

Diakonia Program – Northern Illinois Synod ELCA

Christian Doctrine

**Session 4, Segment A
The Holy Spirit**

- I. Opening Devotions
- II. The Concept of “Spirit”
 - a. The use of the term “spirit” is not exclusive to speech about God.
 - b. There is power in the past (revenge, anger, hatred) that drives.
 - c. There is power in the culture and gathered people (mob mentality, war, consumption) that guides.
 - d. There is power in a vision of the future (domination, lust, greed) that calls.
 - e. We can speak of “evil” spirits in this sense, as we can speak of “possession” in an experiential way.

III. The Holy Spirit

“I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.”

⁶ *What does this mean?*

Answer: I believe that by my own reason or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church he daily and abundantly forgives all my sins, and the sins of all believers, and on the last day he will raise me and all the dead and will grant eternal life to me and to all who believe in Christ. This is most certainly true. (From Luther’s Small Catechism)

- a. The Holy Spirit is the power of the Triune God as it:
 - 1. Expresses power in the remembrance/tending/telling of the story of Jesus Christ and drives us;
 - 2. Forms a community, formed by the Triune God;
 - 3. Calls people into God’s future revealed in Christ.
- b. The Holy Spirit is essential to the place of God in our lives
 - 1. Life giving
 - 2. Communion making
 - 3. Power to be transformed and changed - sanctified.

“The Spirit of God is the spirit of divine presence. It makes both the Christ of yesterday and the kingdom of tomorrow present today in the word of preaching and the celebration of sacraments.” (Peters 237)

“The Spirit unifies in that it ties us to the saving work of Christ and binds us one to another through membership in the one body of Christ, the church. The Spirit is the very life-giving and communion-making presence of God at work in our lives, a post-Easter form of Emanuelism. The work of Christ for our justification becomes, through the Holy Spirit, the work of sanctification. (Peters 239)

IV. The Christ of the Spirit

- a. The gift of the Spirit in the Baptism of Jesus – The fact of his messiahship.

“It is in the special relationship to God in this Spirit that Jesus experiences himself as the messianic ‘child’, and experiences Israel’s God as ‘my beloved Father’. In the Spirit, Jesus prays ‘Abba, dear Father’. In the Spirit he knows himself to be the beloved Son. So the Spirit is the real determining subject of this special relationship of Jesus’ to God, and of God’s to Jesus.” (Moltmann, SL, 61)

- b. The Spirit in the experience of the cross – The content of his messiahship
 1. If the Spirit leads Jesus to the cross in obedience and call, it also accompanies him to the and through the suffering.
 2. A companion in suffering
 3. Christ bears the Spirit into the world and midst of suffering

“He himself brings into the God-forsaken world the Spirit of God, the Spirit who intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words, as Paul says in Romans 8.” (Moltmann SL 65)

V. The Spirit of Christ

- a. The Spirit and resurrection

“Christ was raised through Yahweh’s ruach, the divine energy of life, so that his rising and his presence as ‘the living One’ is the manifestation of God’s Spirit, which will transform this transitory world into the new world of eternal life.” (Moltmann, SL, 66)

“This is just what happens at Easter. God puts the Spirit in the dead Jesus and life begins anew. The resurrection of Jesus is the eschatological act of the Holy Spirit whereby the promise is fulfilled in the person of Christ and made anew for the rest of creation.” (Peters 242)

- b. The Spirit as bringer of the future

“Christian faith is response to the word of the messianic gospel, and the resonance of that word in the hearts and lives of men and women. But in this very way, Christian faith is the experience of the quickening Spirit – experience of the beginning of the new creation of the world... faith is a response, but seen eschatologically it is a beginning.” (Moltmann, SL, 68)

“The Spirit is the eschatological power by which the present age will be transformed into the kingdom of God.” (Peters 243)

- c. The Spirit as Unity/Trinity

The communal/relational being of the Trinity becomes an end time reality for us in the provisional call to unity and community.

“The Spirit integrates, unifies, and brings things into relationship. The Spirit does not simply demand conformity to an already existent or static state of oneness. Rather it engages in the dynamic process of integrating what is presently estranged or disintegrated. Unity in the Spirit is a reconciling unity, or better, a process of entering into unity...The task of God’s Spirit is reconciliation, restoring wholeness to a creation broken apart by self-absolutization and sin.” (Peters 243)

VI. The Blessings of the Spirit - Faith, Hope and Love

“In faith the Holy Spirit makes Christ present to us; it unifies what is separated by time and space...In hope, the Spirit illumines our consciousness with visions of God’s future, with the freeing confidence that the divine promises will attain fulfillment. In love, the Spirit actually releases the power that bears effective witness to the ongoing work of divine reconciliation.” (Peters 243-4)

- a. These three “virtues” stand at the heart of the Christian life -- not as works, but as gifts of the Spirit.
- b. Faith
 1. While we can say faith is in some sense a response we make, its impetus is beyond our scope and control. Our faith is not a “generic” trust, but trust in God particularly revealed in Christ. *“This presence of the Lord in the midst of human lives is the work of the Holy Spirit.” (Peters 244)* We may believe; we may trust, but the object of our belief and trust is the presence - not mere remembrance - of Christ. This is the gift of the Spirit.
 2. This unity with Christ creates a life of paradox -- new life in an old age; sinner & saint. Christ’s resurrection and righteousness are imparted through his presence in the Spirit to create this paradox with what we bring to the table.
 3. There is no doctrine of the “human spirit.” It is all from God. *“Inspiration (being spirit-breathed) is not the actualization of a human potential. This is not a case wherein God has placed within our soul a little divine spark called the ‘pneuma’ which we must fan with trust and virtue until it burns more lightly.”* All that is Christ-like, Spirit-filled about us comes from Christ through the power of the Spirit.
- c. Hope
 1. As faith makes the Christ of the past present; hope makes the future of God (the kingdom, the consummation) present.
 2. Faith trusts the truth of God’s revelation in Christ; Hope looks expectantly to the completion of that revelation in time. The result is liberation, freedom. Freedom from the structures, powers, and brokenness of this age as we live expectantly; freedom from the harshest master - ourselves. *“The reception of Christ’s presence in faith and hope requires a decision on our part to move over and make room, to allow Christ the place of lordship within (us).” (Peters 247)*

d. Love

1. With the freedom that comes from faith (trusting who and whose we are) and hope (knowing that we are bound to God's future) we can live in union with God and others in the way in which Christ manifests union with all things -- love. *"Because the gospel declares us fully holy on the basis of what Christ has done, the life of love we lead can add nothing to our status before heaven. We are already of infinite value in the eyes of God, so whatever good deeds we perform cannot increase our value. This sets our love free.... We do not contain in ourselves a great storehouse of a commodity of stuff called 'love' that we can simply distribute when we are willing to reduce our inventory. (Love) is a quality of relationship and action created on the spot, in each separate situation, through the freedom given by the Spirit."* (Peters 248)
2. To love as Christ loved is the ultimate union in this time -- and the end time - with Christ.

VII. The Personal Aspects of the Spirit

- a. Talents - Those innate proclivities which may be used for many purposes, including witness to the coming age of God.
- b. Gifts - Perhaps those things which arise in each of us from an encounter with the Spirit that have special use in service of the kingdom and reconciliation of the world.
- c. Fruits - Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5:22-23) -- the maturation of life imbued with the Spirit.

VIII. Sanctification

- d. Empowered to Love & Live -- *"By making Christ present to us through faith, the Spirit fills our heart with hope and love and empowers our lives for effective living... We do not seek to live lovingly in order to prove ourselves obedient and therefore holy..."* (Peters 257) We love because it expresses our union with Christ; our union with him and his future.
- e. Completion - The Body of Christ is a creation of the Spirit that is not only a sum of the diversity of the saints; but it is a place where the scattered and fragmented pieces of the whole are assembled into a community of love.
- f. Kenosis - The Spirit-led emptying of our self into union with Christ -- Philippians 2
- g. Theosis - Our becoming "little Christs." -- Our divinization and integration into the Trinitarian reality of the future.

IX. The Cosmic Dimensions of the Spirit

- h. Our sanctification is part of the process of making the whole cosmos new.
- i. The Spirit is moving wherever reconciliation, integration, -- the works described above are taking place.

X. Break

Session 4, Segment B
The Church & the Means of Grace

I. The Problem of the Church

- a. Individualism negating community
- b. Privatized spirituality
- c. Bureaucracy
- d. Hypocrisy of proclamation and praxis
- e. Consumer organization

II. What is the Church?

“The church has been given the charge of bringing light to the world in this period while we await the full shining glory of God when even the sun will be surpassed in radiance. In the partial darkness of the present aeon, however, we must push on, following the path that the lamp of God’s word illumines, a word made audible in the church’s preaching, made visible in the celebration of the sacraments, and made tangible in the ministry of reconciling love... We can identify the presence of the church when and where the story of Jesus is being told with its significance.” (Peters 267)

a. Biblical Symbols of the Church

- i. The symbol of “the flock” - belong to and tended by Christ
- ii. The bride - loved by Christ, mother of her children
- iii. Branches of the vine - bearing fruit
- iv. Temple of the Holy Spirit - dwelling place for God
- v. Body of Christ - Christ as head; Christians in cooperation

b. The Lutheran Offering

“(We) teach that one holy church will remain forever. The church is the assembly of the saints in which the gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly. And it is enough for the true unity of the church to agree concerning teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. It is not necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies instituted by human beings be alike everywhere. As Paul says [Eph. 4:5,6]: “One faith, one baptism, on God and Father of us all...” (Augsburg Confession, Article VII)

c. The Church as Event

“The church is a gathering centered on an encounter with the Living Word as it is proclaimed in preaching and celebrated in sacraments. Contrary to what most of the culture thinks about the church, the church is not a thing; it is the encounter of God and people as they gather around the means of grace – the gifts of God. Church is an event. This definition guards against two things. First it prohibits constructs that see the church as the repository of dead propositions about God. All too often the church is portrayed or presented as an artifact or dispenser of some version of truth. This article points to the encounter between God and people as a living thing. Second, this view of the church stands against ecclesiology that puts the church (or its leaders) in the place of God. This dynamic treatment of the church also asserts that the church matters because it is the nexus of encounter with the holy in the world.” (Olson, Address to the Illinois Conference of Churches, Sept. 2008)

d. Gathered and Sent

“The event that we call “Church” is formative because it is an encounter with the God who forms us. This encounter “calls, enlightens, and sanctifies” the church for its mission in the world. As Vitor Westhelle says, the church formed around Word and sacrament moves “from house to the street.”¹ We live out the Word and become sacraments ourselves in our daily lives beyond the formative event. Church keeps happening in every move we make. Certainly, it might be countered that while the event called church can at times change the world as it moves into the street, it is also true that this event called church can also all too easily end at the door of the building where the gathering happened having no impact at all on the world. This is not a sign that church does not happen, but rather is a testimony to the provisional character of the church. The church, when it is fully church is a gathering of the saints. But, as Luther taught so clearly, we are simul justus et peccator – saints and sinners. He spoke then of the visible church – an earthly regime – as magna peccatrix.” (Olson)

e. Marks of the Church (Luther, On Councils and the Church, 1539)

- i. The Word
- ii. Baptism
- iii. Eucharist
- iv. Power of the Keys - Forgiveness of Sins
- v. Office of Ministry - Apostolic & Diakonal
- vi. Public Worship
- vii. The Cross

“...the (theology of the cross) gives rise to a (church of the cross). Indeed it could be said that the whole purpose of the theology of the cross is to engender a movement – a people – that exists in the world

¹ Vitor Westhelle, “Communion Ecclesiology and the Cross: Limits and Possibilities,” www.elca.org/planning/westhelle.html (Westhelle is Professor of Systematic Theology at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago)

*under the sign of the cross of Jesus Christ: a movement of people called into being by his Spirit and being conformed to his person and furthering his work. A cruciform people.*²(Hall)

- f. Church, Word & Sacraments as Remembrance and Anticipation
 - i. The church is a community rooted in the story of the risen Jesus and driven by hope, to live in anticipation of the consummation of the Kingdom of God. Faith - Hope - Love
 - ii. Worship is a means of imagining the world as God intends it; as God will fulfill promises. The gathered community is sent into the world to cultivate this vision in the broken present.
 - iii. The Word - The Spirit's moving to create faith (assurance) and engender hope (anticipation) to offer love freely through forgiveness and service.
 - iv. Baptism - The one time declaration of "what we are" and "what we shall be;" a beginning of a journey to live from baptism to death, into the future of God's kingdom in the community of God's people.
 - v. Eucharist - The foretaste of the feast to come (hope); the faith in forgiveness and justification (faith); the love of Christ poured out to overflow in us.

Session 4 Bibliography

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The Use of the Means of Grace - ELCA Statement on Worship, 1997

² Douglas John Hall, *The Cross in Our Context*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003) 137