**John 7:37-39 May 31, 2020 (Day of Pentecost)**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for the celebration of the festival of Pentecost from our Gospel lesson, John chapter 7 here re-reading these words. “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water’ Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” This is our text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

There is no grand greeting or saying for Pentecost, like “Christ is Risen! Alleluia!” for Easter, but it is such a pleasure to be together again that it almost seems as though we should say something like that on this glorious celebration of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit finally has their day in the spotlight, and ironically, that’s the last thing the Holy Spirit would want. To sing hymns about the Holy Spirit, to focus on the Holy Spirit, to hear about the Holy Spirit in the Collect and the Gradual, it’s almost too much. At least, it would be if the Holy Spirit had a mouth or could talk. The Holy Spirit’s function in the hearts of believers is not to glorify the self, but to magnify the knowledge of our Savior. The Holy Spirit calls us, gathers us, enlightens us, and sanctifies us in the truth. The truth of the man Jesus Christ who came and died, and the truth that he was more than just a man he was God, he was true man and true God, he was the Savior. He died to save you, to restore you and cleanse you from sin and to make you right before God your heavenly Father so that you will be saved when you exit this earth by death or when he returns in glory. You hear and understand those words not out of your own intellect and understanding, but by the work of the Holy Spirit who reveals it to you. But the Holy Spirit’s message isn’t about itself it’s about Christ, it’s about everlasting life in His name, which means that today is the day where the Holy Spirit’s work is magnified, and where we focus on the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost so long ago, but it’s never not about Jesus. This is true no matter what day it is or what we are going through in our day or time that we are living.

Our Collect touches on something rather astounding that I’d like to take a moment to point out. The words of the Collect for today are as follows, we prayed these words but really pay attention to the use of the word, “day”. “O God, on this day You once taught the hearts of Your faithful people by sending them the light of Your Holy Spirit. Grant us in our day by the same Spirit to have a right understanding in all things and evermore to rejoice in his holy consolation.” And of course, the Collect prayer ends as all Collects do “through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit (there they are again) one God, now and forever. Amen.

Now that prayer, has been said on Pentecost for many years, you’ve heard it at different points in your life, but especially now think about this line. “Grant us in our day by the same Spirit to have a right understanding in all things.” What a request. Grant us in our day, what exactly would define these “days” that we are living in? Prosperity? Wealth? Success? Health? Positive descriptions of how wonderful everything is going? Do we live in a day of absolute and accepted truth when it comes to our world? To God? To right and wrong? No. These descriptions couldn’t really be used for us in our “day”. Just as a snapshot of where we are in our day, currently we are in the midst of a global pandemic, which still changes our lives every day and certainly has changed how we worship together. There are protests and riots throughout our country after the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, an unrest that doesn’t seem to be slowing down or stopping but only heating up. In our own state there was devastating floods in Midland, and even recently this week there was some flooding in Traverse City. There is economic unrest as businesses are wondering how they will survive after so many months of lockdown. These are just a few examples of what’s going on. We are living in uncertain times. Trying times. Times when we need what we pray for here in this Collect, written so long ago, through these words, it’s almost as if it was written specifically for our day but in truth it was written well before any of these problems “Grant us in our day by the same Spirit to have a right understanding in all things.”

We actually live, in a very blessed and privileged time of history, and I don’t mean in terms of technological advancements or the benefits of living in a country of many freedoms protected by the Constitution, I’m going even further back than that to our Gospel lesson. John specifically references the fact that Jesus is speaking about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as an event that is to come, not an event that had already happened. “For as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” As a relatively younger man I’m certainly not as experienced as others who may remember a time before in house plumbing or color television. I can remember a time before the internet. I can remember a time before the events of September 11th, 2001. I can remember a time before cell phones were a staple of everyone’s lives and were as prevalent as they are today. But none of us living know a time before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which happened here on this glorious festival of Pentecost. We actually are very blessed to live in such a time, when the Holy Spirit is present in our hearts through the gift of Holy Baptism. Even in the midst of all the struggles that the world faces today. Because we, who hunger and thirst for righteousness, we who seek the kingdom of God find it in His Holy Word and make sense of the salvation won for us through the Holy Spirit who causes rivers! Not just small streams or small jets, like a hose without any water pressure, but rivers! Of living water to flow out of our hearts, changing and influencing those around us with water, water that cleanses, water that heals, water that quenches and gives life. That’s our lives as Christians! Because of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, because we know the truth.

We live in a post Pentecost day, where the thirst for the Gospel can be quenched in an instant in many and various ways, but especially here in His house as we worship together. But do we still have the thirst? I can remember times at sports practices where when we finally got to a point where we could get some water I felt like I could drink a literal gallon of water because I was so thirsty. At football practice, in August, we’d have to drink from this horrible hose contraption that was a hose hooked up to a rubber tube with holes poked through it, and the water was warm and tasted like rubber. But we all were so thirsty we would drink and drink and drink from it. We didn’t care. That’s the nature of a true thirst, you’ll drink anything to quench it. Do we still have a thirst for the Gospel? Do we have a thirst for God’s Word? What exactly can you blame during these past months when it comes to a neglect of God’s Word? No time? You have all the time in the world, sports are canceled, we aren’t supposed to go anywhere! You don’t have the materials? At the click of a mouse you have access to millions of expositions on God’s Word, but more than that all you really need is a Bible to read in the first place. Do you find you are thirsty to learn and grow and receive from God here in His house the gifts He so freely gives to you? Or are you instead full and satisfied with what has taken the place of the life-giving water in your heart? Water heals the body, cleanses it, flushes it out of the bad stuff, we are supposed to drink 8 glasses of water a day, but instead what takes it’s place? Have you ever drank an entire 20 oz bottle of pop and then try to drink a cup of water? Or do you drink a cup of coffee and then drink a bottle of water? Something takes the place of the good. So what has taken up the spot of the life giving water of God’s Word in our lives? Even in the midst of a lockdown order and quarantine? Is it fear? Fear of the days that we live in? Is it self-gratification and our own selfish interests and happiness that keeps us from a submission to God’s Word and His Will? Whatever it is, the Holy Spirit interprets to us the Word of God which reveals it for what it truly is. Sin. Sin that must be paid for by death.

We pray for understanding, and the Word provides just that through the Holy Spirit. We are sinners, and then we pray, even in our day of trouble and danger, that we may evermore rejoice in His holy consolation. A consolation prize isn’t given to the winner but to someone who didn’t win in order to comfort them. That’s what consolation is, comfort. God provides comfort to the hurting. Thirst is a means of hurting, it’s the body crying out to be satisfied, and God quenches that thirst through the gift of the Holy Spirit. God gives that Spirit to you and feeds the hunger of your faith in His Word, and quenches the thirst of your soul through His Holy Sacraments. This is the place where you receive those gifts, in His house, and for a time there are restrictions on our worship and safety procedures which make it different to be here, but it doesn’t make it impossible to receive from God what your faith desperately needs. Consolation. Comfort. Life. Through Jesus Christ your Savior. Revealed by the Holy Spirit.

Today is a day of celebration, even in the midst of the times we live, because on Pentecost a great gift was given to the disciples who spoke in many languages, who imparted that gift to the thousands who heard the Word and were baptized, who imparted that gift to others until eventually it came to you. The Holy Spirit accomplishes the work of the Gospel in our hearts, so let’s give them their day, and thank them as we do the entire Trinity, for the life we have that will never end. The bad times will, the days of struggle and hate, of devastation and anger will end. Things will calm again, but never be perfect. We live in a world of sin. But because of the day of Pentecost, a day will come when we will be with our Heavenly Father forever. Give thanks to the Holy Spirit for you knowing that and being comforted by that.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.