

St. Peter Lutheran Church  
May 17, 2026  
Seventh Sunday of Easter  
John 15:26–16:4

Our Gospel today speaks of two topics—the Holy Spirit and the persecution rendered against preachers and Christians.

First, Christ's words teach us about the Holy Spirit, and we will spend more time on this topic soon as we celebrate Pentecost. Christ calls the Spirit the Comforter because He is with those who are persecuted for Christ's sake. He comforts those who bear the name of Jesus and so suffer enmity and hatred at the hands of the world even as Christ suffered these things from the world.

Jesus, when He returns to His Father, sends the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. So we know the Holy Spirit is eternal, almighty, and God, for He proceeds from the Father, who is eternal, almighty, and God. Similarly we know the Son is eternal, almighty, and God, for He is begotten of the Father who is eternal, almighty, and God. Though Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God, we learn these distinctions—the Son is begotten of the Father, and the Spirit proceeds from the Father and from the Son.

We also hear that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. God cannot tell a lie. Our Lord Jesus proclaims Himself the way, the truth, and the life, and the Spirit bears witness of the truth. It is the truth that sets us free. What truth does the Spirit teach that sets us free? He testifies of Jesus—that He was sent from the Father, that He was the sin-bearer for the sins of the entire world, that He was given into death as a sacrifice for our sins, and that He rose again from the dead, proving our justification before God in Him, and He now is seated at the right hand of God. Salvation is found in no other name than Jesus, who was crucified, died, and rose again from the dead. It is for His sake that we are counted righteous through faith, not by our own merits. Our holiness, our works, our lives of love do not make satisfaction for our sins—only Christ makes satisfaction.

The Holy Spirit will preach this word concerning Christ. By this we know the voice of the Holy Spirit and the voices of other spirits, chief among them the voice of the evil one. For every other spirit despises the Holy Spirit and His testimony concerning Christ. If we are to think that the preaching of the Gospel should be accompanied with tranquility and peace in this life, we have not heeded Christ's words and warnings. **Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division.** Where the preaching of the Holy Spirit occurs, where His testimony of Christ rings out, opposition and division will be.

The Jews of Jesus' day couldn't tolerate Christ. For he stole back from them what was rightfully His. Salvation was not found in Moses, in the Law, in the works of the scribes or the

righteousness of the Pharisees—salvation was found in Jesus alone. Pride cannot yield to this. Man’s wisdom despises this. So Christ is hated, even by His own people, even by the people who bear God’s name, who have received His promises, and from whom He has come as promised.

And Jesus’ words to the disciples is that they will experience the same thing. For they also will bear witness. They, the apostles, will bring the preaching of the Spirit of truth to the world—they will bear witness of Jesus, even as the Spirit bears witness of Jesus. The Spirit will bring to remembrance all the things they heard and saw from the beginning of their time with Jesus, and He will form their proclamation to truthfully proclaim Christ.

So all preaching that follows the Apostles must conform to their word, for theirs was a special office of the Spirit to proclaim Christ. Their apostolic testimony becomes for us what we call the Apostolic Scriptures—the fulfillment of the Prophetic Scriptures of Old, for the Apostolic Scriptures proclaim Christ and Him crucified. This is the content of all Christian preaching, if it is in fact to be Christian.

And as Christ told the Apostles that they too would bear witness to Him, this would be fulfilled concretely, as nearly every one of them would one day be martyred for bearing witness to Christ. **“These things I have spoken to you, [says Jesus], that you should not be made to stumble. They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.”** The very people who bear God’s name often prove themselves to be the synagogue of Satan, persecuting and killing Jesus and His apostles in service to a God of their imagination, a God who doesn’t attack their righteousness and place them altogether in the same lot of sinners in need of a Savior. They will claim for themselves the name of Church, they will boast in their offices and in their authority. And they very well may be the Church in the fact that they have the Office of the Ministry, they have the Scriptures, they have Baptism, and all the rest. The Office is true even if occupied by a scoundrel. Baptism is valid even if administered by an evil man. For these things depend on the words and promises of God. Abuse does not nullify them, but proves them.

So the Apostles will be treated in like manner as Christ, for a servant is not above His master, and to some extent, every Christian experiences the same. And in these persecutions, the temptation is real to believe that we are in fact the heretic, the schismatic, the divisive one who is deserving of being cast out of the synagogue. For even the most religious participate in the attacks against those who bear witness of Jesus. Why? **Because they have not known the Father nor Me**, Jesus says. The Jews claim to know the Father, but they in rejecting Christ, they reject the one who sent Him. The Muslims claim to know God, but their religion is entirely of works of the Law, leaving no room for Jesus to be Savior and Lord. People think their persecution of the truth is in the name of God and is a service to Him. Much of the modern church is in outright apostasy, denying Christ and His words, and elevating idols of their own—homosexuality, women serving as pastors, social justice as the Gospel instead of Jesus atoning for sins. Worship of the creature rather than the Creator.

And if you are on the side of the Spirit of truth, bearing witness to Christ, these religious people, even so-called Christians, will come at you with all the vile and hatred of the devil himself. The enmity between the Seed of the woman, Christ, and the offspring of the devil remains fierce. The Antichrist **opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.** And we know that even now, many antichrists have come. **But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.**

So Christ continues to be maligned, excommunicated, and killed in those who bear witness of Him. But the Holy Spirit comforts us in our affliction as we are persecuted in Jesus' name. The Jews persecuted Christ. The papists persecuted the pure Gospel of the Lutherans. And so it goes until our Lord comes. But the Lord Jesus will be with us always, even to the end of the age. And His Spirit will comfort us, establish us in the truth, convince us that our Gospel is true—that Christ alone atoned for our sins by his death, and that Christ alone rose victorious to share His victory with us. Christ, sent from the Father, suffering and dying for sins, and rising for our justification is truth. We are counted righteous through faith in Him. If worldly comfort be taken from us for clinging to this truth, we know comfort like an ocean in comparison with a drop of water is what awaits the faithful who remain in Christ.