

**Sermon Series: “Good News for Life”**  
**“Pentecost Preparation and Practicalities”**  
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**Pentecost Sunday, May 23, 2021**

There are some times when leaving a place is advantageous. E.g., I recall going from Bienville Elementary to Ecole Classique in the 5th grade and how that was ultimately difficult for me; I was used to very little homework— and watching many TV shows likes Gomer Pyle and Gilligan’s Island!— to a great deal of homework; this move was advantageous for me in the long run. E.g., we recall that Joe Burrow moved from Ohio State University to LSU and won not only the National Championship, but also the Heisman Trophy! E.g., a number of you did not grow up in New Orleans, but you came here and found a good life. The moves away from what was usual and safe were actually advantageous for many people. Today, we will see that that is true also in the Christian faith.

READ John 16:4b-15 (p. 110)

**CONTEXT:** Jesus has just warned the disciples of rejection by others, even hatred for being His follower. He reminded them that the rejection is ultimately of Him, and His Father. Now we see the comfort Jesus gave them to handle such situations, and more!

READ vv 4b-7. “Jesus prepared His disciples for the coming of the Holy Spirit, which makes His departure advantageous for them.” We can probably understand well the way the disciples first reacted to Jesus when He said He was leaving them. In the synoptic gospels He tells them three times that He is going to be rejected by the religious leaders and killed, but on the third day He would rise. The disciples were uncomprehending of this. In fact, in Matthew 16:21-23 Peter tries to discourage Jesus from this— “Lord, may it never be!”— but Jesus has to rebuke him— “Get behind me Satan!” That is natural for us with loved ones. E.g., I recall after my Dad has some strokes, I was talking with his doctor and asked him how much longer he thought my Dad had to live, and he said months; I was shocked, not only by the short time period but also just to hear that about my own Dad. And the doctor was right; within a year my Dad died. E.g., I heard yesterday in Annual Conference the name read of a pastor who died in the last year— Rev. Dave Sheehan, a very good friend of mine, someone who sought me out to comfort me in some of the battles in which I was involved against the liberal shifting of our Conference; one day he told me he was going to retire, that he was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s Disease, and he knew he was going to die, and he was at peace with the Lord, and it caused me a lot of surprise as to how all this could be happening to him and entrusting him into the Lord’s care. That is how the disciples felt. But Jesus was letting them know that His leaving them would be advantageous for them. This seems counterintuitive, but it isn’t. I am reminded of how things can get better when someone leaves, such as in politics, businesses, and such as in sports. Please consider the Denver Broncos, where Coach Dan Reeves lead John Elway and his teammates to three Super Bowls, all

losses, but two years after Reeves left the new head Coach Mike Shanahan led John Elway and the team to two Super Bowls-- both wins. Jesus' replacement is the Holy Spirit, and He had a very important role.

READ vv 8-11. "The Holy Spirit's role involves informing the world that it will convict the world on sin (cf. 3:18), righteousness (cf. 2:23-25; 8:31-33), and judgement (cf. 7:24), ' . . . shaming the world and convincing it of its own guilt, thus calling it to repentance' (D.A. Carson, *John*, p. 537)." Let's look at each of these. The Holy Spirit will convict the world, prove the world wrong, about their sin because they have not believed in Him, and this with goal to bringing the world to repentance. READ 3:18. This is especially true about those who saw the earthly Jesus and His ministry and still rejected Him. His brother James was like that, and after Jesus' resurrection he became the leader of the church in Jerusalem, and was so prominent a figure that the Jewish historian Josephus wrote about him. The Holy Spirit uses people to bring skeptics to belief. E.g., for Dr. Francis Collins, it was an elderly woman who was terminally ill who asked him was he believed about Jesus and Christianity, and he had to be honest with himself— he rejected Christianity not because he had examined it but more so by presupposition dismissed it. The Holy Spirit used that elderly woman to start him on the road to becoming a Christian. We read the Holy Spirit will convict the world because of its righteousness since He is going to the Father— He will live on in the resurrection— and their shallow righteousness will be seen for what it is— a sham. READ 2:23-25. People saw miracles and saw Jesus the victor on earth, and wanted to get on the "victory train", full of positive momentum. But what about when it would be unpopular to follow Jesus, where would they be then? Jesus knew the fickleness of worldly belief in Him. E.g., I recall talking to a teenager who became a Christian and was going to Bible Studies, and once in my office I was talking to him about the call to surrender to Jesus in Lordship, but he was having a hard time with this, and when the conversation touched on giving

our dating life to the Lord, he said clearly he could not do this and would not do this. E.g., there is also a misrepresentation of righteousness that the world claims, especially today as seen in the area of human sexuality; in a recent *Time* (May 24/May 31, 2021, p. 90) magazine focused on “Visions of Equity” it had a blurb on “Teach Sex and Consent Education in Schools”, where it states, “We must mandate comprehensive sex education in schools that is culturally competent and includes instruction on consent. . . Sex education should also be expansive and inclusive of all identities”; the blurb goes on that in 13 years a whole new generation can be trained to think in these ways— which is a tragedy for young people, since they would be taught to doubt something as basic and innate as gender identity! There are times when we are on a mountain top experience and the idea of being a Christian fill us with righteous, peaceful thoughts, but when it comes to living with Christ in the valley of opposition and rejection, even the valley of the shadow of death, where will we be? Also, Jesus said the Holy Spirit will convict the world on judgement, because the ruler of this world has been condemned. The way Satan wants us to judge right and wrong is based on human pragmatism. In John 7:24 Jesus challenges His critics to judge correctly— if they perform circumcision on the Sabbath day, how can they criticize Him because He heals someone on the Sabbath? His opponents judged right and wrong based on human pragmatism, what worked for them, instead of seeking God’s will and His principles. There are many areas where following Jesus is impractical from a human point of view— like tithing! Waiting until marriage to have sexual relations. E.g., I recall someone who was looking for a job and meeting with a job recruiter for other companies, and the recruiter asked him a question to which, if he answered truthfully, would not be to his advantage and put him in a not-so-good light. So he had a decision to make. Go with human pragmatism, or godly righteousness. By God’s grace, he went the route of godly righteousness, and he trusted God to take care of him. E.g., Tim Tebow was offered to do an

endorsement which would require one day of his time and get him one million dollars, but he could see it may interfere with his then-coach Bill Belichick, so he asked the coach what to do, and the coach did not want him to do it, so he did not do it.

READ vv 12-15. “The Holy Spirit’s role also involves leading them to truth and declaring what is to come— which is based on glorifying Jesus. Cf. 5:19-23; 17:18; 17:3-4.” Two things are especially clear in this text. First, the Holy Spirit speaks truth— ἀλήθεια, the Greek word for “truth”— occurs twice in v 13. Second, the Holy Spirit speaks what He hears from Jesus and the Father. This is an interesting “inside view” of the workings of the Trinity. There is no competition or challenges to authority like in the pagan gods; there is complete dependence upon and unity with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. So the Holy Spirit’s message will be consistent with Jesus’ message, and consistent with God’s message in the Old Testament. There is a view in United Methodist seminaries that God is continuing to reveal new truths to us— this is process theology— and God is continuing to evolve, which is another way of saying God is continuing to evolve to be like me. So when it comes to human sexuality, this is one way people who call themselves Christians get around the Bible-- the Holy Spirit is leading us to new truths, but this is the antithesis of what Jesus is saying about the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit reminds us what Jesus has said. E.g., I recall as a pastor I gave someone a half-truth answer about something, trying to save face, and the Holy Spirit began to remind me of the problem I faced, because I served a God of truth who called me to be true to my word. Thus, I had to go back and apologize to the person and give the truth.

“How has the Holy Spirit been at work in your life?” On this day of Pentecost, where has the Holy Spirit been changing us, guiding us, convicting us, transforming us? What is the Holy Spirit telling us this morning needs to change in our lives so we can be about glorifying Jesus?