



Vestry Voices

The Church Family Newsletter

First Congregational
Church of Clinton

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The Holy Spirit

And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment

John 16:8 (NAS)



Rev. Gary Kiontke



Pentecost Sunday is the last special Sunday in the liturgical Church year until Christ the King Sunday which is on November 26 this year. So, as we enter the long season of what is called Common Time this year, it is appropriate to consider the role of the Holy Spirit in both the world and in the Church of Jesus.

Jesus summed up the role of the Holy Spirit in the world at His last Passover in the Upper Room: having come, that one will convict the world (John 16:8, literal translation). The verb translated “convict” is only used seventeen times in the Gospels and New Testament. The usual meanings in the Greek of the philosophers were: shame, blame, expose, expound and investigate. In the Greek translation of the T^hN^oK (Torah, N^oviiyym – prophets and K^otahviym – writings) it is most often used for a Hebrew root meaning reprove-reproof. Jacob told his father-in-law, Laban, that God had reproved him the night before because of the affliction and toil Jacob had endured under him (Genesis 31:42). And in Proverbs we are told “do not add to His words lest He reprove thee” (Proverbs 30:6). The Theological Word Dictionary of the New Testament (TWNT) sums up the word this way, “It denotes the disciplining and educating of man by God as a result of His judicial activity. From the conviction of the sinner to chastisement and punishment; from the instruction of the righteous by severe tests to his direction by teaching and admonition. ... The idea of God as One who educates by correction (Hebrews 12:5) goes back to Solomon (Proverbs 3:11).”

Jesus listed three things concerning which the Holy Spirit convicts or reproves: sin, righteousness and judgment. We will take these one at a time with respect to the

world. Then we will look at the Holy Spirit in the context of the Church of those made righteous by Jesus.

First, in the world:

Concerning sin, because they are not believing in Me (verse 9). Jesus told Nicodemus: the one not believing [in Me] has already been judged because he had not believed in the only Son of God (John 3:18b). This is a hard statement for people enjoying lives of forgiveness by faith in the good news of what Jesus did for them when He died for their sins. They know they should be obeying Jesus’ last command to make disciples of all people, but they have lost their sense of urgency. But, Jesus clearly says all not believing in Him are already judged! Anyone who understands this will have a strong desire to do whatever he can to help others (people still in the world) to believe in Jesus.

Concerning righteousness, because to the Father I am going and no longer you all are seeing Me (verse 10). Jesus is righteousness (Romans 3:25). He commanded John to baptize Him to fulfill all righteousness (Matthew 3:15). John declared Him the Righteous One (1 John 2:1). But Jesus says people not believing in Him must have physical evidence of His righteousness by observing His actions. Since He is no longer on earth, the Holy Spirit must convict or reprove them of Jesus’ righteousness.

Concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged (verse 11). Jesus had said: now this world is judged, and the prince of this world will be cast out (John 12:31). John later wrote: the Son of God appeared that He might destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). The writer of Hebrews said, through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, the devil (Hebrews 2:14).

To sum it up, because people of this world are not believ-

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The Holy Spirit (... continued from page #1)

ing in Jesus they are already condemned so they are not able to see His righteousness. John also wrote: We know the whole world is in the power of the evil one (1 John 5:19). And, since the evil one who rules this world has been judged, people of this world are judged. It has come full circle. The people of this world are all judged. They need to be convicted by the Holy Spirit so they may pass from the judgment of death to life in Jesus through believing in Him (John 3:16-18; 5:24-25).

Second, in the Church:

The One Holy Spirit baptizes people from every nation and economic class into one Body (Church, 1 Corinthians 12:13). When this happens, believers in Jesus begin a life-long journey of discipleship as they become conformed to the image of Jesus to His glory (Romans 8:29-30).

Paul told the people in the churches in Galatia to walk in the Holy Spirit to have the fruit of the Spirit of love and more; and, to crucify their passions and lusts and so live by the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-26). Paul commanded the saints in Philippi to consider fellowship in the Spirit to unite them in one love and one mind in order to pay attention also to the things of others (Philippians 2:1-4). When believers in Jesus do these things together in the Spirit, they build one another up in their salvation in Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:9-11).

Paul's letter to the churches in the region of Ephesus begins with a doxology (praise word) to The Father, Jesus

Christ and the Holy Spirit, concluding the Holy Spirit seals believers until their final redemption to the glory of God (1:3-14). Next, Paul explains how the Trinity works together to fulfill the seven-fold blessing to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3). God brings the peace of reconciliation to people who were formerly hostile to each other, making them "new men" in one body through the cross. They are being joined together into a holy temple, with Christ Jesus the cornerstone, a dwelling-place of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:11-22). The miracle of the Church does not happen without the Holy Spirit.

Finally, Scripture, breathed by the Holy Spirit, makes people wise, teaching and completing people first of all through reproof (2 Timothy 3:15-17). It is humbling, but God does not work in people until they have been convicted of a wrong behavior or attitude. Only when I have been re-proved by God's Spirit am I ready to repent, ready to turn from myself and my ways to God and His ways. When I do this, God will begin to correct me through a process of training in His righteousness. This may involve being put in uncomfortable and difficult situations. But as Job said, "when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10, RSV).

It is my hope and prayer that this brief Biblical survey of the Holy Spirit will motivate many of you to pay more attention to what the Bible says about the Holy Spirit whenever you read the Bible. With this as an introduction, may you all grow in grace in the Holy Spirit. ~vv~

Sundays in June

We will have Communion on June 4 and June 18.

We will do a two part mini-series on Psalms. The first Psalm is about disorientation in life leading to lament. The second Psalm is a pure praise song to God, who stoops down to raise up the poor and needy.

Here are the details of the sermon texts and themes for each Sunday in June:

Sunday	Readings	Theme
June 4	Philippians 2:1-13; Luke 6:43-45	God works in people through Christ who humbled himself in death
June 11	Psalm 69:1-16; Matthew 7:7-11	When the floods rise
June 18 Father's Day	1 John 2:12-17; Psalm 32:1-7	Fathers know the eternal Jesus
June 25	Psalm 113; Luke 15:8-10	God stoops down

It Just Happens*... “As the World Turns ...”

by Petros

It Just Happens*... on one of my jogs I was looking over the damage in the forest caused by the strong winds we have had recently. There were giant pine trees that had toppled over and some snapped trunks that rested in the branches of adjacent trees. It reminded me of a war zone, in a state of disarray. Mighty pines laid lifeless on the ground exposing a surprisingly flat root ... there was no depth. The shallow roots were intertwined with the earth's surface and would never stand against whatever nature brought. I reflected on how we feed off our superficial pride and accomplishments. It is our nature to become intertwined with temptations that appear before us as the world turns. Our priorities become looking and feeling good. We are happy obtaining the goals of this world.

It was opposite to how God said to be like the tree along the stream. Its roots worked to go deep for the living water that would suffice for the droughts of this life. Followers of Jesus have a (Holy Spirit filled) heart that seeks the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. They have learned from the Word of God to be humbled rather standing tall on this earth. Reading the Holy Bible allows us to see the truth that sets us free. Following the path God has for us will give us the strength to survive. Freed from the (lustful/sinful) desires that prevent us from growing and leaning on God's Love.

It Just Happens*... as I was leaving the turmoil and devastation of that part of the forest, my ears picked up the constant pecking of a woodpecker. My eyes focused on an unusual, long, shinny black woodpecker. It looked like it was wearing a long cloak, with its little white head and a bright red cap. It made me think of the devil picking at our flesh in

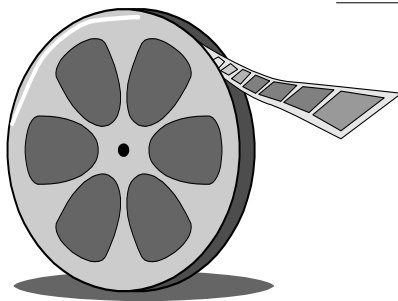
hell. Not only being down and broken for an eternal life of damnation, the Prince of Darkness would constantly remind us of the misery. God has given this sinner a new life! An amazing life that one cannot realize while rooted in this world. We are freed from the (lustful/sinful) desires that prevent us from growing and leaning on God's Love.

It Just Happens*... the other day, I came across my good friend, Church Mouse. It had been quite a while since we last talked. He was very excited and couldn't wait to tell me and all his friends about the Community Dinner that was being planned at the church. He was making plans to invite all his friends to join him. “Not only one Community Dinner, not two, but three Community Dinners a year,” exclaimed Church Mouse; his mouth was already watering. I didn't have the heart to tell him that I thought it would be an outreach for every person in the community. Maybe by the time the dates are released, he will realize the events are for the people in the community – not the residents of the church!

“Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor uselessly.” Psalm 127:1

Author's note: This article's title “It Just Happens*...” counters the cliché ... things just don't happen. “It” will stand for the world view one chooses to abide in. “Just” is the character of the God who wants to be our God. He has made us in His image – righteous; by faith in God. “Happens” will be the events and experiences God uses to grow our faith. All things work for the glory of God. When we turn from our ways and we look to God and live His Word – His plan for us unfolds. ~Vr~

Movie Night **Friday, June 23 at 7:00 PM**



We show a movie once each month, in Fellowship Hall, usually on the fourth Friday. The movies shown in the past have covered a range of genres, and were usually thought provoking.

We are able to show these movies based on the church's CVLI® license. However, this license does not allow us to advertise or publicize the names of these movies to the general public, and they are always free of charge.

We usually have free snacks available, and you are also welcome to bring your own meal, if you wish. So, please join us for a night out at the movies!



JUNE 2023

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1 (**)	2	3
4 Communion Sunday (Note #1)	5	6	7 (††)	8 (**)	9	10
11 FCC Worship; Coffee Hour after Worship (Note #2)	12	13	14 (††)	15 (**)	16	17
18 Communion Sunday; Father's Day (Note #3)	19	20	21 (††)	22 (**)	23 Movie Night (Note #4)	24
25 FCC Worship; Coffee Hour after Worship (Note #5)	26	27	28 (††)	29 (**)	30	

Calendar Notes:

- #1) 6/4 — Communion Sunday: **10:27 AM.**
- #2) 6/11 — FCC Worship: **10:27 AM. ALSO:** Coffee Hour after Worship.
- #3) 6/18 — Communion Sunday: **10:27 AM. Also:** Father's Day.
- #4) 6/23 — Movie Night — in Fellowship Hall: **7:00 PM.**
- #5) 6/25 — FCC Worship: **10:27 AM. ALSO:** Coffee Hour after Worship.
- (††) Wednesday Bible Study: **3:00 PM** (in Fellowship Hall)
- (**) Thursday Prayer: **3:00 PM** (in FCC Parlor).

