

The Holy Spirit Teaches John 14:23-31

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

Did the disciples get it? Did they always understand what Jesus was talking about when He was with them, teaching them and doing miracles in their midst for 3 years? Look at the evidence, how many times were things “hidden” from the disciples’ minds? How many times did they not understand what Jesus was talking about? He even had to explain parables to them in private.

I do not know about you, but there are times I read through a passage of Scripture and do not always understand it. There are things about God that I can explain by saying, “this is what God says about that particular thing,” but that does not mean I understand how such a thing can be so.

In Matthew chapter 11, we have these words of Jesus. At that time Jesus said, “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*.” (Matt. 11:25-27)

What does this mean that He hid them from the wise and intelligent, but that He has revealed them to infants? What is Jesus trying to say here? Jesus is talking about faith!

Dear friends, Jesus’ goal is faith! He wants us to believe and trust Him at His Word. In fact, even when we do not understand, His goal is that we believe and trust Him at His word. He wants us to have faith like small children. He wants us to trust Him implicitly, without question or doubt. It is not about understanding, but about faith.

Let me give an example. Jesus said, “Take eat; this is my body! Drink of it, all of you, this is My blood of the covenant, poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.”

We are very tempted to say, “Seriously, Jesus? You are giving me Your flesh to eat and Your blood to drink?” Let’s face the truth here, do Jesus’ words make sense? This is difficult to understand!

In the 6th chapter of John’s Gospel, Jesus says in part, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.” (John 6:53-56)

Because of these words, some of His disciples no longer followed Him. Today, in the discussion of the Lord’s Supper, there are some, who in an effort to help the words of Jesus make sense, do their own mental gymnastics with these words – they try and explain away the word “is.” Some

claim, “What Jesus really meant, is that the bread and wine symbolize or represent His body and blood, not that we really eat and drink of Jesus.” Another group tried to explain these words so that they are understandable by claiming, “What happens is, when you eat the bread and wine, they change into Christ’s body and blood.”

I do not claim this is easy to understand, but Jesus said that the bread is His body; that the wine *is* His blood; and that those who eat and drink in faith, receive forgiveness. So, that is what I believe. As I eat the bread, I also eat Christ’s body; when I drink of the cup, I also drink of Christ’s blood. I can explain that somehow Christ sacramentally unites His flesh and blood to the things I see and taste – the bread and wine – I trust Jesus at His word.

Does God want your complete understanding? Or does He want you to believe and trust in Him, so that you might receive forgiveness, eternal life, and salvation?

No, it is not always easy to believe. Later in this monologue of which our text is a small portion, in chapter 16, the disciples tell Jesus that He is speaking plainly, “*now You are speaking plainly and are not using a figure of speech. Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God.*” Jesus answered them, “*Do you now believe? Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.*” (John 16:29-33)

“Do you truly believe now?” Jesus asked them. He knew what was coming, He knew they would run away when He was arrested, and that they would hide behind locked doors on the day He had told them He would be raised from the dead. He knew they would have tribulation in the world.

He also knew which ones would be martyred for the faith. He knew which ones, although their faith would waver and falter, would give their lives rather than deny Him.

What about you? What comes along that makes your faith falter? What tribulations cause you to tremble in doubt? What is it that causes you to wonder if it is really all true?

Sometimes it is problems in your life that cause your faith to falter. Sometimes it is a difficult teaching that doesn’t seem to make sense to you that causes you to wonder if it is all true. Maybe you wonder about the things of God because society and the world teach something that seems to be *easily* understandable and true, but it contradicts God’s Word – so you are tempted to go along with what the world says, just because it *appears* more believable.

Dear friends, Satan attacks faith each and every day. He likes to whisper to you, “Doesn’t that make more sense than what you read in the Bible?” He fairly screams at you, “Come on, you do not buy that, there is no way that is right. Look around you, see what everybody else believes... see what everybody else thinks is right... doesn’t that make more sense than what God seems to be declaring in His Word?”

In our text, Jesus said, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me. These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”

Jesus understands the temptations that we face each and every day. He knows that on our own, we would have no faith at all. So, He promises the Holy Spirit to teach you, to guide you into all truth, to grant you peace.

Today is Pentecost, we rejoice in the remarkable sending of the Holy Spirit on that day, that the disciples were moved by the Holy Spirit to boldly speak, proclaim Christ, record for us the Word of God that is the New Testament, and even that they were martyred – remaining faithful even to the point of death – that they, by the Spirit, might teach us.

Jesus wants us to trust Him solely, even when we do not understand completely. He also wants you to strive for understanding of those things you do not yet know. So, my dear friends, that is why He promises the Holy Spirit will come to you and teach you.

Today, God’s Spirit teaches you and gives you gifts. God, in His love, has gathered us together in this place. His Spirit moves all His chosen whom He has called by name through the waters of baptism, by the power of His Spirit. The Spirit taught you the importance of being here, He brought you here to receive all the bountiful mercy and grace of His peace, truth, and love. It is the Spirit who is at work in God’s gifts of Word and Supper. He brought us all together in this place so that He would continue filling us with Himself in His Word and Supper.

It is the Spirit who is at work even now in the Word you are hearing. He is teaching you, leading you to trust that you are forgiven for your doubts and fears. He is teaching you that are forgiven for the times your faith failed.

And when you step forward to this communion rail and join all those gathered around the banquet feast of the Lamb and eat of His body and drink of His blood, that meal, my friends, is the ultimate place to receive the Spirit’s gift of peace – His teaching of heart and mind. God loves you so very much that He feeds you Himself. In this gift, you join with all the saints who have gone before and are gathered round the throne in His eternal kingdom – all those who abide in Spirit taught truth.

Today, the Spirit is giving gifts to Christians – all over the world – even here in this place. Let us rejoice in these gracious and marvelous gifts of God to life everlasting. Amen.