

Pentecost Sunday.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for the sermon this morning is taken from our Epistle and Gospel readings from Acts 2: 1-21 and John 14:23-31.

John 14:23-31 23 Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word, and My Father will love him, and We shall come to him and make Our home with him. 24 He who does not love Me does not keep My Words. The Word that you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s, who has sent Me. 25 I have told you these things while I am still with you. 26 However, the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you everything, and will remind you of everything that I have told you. 27 Peace I am leaving with you. A peace that is My own I am giving to you. I am not giving it to you as the world gives it. Let not your hearts be troubled or afraid! 28 You have heard Me telling you, ‘I am going away, and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved Me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. 29 Now I have told you before it happens, so that, when it happens, you may believe. 30 I shall not say much to you any more. For the ruler of the world is coming, and he has no hold on Me. 31 However, the world should realise that I love the Father, and that I am doing as the Father has commanded Me! Get up! Let us be going from here!

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us in your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen

Dear friends in Christ,
Peace be with you.

Today Jesus tells us, “If a man loves Me, he will keep My words. ... He that does not love Me does not keep what I say.”

There are very few people in our society who outright hate Christ and are willing to say it. In almost every case, people want to appear to be in favour of Christ. Especially those who go by the name Christian will always say that they love Him. Yet they may wilfully disobey or outright deny things that Jesus said. This is because people often don't have the real Jesus. They say that they love Jesus but they are only loving an imaginary Jesus. The real Jesus offends them.

So they may claim that the real Jesus would never condemn homosexuality because He is loving. He would never condemn sex outside marriage because He is never judgmental. He would never condemn abortion because He is a champion of women’s rights. He would never condemn people of other faiths, because He is inclusive and on and on it goes!

I'm not speaking about those who have casual errors that have crept in. A person because of weakness may sin, or misunderstand what the Word of God says. In time they may be led by the Spirit to greater comprehension.

But rather than excuse us, our weakness should spur us on to greater diligence in the Word. We should beware of becoming people who **wilfully** disobey Christ’s words. Then it's not just a matter of weakness. They may have all kinds of good reasons to ignore the words of Christ, or at least reasons that they think are good. But the truth is, they have rejected the true Christ for an imaginary Christ, no matter how much lip service they give to loving Him.

We are actually like that more than we like to admit. One way is that we Lutherans sometimes excuse our sins with the excuse that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We kind of shrug our shoulders as if to say, “Eh, I couldn’t help it, anyway, I’m forgiven, so what does it matter?” We should be taking sin very seriously, not ignore it or sweep it under the rug. Instead, we should look at our sins as grave offenses against God, and learn to be horrified by them. If we love Christ and keep His Word, could we do any less? So our love for Christ is seen first of all in our obedience. We should try as hard as we can to follow His commandments. But then, secondly, we should repent when we fail. If we stop repenting, soon we may not care whether we obey or not.

These are ways that we keep the words of Christ. But the even more important way that we keep His words is by believing in Him. This is not an act of obedience that we produce from our own ability. On this Pentecost Day we should especially remember that only the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, and enlightens His Church in the one true faith.

We believe in Christ in obedience to His Word because the Spirit accompanies it. He comes along with the Gospel to ignite faith in our hearts and nurture its growth. We need this Gospel for faith. True faith grabs hold of the promises of God. Apart from the promises, there is no true faith. Oh, there are many false faiths that trust in promises that they imagine Jesus gave. Imaginary Jesus gives many promises. But the true Jesus give promises that are set down in Scripture. We love Him and keep His words by believing these promises.

Christ gives us promises today in which to put our faith. First, the Father loves us. What a great promise! Because we love and believe in Christ (the real Christ of Scripture), the Father loves us. His love is so powerful that He will be the truest Father that could ever be. He will protect and defend us from our enemies. He has turned us away from destruction to take us home, where He will see that we are safe for all eternity. That is a Father who loves us!

Second promise: The Trinity dwells with us. We know that because we were Baptized into Him. God wrote His Name upon us so that no one else can claim us and steal us away from Him. He lives with us, even now. For where His Name is, there He will be. He cannot abandon His own.

Thirdly, Christ promises us God's peace that is beyond understanding. This peace tells us that our hearts shouldn't be troubled. Now, we shouldn't use this promise in a fleshly way. If I feel earthly sorrow or pain, I should not say that Christ's promise of peace is false. He can never be false. His promise always stands, and we should trust it. But remember that the peace is beyond understanding. It's not an earthly peace that is judged by our fallible emotions. Yet the peace is real. If we could perfectly and without sin hold onto His promise, our hearts would never be troubled by anything. And sometimes, God helps us feel peace even in the midst of hardship and trouble. That's a precious gift.

But His peace is more than what we feel. We have genuine peace with God. Christ has paid the price so that we are no longer enemies with God. The price was very great. The Covenant of peace was written with His Blood, the same Blood that we drink today.

This leads to the fourth promise: Christ says, **“I love the Father, and that I am doing as the Father has commanded Me!”** Christ tells us that He has obeyed the Father because He loves the Father. Obeyed the Father in what? Well, these words were first spoken by Christ in John fourteen on the night He was betrayed. He was about to suffer, die, and rise. In love for His Father, Christ obeyed His Father's command to go up to the Cross and become the salvation of men. See how obedience and love go together for Christ as well as us. In spite of the great difficulty and pain, Christ did not fail to show His love in the greatest way possible, in the place that did not look like love. It looks so unlike love that many people have difficulty looking at a crucifix. Yet that is the love of Christ, just as the empty tomb also shows how much He loved the Father, and us.

Finally, Christ promises that the Comforter will bring to remembrance the words of Christ. This is NOT an excuse to laziness. We are not to say, “The Spirit will tell me as much as I need to know, so why study the Scriptures?” That would be to pit the promise against obedience. We are to be devoted to the Word, and listen carefully to the teaching of the words of Christ. If we are lazy and ignore His words, that is not keeping them, so how could we say that we love Him? For He says, **“If a man love Me, he will keep My words.”** The most direct application of the promise that, **“The Comforter will bring all things to remembrance,”** is that the Spirit would help the disciples to recall the words and deeds of Christ. That's why we can rely upon the text of Scripture. It's not merely the words of men, but in truth the Word of God. So we should rely upon it, and gladly hear and learn it.

In a secondary way, the Spirit continues to teach and guide us into all truth. The Word is living and active in our hearts. Faith and sanctification take place in us as the Spirit's work. We need not fear that the Word will be empty and useless for us. It's always the life-giving Word of Christ, which is the Word of the Father, empowered by the Spirit. Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Prayer of the Church The Feast of Pentecost 2019

P Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

Brief Silence.

P The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who on the Day of Pentecost graciously poured out the Holy Spirit upon the Church, would be pleased to pour out the Holy Spirit upon us anew, that we — His people, this Christian congregation, and all the congregations of the AELC — may be renewed in faith and zeal for the Gospel, strengthened for life in this world, - preserved in the hour of tribulation and enriched in every way that deepens our knowledge of the love and grace He has for us in Christ Jesus, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P That our merciful God and Saviour, who has promised forgiveness, life, and salvation to all who faithfully eat and drink His body and blood trusting His promise, “Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sin,” would abundantly give us His healthful Spirit, that our eating and drinking may be beneficial to us, bestowing upon us the fullness of His heavenly benediction and grace; let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P That the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the Great Shepherd of the sheep, thereby making peace between God and sinners through His cross, would also grant peace among the nations of the earth, that He would raise up and preserve to us leaders who fear Him that we may live in tranquillity and justice, that He would direct and govern all who are in government, and that He would lead and direct our people in the paths of His holy commandments; let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P That our gracious and almighty Lord would bend His ears to hear the cries of those who, in adversity or affliction, cry for help and relief [especially _____]; that He would deliver them from their troubles, heal them of their diseases, strengthen them during their hour of trial and bring them to everlasting life; and that He would lead them, together with us, to ceaseless praise and high thanksgiving for His abundant mercy in Christ, let us pray to the Lord:

C Lord, have mercy.

P Father of mercy, we humbly come to Your table, trusting in Your Word and promises. Give us Your Holy Spirit, that what we receive there we may keep faithfully, in true hearts, now in the days of our struggle and soon in everlasting light and life. Lord, in Your mercy,

C hear our prayer.

P Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

4th Hymn: 151.