

The Holy Spirit

May 20, 2018

Our Savior's Way
Worshiping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM
Pastor Bill Mann

Today is Pentecost Sunday. It's an important Sunday for Christians. We call it the "Birthday of the Church". Pentecost means "50." 50 days after Easter the Bible says that Jesus poured out his Holy Spirit on his followers in Jerusalem. So, Pentecost is majorly important. There's lots of special music and celebration on Pentecost. But Pentecost is important to me for another reason. My youngest son David has been going to school at MSU (Michigan State University) for the past two years. He's been working as a music director at a big Catholic church in Lansing to pay for his college. And this is his last Sunday of work. So, he'll be coming home to get married on June 9th. A couple of weekends ago his mother and I went up to Michigan for his graduation ceremony. It was a long trip and it cost a lot of money. I have to confess I was dragging my feet about going. But you put your time and your money where your heart is, don't you. And so we went and I'm glad we did. Our presence was important. It was an opportunity to be with our son and meet his friends and touch his life. It seems to me that this is the purpose of the Holy Spirit. It's God's way of being present with us and touching our lives in a personal and powerful way.

There's a story in the Bible about Jesus and people bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them. The disciples try to keep the children away. But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and don't stop them for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Mark 10:13-16) Children are important to Jesus. He picked them up. He touched them. He valued them. One of our

major ministries is the Open Arms Christian Child Development Center. We have over 500 kids enrolled in this ministry. It is one way we touch the next generation for Christ. As a parent I have always felt a deep responsibility—to pray with my children, to talk to them about Jesus. If God has touched my life then I need to touch the lives of others—especially children. We need to touch them, spend time with them, and love them. Of course, there will always be some people who like the disciples “don’t get it.” They won’t see the value of children. But we can’t let that ignorance stand in our way. Sitting on little chairs with our little girls playing tea time is just as important as sitting at a table with an important business associate. Throwing a baseball with our sons in the backyard is every bit as important as a big sales pitch to a major corporation.

Somebody figured out that, as parents, we each have about one-thousand weekends to spend with our children. Then they leave home and go out on their own. In the video you’re about to watch, each of those one-thousand weekends is symbolized by a marble.

VIDEO: “1000 Marbles” by Ariel Rakes

I have to confess that sometimes I overlook my children and take them for granted. I don’t always give them the time and attention they need. On this Day of Pentecost, I wonder, do we treat the Holy Spirit the same way? Do we overlook the Holy Spirit? Do we take Him for granted? And, if we do, why? Is it because the whole idea of the Holy Spirit is too hard to talk about? Is it because the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Holy Trinity and “third” doesn’t sound very important? Is it because we are a little scared of the Holy Spirit--things like speaking in tongues and dancing in the aisles and getting slain in the spirit? I mean, really, is that something we should get ourselves mixed up in?

The thing is, the Bible talks about the Holy Spirit from beginning to end. Genesis 1—“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ... and the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” At the beginning the Spirit is there. Revelation 22 (the last chapter of the last book of the Bible)—“The spirit and the Bride

say, ‘Come.’”(v. 17). At the end the Spirit is there. Trying to understand the Bible without the Holy Spirit is like trying to read a sundial by moonlight. It just can’t be done.

Have you ever noticed—a lot of times we refer to the Holy Spirit as IT. I want to clear up a misconception, right now. The Holy Spirit is not an IT. The Holy Spirit is a PERSON. Jesus, for example, always talks about the Holy Spirit as “HE”.. St. Paul writes, “The Holy Spirit gives us gifts just as HE determines.” (1 Corinthians 12:11) The point is this—the Holy Spirit is not some impersonal power that you and I can call on like a genie in a bottle. The Holy Spirit is a PERSON. He is the PERSON of GOD. And this is an important distinction. Because if you think about the Holy Spirit as an IT—as some kind of spiritual force or power—you’re going to be think, “How can I get more of it so that I can use it?” But if you think about the Holy Spirit in a Biblical way—as a person of divine majesty and glory—you will say, “How can the Holy Spirit get more of me so that He can use me?” This is an important distinction because it’s not we who get hold of the Holy Spirit, it’s the Holy Spirit who gets hold of us. The Holy Spirit is the “Comforter.” The Holy Spirit is how God touches us in a very real and personal way.

Another name for the Holy Spirit is “Counselor.” Jesus said, “But the COUNSELOR, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things.” (John 16:7) The Holy Spirit counsels us and guides us. People need guidance. Children need guidance. Parents need guidance. We all need guidance—especially in the world we live in. Because life is filled with challenges, isn’t it?--and there are big decisions we have to make. I know a children’s counselor in Loudoun County who charges \$250 an hour for one counseling session. I know a financial advisor who will charge you \$200 an hour to tell you what to do with your money. And, believe it or not, even here in highly educated Northern Virginia, you can drive down Hwy. 28 to Manassas and pay a fortune-teller \$165 an hour for their advice. Here’s the problem with all these advisors--They are experts in only one area. And if you want their advice you have to make an appointment, during office hours, and you have to pay for their advice. Not so

with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a qualified expert in every area of life, available to all Christians, at all hours of the day and night, and the Holy Spirit will never send you a bill. The Prophet Isaiah said, “The Lord of hosts ... is wonderful in counsel ... and excellent in guidance.” (Isaiah 28:29) If you ask Him, He will tell you where to go and what to say and what to do.

Years ago the throne of Russia was occupied by two young boys. The co-czars were very young, yet, every day they dealt with decisions that affected the lives of millions of people. The people were amazed at their judgment. What the people didn't know was that behind the throne, hidden by a curtain, was the princess Sophia, their older sister. She was secretly supplying the answers to her brothers. Well, in the same way people marveled at the apostles. They didn't know the Holy Spirit was supplying them the wisdom and power they needed to make good decisions. Are you looking for some guidance in your life?—then go to God in prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to counsel you. I felt really good when I went up to Michigan for my son's graduation. For the past two years he's been directing the choir at a big Catholic church. Some of the choir members invited us over for a little reception in their home before the graduation ceremony. As we were getting ready to leave, one of the choir members, a woman in her 70's came up to me and said, “You really did a great job raising your son.” As a parent you love to hear those words. But what I said was this: “It's God who deserved the credit. I just followed His counsel and guidance.” May the Holy Spirit guide you as you seek to live your life well.