that part of Jesus being our intercessor, going to God

the Father on our behalf, “and He the Father will give you another helper to be with you forever.” Another helper, Jesus is the first, now we have another helper. Who is this helper? Jesus continues, “The Spirit of truth, and He will be in you.” And that's not the end of it. Not only is He a helper, not only will He be in us, He will, I quote, “teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”

Now we have to first take a look at this. This is not faith and knowledge by some osmotic or diffusive process. We have to first hear what Jesus says. And we do that yes, through church. And as pastor, I'd better be sharing with you what Jesus says. But we also get it, and we get it much more often, through Bible study and daily devotions that are rooted in the Bible. That's giving the Holy Spirit something to work with to bring to our remembrance. But when we realize that, that the Holy Spirit's going to take it and start working in us, that gives us something, well Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you.” When you're in the Holy Spirit hands and He's working through you, you have peace.

But it's more than just bringing to our remembrance all that Jesus said and having that peace. When we take a look at Mark 13, Luke Chapter 12, Matthew 10. All three of them recorded about where Jesus speaks to His disciples and He says, “And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over.” You know that's a big oh no, going to trial, being delivered over. That's getting back to that man's rule and what man did, what man did to Jesus. What does Jesus say about that when that happens? “Do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak but the Holy Spirit.” In fact, if we go to 1st Corinthians 12 verse 3, Saint Paul tells us, ‘no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.’ What does that mean? It means that it is the Holy Spirit, who doesn't just bring to our remembrance all that Jesus has said; who doesn't just give us that peace that passes all human understanding. It is the Holy Spirit who works the faith in our hearts. And Saint Paul continues in 1st Corinthians 6:11, “It is the Holy Spirit that sanctifies you.” Sanctifies the Holy Spirit is one who sets us apart for work in our Lord's Kingdom.

So now to recap all of this. Jesus tells them, stay in Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit's going to come on you with power. That Spirit who works faith in your hearts, that Spirit who sanctifies you and sets you apart for working in my Kingdom, that same Holy Spirit; He's going to teach you all things. And then He's going to bring to your remembrance all that Jesus has said. And He is going to give you the actual words to speak when you are in those situations so that you can be witnesses and do the actual works of Jesus and be at peace the whole time. And I guess the big question is "But Pastor Matt Jesus said all that, did it happen?" Well, consider Peter at Pentecost. He stood up. He spoke filled with the Holy Spirit. He spoke in such a way that everyone, in every language that was there understood exactly what he said. That's pretty impressive for a fisherman, an uneducated fisherman. In fact, no one could do that today unless they had the power of the Holy Spirit.

But we just move on a couple chapters, and we see Peter and John being before the court, the Sanhedrin, the ones that condemned Jesus to death. And they speak. Their words are so powerful that one of the lead Pharisees, Gamaliel, says, 'You know what guys? Let's not do anything here with them like we did with Jesus, otherwise you might find yourselves opposing God himself.' That tells you a little bit about how powerful Peter's response to the Sanhedrin was. And by the way, why were they before the Sanhedrin? Because they had healed a lame man on the Sabbath. And that's not it. When we look at Acts 5:22, we read, "now many signs and wonders..." (We would call those miracles.) "Now many miracles were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles." And I can't help but say, just like Jesus said.

And that lays the groundwork for the last part of the Apostles Creed. I believe in the Holy Christian Church. It's God's church. Not ours. It's a Church of action. And I think we might just need to buckle up and get ready to go because that promise of the Holy Spirit is to you and to me. Christ's command to go and make disciples is to you and to me. And we need to get off our tails and off of our own preconceived notions of 'I can't do that.' Because we have the Holy Spirit and yes, we can.

In our Saviors name. Amen.