

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Two weeks ago, we heard how the Creator remains present and active in His creation. And despite our ongoing misuse and abuse of His creation, He keeps His creation going. Last week, we heard how God came into His created world to be present and active in a very unique way – as a human being, yet without sin. He came into this fallen world to defeat the power of sin and evil that Satan and we humans brought into it.

Tonight, God comes to be present and active in another way. This time, God sends His Holy Spirit into us, into our bodies.

Jesus gained His Lordship through death, but how do we come to know Jesus? We no longer see Jesus fully as He is. So, if we have never physically met Jesus, how do we come to know Him? On our own, we are left to saying, “*I believe ... that I cannot believe*” in Jesus as my Lord or come to Him. If Jesus’ redemption remains hidden, then all is lost.

To this question, the Third Article of the Creed enters in:

*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.*

So, in order that Christ’s death and resurrection may not remain hidden, the Holy Spirit comes and preaches, that is, the Holy Spirit leads us to the Lord, who redeems us.

The Holy Spirit sanctifies us through the following works: through the “*forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.*”

To this, Luther says, *“the Christian church is your mother, who gives birth to you and bears you through the Word. And this is done by the Holy Spirit who bears witness concerning Christ.”*

In regard to the Holy Spirit, He leads the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints. This *“communion of saints”* is the Christian church, which is made up of saints, a congregation of saints. And you are in this Church, as the Holy Spirit makes us saints through the preaching of the gospel. It is only through the Christian Church that the Holy Spirit sanctifies us. Otherwise, we would never know or hear about Christ.

Then in this Christian Church sanctified by the Holy Spirit, we receive *“the forgiveness of sins.”* We receive the forgiveness of sins in the following ways: Holy Baptism, Absolution, the Lord’s Supper, hearing the Word preached, and the commendation of the dying. This is where we receive forgiveness. Outside of the Christian Church, there is no sanctification and there is no forgiveness.

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit will sanctify us through *“the resurrection of the flesh.”* So, after our death, sin will have completely passed away and the Holy Spirit will then complete His work. Therefore, after death, there is nothing but eternal life.

Outside the Christian Church, there is no sanctification. There is no justification. There is no salvation.

Here, in the one holy Christian and apostolic Church, the Holy Spirit preaches. He calls you and makes Christ known to you.

Earlier this week, Elsie surprised Melissa and me. While Melissa was singing “Create in Me a Clean Heart,” the historic offertory from Psalm 51, Melissa paused and without any coaching, Elsie continued the song. That was the work of the Holy Spirit in Elsie. By being immersed in the liturgy week after week, the Holy Spirit inspired Elsie with what to say next. That is the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. He teaches us the faith through Word and Sacraments.

The Holy Spirit breathes into you the faith that through the Sacraments and God’s Word, you will be made free from sin. So, when you die, while remaining in the Church, the Holy Spirit will raise you up and sanctify you wholly.

Tonight, we have finished our series on the Second Chief Part, the Creed. Through the Creed, we can each say: “I believe in God, that He is my creator, in Jesus Christ, that He is my Lord, and in the Holy Spirit, that He is my sanctifier.” We can say, “God has created me and given me life, soul, body, and all goods; Christ has brought me into His Lordship through His body; and the Holy Spirit sanctifies me through His Word and Sacraments, which are in the Church, and will sanctify me wholly on the Last Day.”

The Creed is different from the Ten Commandments. The Commandments teach us what we should do, but the Creed teaches what we have received from God. The Creed, therefore, gives us what we need, so now, that we know God, we are now able to pray to our dear Father in heaven. Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

**+ SOLI DEO GLORIA +**