

## The Gift of the Spirit

### Introduction

My father used to always say that Pentecost was his favorite feast of the Church year because it was the only feast that hadn't been co-opted by commercialism.

You look at Christmas and it's all about shopping.

You look at Easter and it's all about easter eggs.

But Pentecost has been spared.

Perhaps this points to something about Pentecost that is important for us to consider this morning.

The Reason why Christmas and Easter are such big *commercial* holidays is because the church made them a big deal and the commercial interests jumped on board.

Perhaps Pentecost has been spared because the Church has not done as good of a job making Pentecost as big of a deal as it should!

Almost everyone knows about Christmas and Easter.

However, most non-Christians, and even many Christians, don't even know what Pentecost is or why it's important.

Ten days ago, in my Ascension Day homily, I noted how the evangelical church focuses so much on the cross that they often lose sight of other essential aspects of the Gospel, like the Ascension.

The same could be said on Pentecost:

Each Lord's day we confess the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son but often we lose sight of the importance of Pentecost.

On Pentecost we rightly take time to consider the Holy Spirit.

The third person of the Trinity who shares an equal Godhead with the Father and the Son and together with them is worshipped and glorified.

This morning, as we consider the Holy Spirit, I'd like to focus on how the Scriptures describe the Holy Spirit as a gift.

I have divided my sermon into three parts:

1. The Spirit is a Gift-Giving Gift
2. The Spirit Gives the Gift of Peace
3. The Spirit Gives the Gift of God's Love

The Spirit is a Gift-Giving Gift

Spirit as Gift

In the book of Acts the Holy Spirit is repeatedly described as a “gift”.

We heard from [Acts 2](#) how Peter called the crowds in Jerusalem to “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive **the gift** of the Holy Spirit.”

Likewise, in [Acts 10](#), when the Gentiles hear Peter’s preaching we read that, “the **gift** of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles.”

But this theme is also present outside of Acts.

In [Hebrews 6](#), those who have turned away from the faith are described as having had a share in the Holy Spirit.

And in this they are said to have “tasted the **heavenly gift**”.

The Spirit is a gift, and one of the things that this means most obviously is that the Spirit cannot be bought.

### **Simony**

This may seem obvious to you but it is actually something that someone attempts to do in the Bible.

In [Acts 8](#) a great persecution arises against the church in Jerusalem causing many to scatter throughout Judea and Samaria.

Phillip, who was one of the seven chosen to help serve, ends up in Samaria where he proclaimed Christ.

Many were converted by Phillip’s preaching and were baptized; including a magician named Simon.

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God they sent Peter and John to Samaria.

When Peter and John arrived they laid their hands on the Samaritans and they received the Holy Spirit.

This impressed Simon the magician.

Simon then came to Peter and John and offered them money to have this same power.

Peter’s response to Simon reveals much.

[Acts 8:20](#) “Peter said to him, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the *gift of God* with money!”

Here Peter describes the Holy Spirit as the gift of God and it cannot be bought with money.

You cannot buy a gift, you can only reject a gift or receive a gift.

The Scriptures repeatedly call upon God’s people to be receptive to what God is giving to them.

As Christians you are called to receive the gift of the Spirit with thanksgiving.

### The Gift-Giving Gift

But one of the fascinating ways Scripture describes the gift of the Holy Spirit is that the Spirit is the gift that gives gifts.

When the Holy Spirit is given to the Church and to the Christians as a *gift*, the New Testament shows that Holy Spirit *also* gives particular gifts to the Church and the Christian.

When we consider the gifts that the Spirit gives to the Church, it would be gifts like the Word, the Sacraments, and the officers who serve the Church.

The Church receives the gift of the Spirit, but then the Spirit gives particular gifts that aid the Church in her sanctification.

When we consider the gifts that the Spirit gives to the Christian, it would be things like the benefits of salvation, the fruit of the Spirit, and particular giftings to serve one's fellow Christian and neighbor.

The Christian receives the gift of the Spirit, but then the Spirit gives particular gifts that aid the Christian in their sanctification and loving service to others.

Christian, as you are ministered to by the ministry of the Church, remember that you are enjoying the gifts of the Spirit.

And, as you enjoy the benefits of your salvation, remember that these gifts come to you by the Spirit.

When we consider the particular gifts and works of the Spirit, there is simply too much to say.

So I wanted to spend the second and third point of this morning's sermon considering two gifts that the Spirit gives to God's people.

### The Spirit Gives the Gift of Peace

In our Gospel Lesson from [John 14](#) this morning, Jesus tells his disciples that, "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."

[John 14](#) is a part of Jesus' Upper Room Discourse with his disciples.

These are Jesus' final words to his apostles before he is betrayed and crucified.

These are his words of comfort and preparation for them to gird them up for the troubles that they will soon face.

But here Jesus looks beyond his own Resurrection to the time when he would leave his disciples after his Ascension.

Jesus tells them that it is better that he should go because when he goes the Father will send the Holy Spirit to them.

And here, the Holy Spirit is described as a Helper.

But it is what Jesus says in the verse immediately following the Gospel Lesson that I want to focus on.

After telling his disciples that they will receive the Spirit Jesus says,

**John 14:27 ESV**

<sup>27</sup> 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.

John draws a very clear connection between the gift of the Spirit to Jesus' disciples and the gift of the peace.

The peace that Jesus' disciples will receive from Christ is a peace that comes to them by the Holy Spirit.

This is informative for you Christian.

You have received the Holy Spirit.

And one of the particular gifts that the Spirit is working to manifest in your life is the gift of peace.

You live in a world of anxiety, but the Spirit seeks to form the peace of Christ in you.

But this gift, as I mentioned above, must be received.

You cannot buy this peace.

This is one of the biggest lies of our culture.

Our culture thinks that peace can be bought, but it can't.

Retail therapy won't bring you peace.

You can, however, *receive* the peace of Christ by the Spirit.

And this peace is lasting peace; the promised rest of God that Christ has won for his people!

But in addition to this peace, the Spirit also brings the gift of God's love.

The Spirit Gives the Gift of God's Love

One of the most profound meditations of the way the Spirit brings the gift of God's love to us is from St. Augustine' meditations on [1 John 4](#).

[1 John 4](#), is one of the most famous passages Holy Scripture on the theme of love.

**1 John 4:7–8 ESV**

<sup>7</sup> Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

St. Augustine meditates on how this passage relates to the doctrine of the Trinity.

Augustine found it profound that John states that God *is* love and that love is from God.

A trinitarian question arises from this:

When John states that love comes from God, does he refer to the Son or the Spirit.

John answers this question in the next two verses.

**1 John 4:9–10 ESV**

<sup>9</sup> In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

This seems to present a simple answer, God sends his love through the Son.

But John does not stop with the Son.

In the next verses John writes,

**1 John 4:11–12 ESV**

<sup>11</sup> Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup> No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

For John, the way that Christians love one another is through the presence of God abiding in them.

But it is in the next verse, verse 13 that John reveals *how* God abides in believers:

**1 John 4:13 ESV**

<sup>13</sup> By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.

From this Augustine rightly reasoned that that the whole Triune God *is love*.

The Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, *is love*.

Therefore, when the Triune God sends his love, he does so in a triune manner:

The Father sends his love through the Son, and by the work of the Spirit his love is applied to the Christian.

Fesko puts it this way,

Love originates in the Trinity among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and the Father pours out the Spirit on the Son, and both in turn pour out the Spirit on the church—a gift of love.

– Fesko

On this Pentecost Sunday we celebrate this divine gift of love that has been made manifest to us in the Holy Spirit.

This Pentecost let us abide in the love of God as we keep in step with the Spirit.

And, abiding in God's love, let us love one another and see his love perfected in us.

For God is a flame of love, and he has placed the flame of his love on us by the Spirit.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN!