

# The Spirit of Truth

May 02, 2010

Rev. Mark F. Bartels

Old Testament Lesson; Isaiah 49:1-15

Epistle Lesson; James 1:16-21

Gospel Lesson; John 16:5-15

Sermon Text; John 16:5-15

The scripture we will look at today is taken from John, chapter 16, verses 5 – 15. Look for the word, “*world*” in this Bible passage, because we are going to talk, today, about the **world wide mission of the Holy Spirit**.

Our Savior spoke this the night He was arrested.

“Now I am going to Him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. When He comes, He will convict the **world** of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this **world** now stands condemned.

“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own; He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take

from what is mine and make it known to you.”

These are Your Words, Heavenly Father. Lead us in the Way of Truth. Your Word is truth.

Amen

You and I should care deeply for the lost. Why should we care for the lost? We should care for the lost, because our dear Lord Jesus has deep compassion for the lost. One of my favorite chapters in all the Bible is Luke, chapter 15. In Luke, chapter 15, Jesus opens up His heart to us. He shows us His great compassion for the lost. In Luke, chapter 15 you find three stories, right in a row, about Jesus' great compassion for the lost.

The first one is this. In Luke, chapter 15 Jesus says, “Who of you, if you have a hundred sheep and you lose one of them, won't leave the ninety nine in the open country and go and look for that one lost sheep until you find it? And when you find it, you pick it up and put it on your shoulders and return home rejoicing.”

Jesus said, “I tell you there is rejoicing in Heaven, over one sinner who repents.”

There Jesus opened up His heart and He pictured a shepherd who would go and search, and search, **and search** for that one sheep. What great concern for each and every soul! And, how far Jesus went! He went to the cross to find each lost soul.

The story about the lost sheep, is followed by another story about a lost coin. Jesus says, “Suppose a woman has ten silver coins and she loses one of them. Won't she light a lamp and sweep her house, until she finds that one lost coin? And when she finds it, she will call her neighbors and say, 'Rejoice! I have found my lost coin.'” And again, Jesus said, “I tell you there is rejoicing in Heaven over one sinner who repents.”

There is that beautiful picture of Jesus' compassion for the lost so deep that He shines His light in all places, the light of His Word,

looking for those huddled, lost sinners. And when the light shines on them, He reaches out to them and says, *“I love you. Come to me.”*

**What a beautiful picture of compassion for the lost!**

That is immediately followed by a third story regarding the lost. It is the story of the lost son. Jesus, (to summarize) said,

*“Suppose there is a young man who takes his inheritance from his father. He goes to a far distant country. He spends all of his money on wicked, sinful living. And then, he sees all of his money is gone. He is in great need.*

*“And so, he determines to go back home. He heads home, even though he knows he does not deserve to go back home. But, while he is still a long ways off, his father runs out to greet him. The son looks at his father and says, 'Father I have sinned against heaven. I have sinned against you. I don't deserve to be called your son. Make me like one of your servants.'*

*“But, the father throws his arms around him and says, 'Bring a ring. Put it on his finger. Put a robe on him. Kill the fattened calf. My son who was lost is found!'”*

There Jesus shows the heart of God toward those who are sorry for their sin, and how God, so gladly and freely, forgives the lost who come to Him in repentance.

Jesus had deep compassion for the lost. You are a beneficiary of that. You were lost, but you have been found! We all have learned to confess,

“Christ has redeemed me  
a **lost** and condemned creature,  
purchased and won me from all sin,  
from death,  
and from the power of the devil.”

You are a beneficiary of being found.  
You know the joy of having a Savior!

Our Lord Jesus calls us to have compassion on the lost. I love what our Large Catechism says regarding the work of Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit. I am going to illustrate it by using this treasure chest. Our Large Catechism compares the work of Jesus to this treasure. What Jesus did is He earned this massive, vast treasure that nothing can even begin to compare to. Our Lord Jesus, by His holy life, by His death on the cross, earned the salvation of your soul. He redeemed you. He paid for all of your sins. By His resurrection, He defeated death. And, nothing in the world can even begin to buy this great treasure. It is an accomplished fact. It is an accomplished fact. That treasure stands and it is there for everybody in the whole world. That is the work of Jesus, this accomplished treasure.

But, what good does that treasure do, if it lies hidden? What good does it do, if it just sits there and you don't pick it up and make it your own?

And so, that gets us to the work of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit is to take this treasure, bring it home, take it to you, and put it in your hands and say, *"This is yours. The forgiveness of sins that Christ won is yours. Heaven, itself, is yours."* That is His work. He takes what Christ has done, and He brings it home and gives it to you.

And so, in our scripture reading today, that is what Jesus says about the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus says, "I am going to the Father..." He is about to complete His work and finish purchasing that treasure. He says, *"I am going to send the Holy Spirit. He is going to take from what is mine and He is going to make it known to you."* That is the work of the Holy Spirit. And then He says this is something the Holy Spirit intends to do worldwide. It is for the whole world. Listen to what He says,

"When He, (the Counselor) comes, He will convict the **world** of guilt, in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness,

because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.”

What does that mean? The work of the Holy Spirit is to convict the world of guilt in regard to sin. The world has a faulty view of sin. That means, you and I, by nature have a faulty view of sin. And what is our faulty view of sin? Our faulty view of sin is that we make sin less than it is. We make it smaller than it really is. That is our tendency. Our tendency is to think, *“Isn't it those really big sins that are damnatory, that can damn me before God?”* That is what our sinful nature has a tendency to do. The world has a tendency to think, *“Can't I take those little sins and make up for them, somehow, by being a better person and doing good things? Can't I overcome sin on my own, in someway?”*

And so, Jesus says, *“I am sending the Holy Spirit to convict the world in regards to sin.”* Jesus intends the Holy Spirit to convict every one in the world and show every one in the world, through the Word, just how serious sin is. Sin is far more serious than we have the tendency to think. It is not just the big sins that damn somebody. On Judgment Day what is Jesus going to say? *“I was thirsty, and you did not give me anything to drink!”* That is a little sin in our eyes, but that is a damnatory sin. And, the Holy Spirit is here to convict us and tell the whole world just how serious sin is. Sin is not just some action, but sin goes to the very heart and core of who we are.

Is there anybody in this world, yet, who has been able to overcome sin on their own? Doesn't the Bible say, *“The good I want to do, I don't do. The evil I don't want to do, that is what I keep on doing”?* We can't overcome our own sin. And, the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and shows us **the biggest sin is unbelief.**

Here is this treasure  
and it is all ours,

simply by faith.

Let Jesus have your sins. **Let Him have your sins.**

-Let Him have your huge sins.

-Let Him have your little sins.

-Let Him have the sins you have been trying to overcome for years, and years, and years.

Let Him have them. He has paid for them. He has washed you clean with His blood. He has blotted them out with His blood. He has cast them away by His death on the cross. The Holy Spirit convicts of sin and then He comforts us with the forgiveness of sins in Christ, through faith. Jesus says, "He (the Holy Spirit) will convict the world of guilt, with regard to sin and righteousness...because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer."

Jesus completed His work, His holy life and death on the cross. And then, He truly was righteous enough to go to the Father.

The world has a faulty view of righteousness. Our tendency is to look at ourselves and compare ourselves to other people. "*At least I am better than he is.*" Or, "*I am not as bad as she is*". Or, "*At least I say my prayers everyday*". But that kind of righteousness is not enough to get us to Heaven.

**To be righteous enough to get to Heaven, you have to be perfect.**

Let me ask you this.

-Are you more pure than Jesus was? Are you?

-Can you say you can speak more truthfully than Jesus did?

-Can you say you serve God's cause more dutifully than Christ did?

-Can you say you submit to the Will of God more fervently than our Savior did?

Of course not!

All of our righteousnesses are like filthy rags.

**Look to Christ.** There you have what you and I could never have

on our own. The holy righteousness of Christ is a treasure God freely gives to you, for Christ's sake. And there is our salvation. And then the Bible tells us Jesus says the Holy Spirit will convict us, the world, "in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world stands condemned."

The devil likes to confuse us, regarding Judgment Day. The devil likes to confuse the world and cause the world to think, "*Well, maybe if I do more good things than bad things, when I stand before God on Judgment Day, maybe God will let me into Heaven. But, I am not sure if I have been good enough.*" What a troubling thing that would be.... to be unsure that you are going to Heaven.

Or, the devil likes to try to pull the rug out from underneath our feet and point to all of our sins, saying, "*You think God is going to let you into Heaven?*"

Jesus came and whoever clings to this treasure of Christ can have absolute certainty, "*I don't have to worry what the world says. I don't have to worry what the devil says about my sins. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. There is none. My sins are forgiven and I stand before God, for Christ's sake, ready to go to Heaven.*"

That is the treasure you benefit from every day. Every day! The Holy Spirit has placed this in to your hands, by faith. And you know your sins are forgiven. You know you have the righteousness of Christ. You know when Judgment Day comes, you will stand with Christ's righteousness, as your very own. What a comfort!

It has taken two thousand years for this treasure to get to this church building. Two thousand years ago, Jesus earned this treasure. The Holy Spirit placed it in the hands of His disciples. They believed it. They turned around and placed it into the hands of the next generation. And they believed it. Down through the centuries it has been handed down. And here it stands, today. Here it stands. By the grace of the Holy Spirit, you have picked it up and made it your

own, by faith.

Now, what are you going to do with it? **What are you going to do with it?** Jesus had great compassion on the lost. There are still people out there who don't know this treasure. It is still a hidden treasure to them.

-Everyone in this room, everyone in this room can **pray for someone** you know, who does not know their Savior, yet. Think of a name, right now, think of a name, someone you know who does not know this treasure. They are lost. Commit to taking them to God in prayer. Pray that the Holy Spirit, through the Word, will convict them of their sin and cause them to trust in Jesus, as their Savior. Pray for someone.

-Everyone in this room could do something so simple as **invite someone to church, here**. You could do something so simple as to say, *“If you don't have a church home, we would love to have you come to Holy Cross.”* When they come to Holy Cross, the treasure is going to be presented to them through Word and Sacrament. Every body can do that. Think of someone that you could pray the Holy Spirit would lead you to invite to come here and hear this treasure.

-Everyone can **invite someone to come to our school**. The little children can come to school. Through the little children, the Word can be carried to the parents. And so, they come to Christ. Think of someone you could tell about our school.

-**Think about people you can befriend, who don't know Jesus**. Be their friend. Pray that the Lord would someday open an opportunity for you to take this treasure and put it right in front of them.

If you were in a restaurant with a friend who was lost, (just you and your friend), and somehow the conversation came up and your friend asked you, *“Well, how do you think you get to Heaven?”* If you had the opportunity, today, would you be ready? Would you be ready to

just lay a simple Law and Gospel presentation before them? I think all of you could do just fine. Here is my favorite Bible passage, when it comes to a simple Law/Gospel presentation. You might want to write this passage down or file it in your mind. I love this passage! It makes it so simple to make a simple presentation about salvation. It is II Corinthians 5:21. II Corinthians 5:21 is what we call The Great Exchange, (which I will get to in just a little bit). So, let's say you are sitting with your friend and your friend asks, *“So, how do you think you get to Heaven?”*

Well, this is what I like to do, (and many of you have heard me tell this story before. But, maybe you can make it your own). I would get out a place mat and I would draw two squares. Then, I would say, *“Let's say those two squares are two pieces of paper. Let's write your name on one of those 'pieces of paper'.”*

And then, write that person's name on that square. Write Jesus' name on the other square.

And then, I would say, *“Let's suppose God is watching you, which He is. He is keeping track of all the sins you commit.”*

Start writing little lines in the square and say, *“These little lines all represent sins you have committed. We could write down things you should not think, things you should not say, things you have done that trouble you.”*

You can even say, *“I know if that were my sheet, with my name, there would be lots of sins on there, and things I would not want anybody else to know about. But, God does.”*

*“But what about Jesus' 'sheet of paper'? Let's say God was keeping track of all of the sins Jesus committed. How many sins would there be there? Zero. None. He was perfect. He was holy. That is what the Bible tells us.”*

*“And so, here we have your 'sheet of paper', which has all of these lines that represent your sins, and Jesus' sheet which has no lines, no sins on it.”*

And then comes II Corinthians 5:21. *“Let me share with you a Bible verse. It is called The Great Exchange. Here is what it says.*

**God made Him who had no sin  
to be sin for us,  
so that in Him  
we might become the righteousness of God.**

“What does that mean? God made **Him who had no sin** (who is that?) That is **Jesus**. That is His 'sheet of paper'. Right here. No sin.

**He made Him who had no sin  
to be sin for us.**

*“What does that mean?”* Erase the person's name off of the square and write Jesus' name there.

**He made Him who had no sin  
to be sin for us.**

*“God gave your sins to Jesus so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. God put your name on Jesus' perfect list. It is what we call The Great Exchange. Jesus took our sins. He gave us His perfect life. He died for us.”*

The Bible says,

**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ  
and you will be saved.**

Maybe someday, when the opportunity is right, you will have a chance to give someone a simple Law and Gospel presentation, through which the Holy Spirit will work to deliver that treasure to them. Our Lord Jesus has great compassion for the lost. So much so that He sought you and He found you. He has given you His great treasure. Let's have compassion for the lost, too. Remember them in our prayers, in our actions, and in our words.

Amen