

June 9, 2019 (Pentecost Sunday C)

John 15:26-27

“Compelled to TESTIFY!”

This morning I want you to put yourself in the place of a good and honest police officer, who is trying to figure out WHO committed a terrible crime. There **is** an eye-witness. But . . . he’s afraid to say what he saw. He’s afraid of what might happen to him, or what it might cost him (and perhaps his family), if he tells what he saw.

What are you going to do? This guy has **got important, critical information** and he’s keeping it to himself. You’re going to put PRESSURE on him to get him to “spill the beans” and tell what he saw. On the negative side you’re going to tell him the consequences of sitting on this information – and the injustice of letting the culprit go free and victimize more people. On the positive side you’re going to tell him how much good can come about from his stepping forward here and how much you’ll appreciate it. And, you’ll do whatever you can to encourage this guy to share what he knows and assure him that the police will keep him safe. You will, for the right reasons, pressure him to **do the right thing!**

Well, you just got a little taste of what the HOLY SPIRIT does. He compels believers to *testify* to what they know. He, for the right reasons, encourages us to be involved in the **ministry** of Christ’s Church. Believers have crucial information known as the GOSPEL: we know how the Triune God planned and brought about the salvation of the world through the sacrifice and resurrection of Christ Jesus.

The Holy Spirit pressures us. On the *negative* side by telling us people can’t be saved without faith in Christ. People NEED this Gospel information. Souls are lost when Christians keep their mouths shut. This is eternal in significance. Judgment Day could be right around the corner and time is running out! On the *positive* side – God tells us what a powerful privilege and honor it is to share in this Gospel ministry, it’s the most important (and eternally significant) work we could ever do, it actually SAVES people and is then passed down to future generations (saving even more and more!)

Above all that, the Holy Spirit also PROMISES to **equip and support** us and give people everything they need so they can step up and be involved in Gospel Ministry. For those first disciples of Jesus

– that was a daunting and overwhelming concept. They were hiding out behind locked doors. Peter couldn’t handle the pressure – he denied Jesus 3 times on Good Friday. The rest of them felt that FEAR and UNCERTAINTY too. Even after seeing proof that Jesus had risen from the dead, and after spending considerable time with Him – *still* these men were justifiably afraid and simply NOT up to the task. It was **overwhelming** to think that they were capable of transforming the world with the message of Jesus.

So – the Holy Spirit gave them **overwhelming** tools and support so they could step up and TESTIFY and build His Church. In just one day – everything was overwhelmingly different. They stood up. The sacrifices *would* be HUGE. They TESTIFIED about Christ. In different languages, in different settings, wherever / whenever they could – in the face of death itself / at the cost of their lives.

Jesus promised to send the **Spirit** on this Special Day of PENTECOST. He taught the disciples about a whole host of different things. He filled in all the blanks about our Triune Lord; about our Heavenly Father, about why Jesus came and how He’d die and rise again, and – about how the Holy Spirit / the Counsellor (or Advocate) would give them the **truth** and equip them to STAND UP and get the Gospel message out to the world. The night before Jesus faced the cross, He spoke these words of promise (about this Event, and what would follow) to His disciples: **John 15:26-27** (EHV)

26 “When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father—he will testify about me. 27 And you also are going to testify, because you have been with me from the beginning.”

It’s hard to imagine what the world would be like if Pentecost never took place. It surely would have all ended long ago. Without the Spirit’s power the message wouldn’t go anywhere and wouldn’t penetrate unbelieving hearts. Or, what if Pentecost took place (just as we heard) but the disciples never used the gifts the Spirit gave them and went back to their day jobs and put out the Spirit’s fire?

Thankfully – that didn’t happen. Thanks to the Spirit’s power and help – they were no longer afraid. With the Spirit’s words – they knew what to say. With the Spirit’s PRESSURE – they were **compelled to TESTIFY and do Gospel Ministry – and they did!** The work / ministry / service they did FLOWED from the Spirit (and it still does). He provided them with all the necessary tools, even the

words and the courage and the signs and the languages they needed (and of course, ALL glory belongs to God) – but THEY – those unworthy men, were still a part of it. Jesus said, “**YOU, you also must testify!**” It’s a partnership between believers and the Spirit who compels them to testify and that transformed the world with the saving Truth of Jesus that has reached around the globe and down through time to us.

It’s Pentecost Sunday, 2019. And now the Holy Spirit’s **torch** has been passed down to us. Jesus’ words now aim right HERE. **YOU must testify! You and I have a ministry to carry out.** The Holy Spirit compels us to speak up and get involved. The world will be affected by what we say and do. Souls will be impacted . . . *or not impacted*. Future generations will benefit – *or they will have to pay*, depending upon whether or not WE take up the torch and (with the Spirit’s help, tools, and power) **testify** that Christ is the Lord and Savior, and the only way to eternal life is through repentance and faith in HIM. The **torch** is that clear, pure, powerful Gospel truth. We have it. However, *don’t we often keep that critical information to ourselves?* (And is that not unlike the witness who saw everything but held on to that valuable information because it might cost him?)

Christ has TOLD you – told me, told **us**, to TESTIFY and to get involved with the ministry of His Church!

- We have said “no” when we have neglected the Spirit’s words.
- We have said “no” when we let those opportunities to speak the truth of Christ slip by.
- We have said “no” when we stepped away from involvement in church outreach activities when the REAL reason was that we just didn’t want to be involved.
- We have said “no” when we have withdrawn and held back support to those who testify on our behalf by holding back our prayers, our dollars, and our encouraging words from them.

It IS sinful to say “no” to something Jesus tells us to do. Are we going to be OK with that and defend ourselves against the Spirit’s accusing words? Or, are we going to repent of it. Repent and see that Jesus had to pay the price for all our sins. Humbly ask your Lord for a second chance. You’ve got it! We need the Gospel forgiveness – and WE HAVE IT! It is here (at our church) and here (in the Word)

and here (at the baptismal font and the Lord’s Table) and here (in our hearts).

Wrapped up in that Gospel forgiveness and righteousness of Christ – pick up the **torch** and heed the Savior’s call: ***You people must TESTIFY!*** How? Good and honest police officers who have wisdom and experience know how to put the right amount of pressure on a witness, depending on whether that person is a child or an adult, and what their specific fears and issues might be. The same is true of us, but the Spirit / the Advocate encourages all of us to do the following things:

1. Be in the WORD. There He’ll build you up in the Truth and equip you with everything you need. You know who Christ is and what He did. It begins there. Then the desire grows to share this priceless truth. Then the opportunities will simply present themselves.
2. SPEAK UP when the chance presents itself. You don’t have to force things, you don’t have to argue, you don’t have to convince someone – just TESTIFY to who Jesus is and what He’s done for the world. Direct people to where they can find out more and have what God has given you.
3. GET PERSONALLY INVOLVED with the ministry of your own congregation. Opportunities for service abound, and they all tie in with the Great Commission somehow. The camps at Shiloh are the next big events; there are all sorts of things that need to be done beforehand, during, and with follow up. Our congregation is there to help assist in this goal, and to provide future opportunities and events.
4. SUPPORT those schools and missions in our WELS fellowship that (in God’s Name and on our behalf) prepare people to go and testify to the world about Jesus. Support and encourage them with your words, your dollars, and your prayers.

You have **very valuable information**. That message we hold and proclaim has, and will continue, to change the world and bring souls to eternal life. The Holy Spirit has promised to give you the words, the courage, and all the tools you need – *take Him up on it!* You’re **compelled to Testify!** We are ONE body in Christ, and this work is BEYOND important . . . so, let’s get to it!