

THE DAY OF PENTECOST

Whitsunday

Study Notes for the Christian Layperson

by: Rev. Travis Loeslie



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John 14:23-31 ESV

Author and Date:

The Holy Spirit caused the Apostle John to write the words of this Gospel (ca. AD 90). These words were compiled in the farewell discourse of Jesus to His disciples in John 14-16. These words were uttered on Holy Thursday, the night Jesus was betrayed. Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit, who comes fifty days after Jesus' death and resurrection on Pentecost (or, as the German speakers remember: *Pfingsten*).

²³ Jesus answered him, "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." ²⁴ 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.

- Jesus gives comforting promises to His disciples. Christians show that they love the Father by keeping Jesus' words. Jesus' words matter! His doctrine is more precious than life itself because it grants eternal life. Christians do well to cling to Jesus' words above all else.
- The Father loves those who keep Jesus' words. He comes to make His home with the Christian. When Jesus forgives our sins, the Father comes to dwell in His people. This mystical union is the fruit of the forgiveness of sins.

- Johann Spangenberg notes: "Not only will a lover of God, a hearer and doer of His Word, be safe from God's wrath, the devil, death, and hell, but God will also be his mansion, palace, and dwelling place eternally!" He continues: "...What more blessed thing could happen to us poor men that we should be the dwelling-place, pleasure-garden, paradise, and kingdom of God's high Majesty, and all that we do and are will continue against all the gates of hell, indeed, against all the rage and fury of the world. They will not move us, unless it should happen that the Guests, Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, are no longer God." (Spangenberg, *The Christian Year of Grace*, 218)
- These "guests" by faith are "generous and benevolent Guests. They do not come with empty hands, nor depart without being thanked. As they bring the treasure of all goods, graces, and gifts with them when they come, they likewise do not forget all divine blessing, salvation, and blessedness, as the accounts and example of Abraham and Lot show (Gen. 18; 19)." (Spangenberg, 218)
- On the flip side, those who do not love the Father do not keep Jesus' words. Disobedience and hard-heartedness against Christ and His words leave a person alone, cold, an atheist or scoffer at truth without God and without spiritual aid in the world.

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²⁵ “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. ²⁶ 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.

- Jesus promises to send the Helper. This is the “Paraclete,” or as Luther often translates the word, the “Comforter.” Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit. This Spirit will remind the disciples of all things. The Spirit of Truth later brings to mind the truth Jesus taught for the Church. This Spirit continues to testify to Christ and His Word throughout these end times. What a gift this Third Person of the Holy Trinity proves to be from Pentecost and into the age of the New Testament.

²⁷ 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. ²⁸ You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. ²⁹ And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe. ³⁰ I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, ³¹ but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.

- Jesus promises “peace.” This is a refrain in St. John’s Gospel. Peace! This peace is not a mere psychological trick, but it is a divine self-giving. It is no simple word, but it is grounded on the God who makes peace by His passion and the shedding of His blood for poor sinners. Jesus reconciles God and man. There is now peace where there was wrath; grace covers sin; comfort of conscience instead of worry and distress; life instead of death. This peace Jesus gives and guarantees with His death and resurrection.

- Spangenberg: “It is as if He says, “Let this be My farewell. I herewith bid you good night and give you the blessing; I depart from you and know nothing better to leave to you at last in this world than My peace, the highest treasure, that you may have a fearless and joyful heart and peaceful conscience in God.” (219)

- Jesus goes to the Father. “The Father is greater than I.” To our ears, shaped by the Trinitarian creeds, we expect to hear of equality in the Godhead. To paraphrase the Athanasian Creed, the Father is equal to the Son according to His Godhead. Jesus reminds us in this Gospel lesson that the Father is in unique authority over Christ’s vocation and mission to save sinners in their need. Christ listens to the words of His Father and carries them out with divine precision.

- Jesus reveals that the devil, the ruler of this world (or “the prince of the power of the air” [Ephesians 2:2]), is “a roaring lion” (1 Peter 5:8) on the loose. Satan will strike Jesus and the little Church, but His power is limited. His rule does not extend into heaven, and that makes all the difference. Jesus conquers the ruler of this world by shedding His blood for the sin of the world, and rising in great victory – bruising the head of the ancient serpent (Genesis 3:15). The Lord Christ opens heaven to all believers. No one will stop Jesus’ love for the Father and keep Him from doing His vocation in love – to be the Savior of all who believe in Him.

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