

2024 verbs of the Holy Spirit

A blessed Pentecost to you all. On Pentecost we think of being On Fire with the Spirit, and so I thought, what better way to capture this excitement than with a quick Word Study! Try to contain your jubilee, please.

We often think of feelings when we think of the Spirit. But I contend Pentecost is more about Words. Words in real languages that tell of God's Mighty Works in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

So I started looking at the words, specifically the verbs in our Gospel lesson, attributed to the Helper, the Holy Spirit. "He will bear witness about me," Jesus says. And so we Lutherans get criticized for not talking about the Spirit much, but, well, He doesn't talk about himself much, he is perfectly content to point to the Risen Lord, as Peter himself will do in his sermon on Pentecost!

There are some other verbs in there attributed to the Helper, he will guide, he will glorify the Son, he will take what is the Son's, from the Father, and declare it to us. Beautiful sentiments that point to Christ. But then there is the middle section: he will convict. That's not as positive of a word. Convict the World of Sin – that doesn't sound very "helper," not very nice. What is that about?

But first, since you so desperately want it, and so that my couple hours of searching aren't wasted, here's all the verbs and themes attributed to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. Now, some caveats, this isn't an exhaustive study, it doesn't include the more generic "Spirit" or "Spirit of the Lord," This is just "The Holy Spirit." But that still came up like a hundred times in the New Testament, 42 of those times were in the book of Acts. Do you think the Spirit is active

in the early church? Do you still think he is active now? Yes. But what is he active doing?

Thanks for asking!

The Holy Spirit conceives the Son into the flesh, not with a physical act, but his divine power.

The Holy Spirit is present in baptism, Directs words of Prophets, Directs words of Apostles, he fills, he Reveals, Descends, Causes to rejoice, He is Given to those who ask, he Teaches. He is Received (many, many times, he is received). He Is promised, he Comforts, he Falls on people quite often. He Is a gift, he Speaks, he Sends out, Testifies, Makes overseers, Pours out God's love, Gives righteousness peace and joy, Gives power, Sanctifies, Temples or dwells in us, Makes us say "Jesus is Lord", Gives fellowship, Gives endurance, Renews, Gives gifts, allows us to share in Him, Preaches the Good News, Carries prophets, Helps us pray, Intercedes in prayer, Gives fruit.

What wonderful verbs! All of those ought give us reasons for joy. A Helper indeed, to our advantage indeed, that these gifts, theses actions are carried out by God here and around the world. How could we ever say we are alone?

But I must confess I am holding back. There are other verbs the Holy Spirit does.

Because is everything in this world great? Is everything in us perfect? And what does a helper and comforter and friend do with that? It's great to have the super positive friend, by all means it's so much better than a toxic leech, right? And there is something quite beautiful about a friend who still cares about you even when you're wrong, but... at what point are they just a "yes" man, just a smiling face as you edge closer to danger? Is that a good helper? Is that the Holy Spirit?

No, and so we saw Jesus say the Holy Spirit will convict the world. Elsewhere we see that – the rest of the verbs now - the Holy Spirit Calls to repentance, Can be blasphemed, Is lied to, Is resisted, Forbids, and Is grieved.

Those aren't as positive and happy words are they? But this is our indication that the Spirit, as we confess every week in the Creed, is a real person of the Trinity – not some magic happy force or voodoo karma. A real person of the Trinity, and One who cares, cares enough to tell us when we are wrong, cares enough to tell us the truth, cares enough to walk with us as we struggle with that truth, cares enough to risk you being mad at him or telling lies about him, if it means your good. He isn't a “yes man,” he wants to guide you in truth to Christ.

But now maybe we are wondering if we've grieved or resisted the Spirit, “what if we've sinned against him!?” And so we must remember again that, first of all, if you are worried about it – you haven't. Because those who ignore the Spirit don't care if they have. Secondly, we must remember his work and promises, his promises that he comes in baptism (Peter says this in Verses 38-39 of his very Pentecost sermon!), have you been baptized? Then rest a little. And his Work: to bear witness to Christ, so do you confess Christ as Risen Lord and Savior? Then the Spirit is yours and his indwelling gifts are yours.

And so you need not fear him. But can rejoice in that whole long list of gifts and positive joys he brings. And if those seem lacking. If your heart and mind seem filled with negativity or anger or despair. First of all, don't assume that means you are doomed, we just went over how you can know you have the Spirit. And once again, I'll remind you, this is not so much about feelings at all, but words – Words of God, for you!

So if the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are lacking... ask for more! And let his work and promises come to you all the more. Open those ears, open that heart to the truth of the Word, that Christ has died and rose for you! That his Word is a lamp to you. Walk in it, or rather, be led in it by the Spirit. Let the helper help you in it. And see if joy and light comes along!

And if the darkness of the outside world is what is crushing you – despair, evil, injustice, death, tragedy, violence... I think this is where we find comfort in our Lord's words today regarding the Holy Spirit. "He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged."

Which is cryptic, yes (as is all Jesus' teaching this Maundy Thursday), and again it does show the Holy Spirit is not a "yes" man, but that He comes also to help us by standing against the world and its evil and lies. They will not get off scott-free, they will not go unpunished. Jesus is exalted, the Spirit convicts the world of that, the devil is defeated, the Spirit convicts the world of that, and those who block their ears, and deny the exalted king and prefer their darkness will receive exactly what they want – darkness.

A sad reality, of course, and One contrary to the will of God, which is that all come to a knowledge of the truth, but a reminder that the darkness will not win.

We have, by this Holy Spirit, been brought to the Light of the World Jesus. We have been washed, rooted, planted, made One with Him. And we are not left as orphans but equipped with

the promised Spirit that may not always bring about a particular feeling, but make no mistake, his promised gifts are still ours, even as the Savior He points to, is ours unto life everlasting.

And on Pentecost we see his heart for the world, to offer these gifts to the great and the forgotten, in each language, in each land. Which brings us back to you. Is there Word and Water here for you? Yes, there is! Which means the Spirit is here for you too, in you! To help, to give, to guard, and all those good verbs – until the fullness of his gifts, Christ's Salvation, are yours completely.

God be praised. Amen.