

Where do you find the Holy Spirit? He came upon the disciples of Jesus on the day of Pentecost. As they were together in one place, a great blast of wind came from heaven and filled the whole house. A vision of flames appeared above all of them as they spoke. And they were given the ability to speak in many different languages. These signs amazed the people of Israel and the converts who came from far and wide to the feast. They heard their own native tongues spoken by Christ's disciples. These were incredible signs, which certainly bore witness to the fact that the Spirit of God was there. But the signs are not where we find the Holy Spirit. Instead, these great signs point us to where he is found. Yes, it was amazing for the travelers to hear their own languages coming out of the flaming mouths of the disciples. But pay attention to what they are hearing. They were hearing of the great deeds of God.

Where do you find Jesus? He was a great teacher, doing amazing signs. He raised the dead, healed the sick, and cleansed those with leprosy. Though he was crucified and died, he rose from the dead, bursting forth from the grave. He showed himself to hundreds of his disciples. But again, these great signs point us to where Jesus desires to be found. He says to his disciples, "If you love me, you'll keep my word, and my Father will love you, and we will come to you and live with you." The great signs performed by our Lord Jesus were much more than marvels to the eyes. They fulfilled what had been written and proclaimed by the prophets. They fulfill for us the Word of God, exactly where Jesus wants us to find him.

If we find Jesus in his Word, then we find him in his works. We find him in his life, death, and resurrection just as his Word reveals from Moses and the prophets all the way to the Apostles and Evangelists. It has always been in his Word where God chooses to reveal his great works and make his home in us. As surely as the Holy Spirit came into the house where all the disciples were staying, so does God make his home with all those who hear and believe his Word.

Jesus was a great teacher who performed miraculous signs. Which is more impressive? Was it his teaching or his miracles? People are always trying to reduce Jesus merely to a good teacher of practical wisdom and morals. They downplay, ignore, or even deny the miracles he performed, because they don't want to acknowledge his true identity and status. But he is much more than an earthly teacher or a spiritual guru. He is the Lord God, the eternal Son of the Father. His many miracles testify to this fact. To reduce Jesus simply to a good teacher is to reduce God himself. Sadly, this is exactly what many have done. When you treat Jesus merely as a good teacher, you can act like you are giving him honor. You can say that you are a big fan of his teaching and that he is a major influence on your life. Yet, all the while, you can choose how devoted you want to be. I've had several teachers in my life. I've learned a lot from them, some more than others. But while I may hold each in high regard, I don't necessarily hold onto every word.

Jesus is much more than a good teacher. He does so much more than just say things that are true. He is the Truth, our Lord and Savior, who bore the cross in the place of every sinner. He rose from the dead, securing for us righteousness and everlasting life before God. He is the Lord of lords and King of kings. He is God Almighty.

And yet, where does Jesus want to be found? In his teaching – in his Word – there is where he promises that he and his Father will come to us and dwell in us.

The fact that people reduce Jesus simply to a good and wise teacher not only tells us about what they think about Jesus – that he isn't God's Son – but it tells us how they see his teaching. They don't just

reduce him to a good teacher. Much worse, they reduce his teaching to human wisdom. Jesus wants us to know him as the eternal Son of the Father who came in the flesh, shed his blood to save us from sin and condemnation, and restore us poor sinful beings to true fellowship with the Father. How does he get us to know him in this way? How does he give us everything he won for us? It is through his Word. It is through his teaching. As Jesus says, “You are hearing, not what I say, but what the Father says who sent me.” In other words, “These aren’t my own private words. I don’t speak them as a mere man, but they are the very words of my eternal Father.”

Our Lord’s teaching is much more than wisdom for this world. Any unbeliever can learn to go the extra mile, to make a settlement with his accuser before things get worse, or to do to others what he wants them to do to him. Jesus teaches all of these things, but he does not teach merely for this earthly life. No, Jesus teaches us to lose our earthly lives. He teaches us to go the extra mile, because he walked the way of the cross to save us. He teaches us to pursue peace in view of the peace he established for us with God by his shed blood. And he teaches us to love one another as he has loved us and gave himself up for us.

The teaching of Jesus is easily despised in this world. In fact, he allowed himself to be despised like this. He made himself of no reputation. Though he was the bright and glorious Son of the Father, he took on the form of a servant. So while people were impressed by his miracles and his powerful teaching, many despised him. Others would eventually move on as their amazement wore off. The same happened to his disciples. Many were amazed that they were speaking God’s Word in so many different languages. But others sneered and mocked, accusing them of being drunk.

Jesus knew how difficult the ministry of his disciples would be. He knew that the gospel he was giving them to proclaim would often be ignored and persecuted. So he comforted his disciples by telling them that the words they hear from him will not fall to the ground. They will not amount to the teachings of just another philosopher or religious leader. No, his words are Spirit and Truth. So he says, “The Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of everything I told you.”

The words and teachings of Jesus are the very words of the Father. They are the very Words of the Holy Spirit. While some believe them and others mock them, they are God’s words, God’s teaching, God’s gospel, God’s saving power to put faith and life in the dying heart.

We are not to look for God outside of his Word. St. Paul told the church in Corinth about the wisdom of Christ, which the Holy Spirit gave to him and Apollos. But then he wrote, “I have referred only to myself and Apollos, but I want you to learn from us not to go beyond what Scripture says, in order that you might not boast about one man at the expense of another. (1 Cor 4:6)” And he says earlier in his epistle (1 Cor 2:12), “Now we were not given the spirit of the world but the Spirit who comes from God so that we know the good things God gave us.” And even earlier he writes,

Now that Jews ask for miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, we preach a crucified Christ. The Jews stumble over him, the Greeks think he’s something foolish, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, he is Christ, God’s power and God’s wisdom. God’s foolishness is wiser than men’s wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than men’s strength. (1 Cor 1: 22-25)

The wisdom of this world is completely contrary to the wisdom of God. While the words of the Bible are treated as old, outdated words, they remain the words of God's Spirit giving us peace through our Lord Jesus Christ. This is peace that the world cannot give, peace with God through the blood of Jesus, peace the Holy Spirit pours into our hearts, even as he also gives us love, joy, patience, and all good things. It is peace in knowing that Christ has fulfilled God's Word for us and his Word cannot be broken.

Now, it's a painful lesson to learn the difference between the world's peace and Christ's peace. Perhaps you try to seek peace with those who are somehow in conflict with you. The Holy Spirit certainly teaches you to do this. Yet, it often happens that people don't forgive you, remain angry with you, or continue to put you down. Even though you have the assurance that God forgives you and is at peace with you for Christ's sake, you still have sorrows from your own sinful nature, the temptations of the devil, and the pressures of the world. In the same way, it's often difficult to discern the doctrines of worldly spirits from the teaching of the Holy Spirit. The words of Jesus are often watered down and replaced with teachings that lead people to trust in human reason and strength. Many get frustrated that there are so many churches that can't agree on what the Bible says. So they throw their hands up in despair, assuming that nobody can know the truth. They then look for spiritual guidance in various kinds of signs and worldly wisdom. But Jesus teaches us not to give up. Don't be troubled or afraid. Don't be intimidated by the confusing teachings of this world. Our Lord has not left us as orphans. He hasn't left behind a dead letter or empty words. No, he has left us with the words of eternal life.

We can have confidence in these words, because he has gone to the Father. And by his gracious providence, he lets you hear of these wonderful works in your own native language. He who humbled himself, dying in our place, doing what the Father ordered him to do, now sits at his right hand as equal God and Lord pleading for you. This is what is going on when you hear his Word. This is what is happening when you eat and drink his body and blood. This is the seal and promise given to you in your baptism. These words and promises of Christ may be treated as humble and irrelevant by this world. But the Holy Spirit, sent from heaven, gives these words to you as your life, comfort, and eternal peace, which surpasses all understanding. Amen.