

Vicar Matthew Christian

May 2, 2021

Fifth Sunday of Easter

John 16:5–15

Grace Evangelical Lutheran in Muncie, Indiana

He is risen!

*And when the Spirit comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgement.*

The Spirit convicts the world. We have some understanding of this word convict. It's legal language. The Spirit shows the faults of the world. He makes an undisputed claim against the world. He brings to light and exposes the corrupt and sinful unrighteousness of the world.

#### I.

The Spirit convicts the world concerning sin. The Spirit brings the truth of God which brings light into the world. One truth that we all must acknowledge is that we are all sinners and fall short of the glory of God. The sin of the world, Jesus tells us, is that they do not believe in God. This is the general condition in which we were all conceived and into which we have all been born since Adam. “And you were dead in the trespasses and sin in which you once walked, following the course of this world,” St. Paul writes, “Among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh” (Ephesians 2:1–3). We are no longer this way, but the world remains this way. Though we have been brought out of this bleak reality into the light of Christ, the world persists in its darkness. We still struggle with the Old Adam in us. This concupiscence, this original sin, sticks to us. It seeks out those carnal desires. It neither fears God nor trusts in Him. It seeks only glorification of itself. It lusts after the world and the material things the world has to offer.

The Spirit will guide us into all the truth. This truth is the truth of Christ. It is also the truth of our sinful world and our own sin. If the world were not convicted, then what need would we have for a Savior? But the Spirit works faith in our hearts to trust in Christ. Through Holy Baptism the Old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, all concupiscence. We are brought out of the world. Lifted above the

turbulent waters of chaos and despair. We are saved as the Spirit works within us. And, with the Spirit as our “Helper,” we are able to do as St. James encourages. We may be “quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger” (James 1:19). This is not the way of the world. The world remains slow to hear. It rejects God’s Word. The world is quick to speak. It bellows its dishonesty all the louder to convince others of its virtue. The world is quick to anger. It seeks not peace but disharmony as it divides and dominates the population. By the grace of God, we are brought out of this human rationale and into His wisdom.

## II.

The Spirit convicts the world concerning righteousness. Like the Pharisees, so often pitted against Jesus, the world seeks after the righteousness of men. It becomes a popularity contest. Who can check-off the most boxes of political correctness? Who supports the most woke culture? Who follows the leading voices secular philosophy? If all goes according to the world’s plan, Christian-minded doctors will soon be compelled against their conscience to perform irreversible surgery altering the bodies of mentally ill children. The righteousness of the world glories in this advancement in humanity’s so-called morality and acceptance. The righteousness of the world seeks popular opinion. If it can’t get it, it will force it.

The Spirit will declare Christ’s righteousness to us. His righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees, who by all accounts were righteous before men. Christ’s righteousness is before God. He alone is truly righteous. He alone is pleasing before the Father. Through the preaching of His Word, the Spirit declares His righteousness to us. Through His Holy Supper, we experience the salvation He has won for us. We confess that, “as often as we eat this bread and drink this cup we proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.” This proclamation is the gospel. “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith’” (Romans 1:17). Through faith, granted by the Holy Spirit, we have the righteousness of Christ declared as our righteousness. The Spirit makes us to be what God has already declared us to be. Strengthened in our faith, we are confident to call upon His name and make known His deeds among the peoples with our own good deeds. By His work, we recognize the futility of the righteousness of man. We seek rather the righteousness of God. The world stands condemned even as it condemns us.

### III.

The Spirit convicts the world concerning judgment. “The ruler of this world is judged,” Jesus says. Satan was cursed by God immediately following his temptation of the world. Condemned by God, Satan seeks the downfall of the whole world. He is its ruler, the evil one who desires that the world would follow after him even to its destruction. To this end, Satan stands as our adversary. He accuses us, tallying each and every offense against God. He aims to claim us as his own subjects, as subjects of the world. The Spirit convicts the world for following this accuser. The world listens to his lies. It falls for every deceit of the devil. It shapes itself after its ruler. And like its ruler, it seeks to condemn others even as it is condemned. The accusations rain down around us as the world wishes to prevail against the Church.

The Spirit will take what is Christ’s and declare it to us. By grace through faith Jesus’ righteousness is attributed to us. As the world accuses us of all manner of sinfulness, Jesus stands in our place. He is our strength, our help, and our shield. Jesus stands accused as we are accused. According to the world, He is a blasphemer and a fraud. He consorts with sinners and tax collectors. According to the world, He is filthy and wicked. But in God’s eyes, He alone is righteous. He alone is deserving of praise. He alone is guiltless. We are judged as Christ is judged. He took our place so that we might receive His place. The disciples could not bear all that Jesus had to teach them at that time. But they receive the fullness of this understanding in the resurrected body of our Lord. They know His perfect sacrifice and witness His Ascension to sit at the right hand of the Father. The world stands in judgment. It awaits the final statement of conviction. But having been brought out of the world, we have no fear as we enter into the glory of our Father. The Spirit calls us and shapes us into the image of Christ. He declares the truth of God’s Word. He comforts us with the assurance of faith in the resurrected Christ. He is our strength and our song, and He has become our salvation.

In Jesus’ name.

He is risen!