

“Jesus Sends the Holy Spirit to Convict the World”

(John 16:5-11 – Pentecost – May 24, 2026)

John 16:5-11 – ⁵“*But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’*” ⁶“*But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.*” ⁷“*Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.*” ⁸“*And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:*” ⁹“*of sin, because they do not believe in Me;*” ¹⁰“*of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more;*” ¹¹“*of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.*”

Dear Redeemed in the name of Jesus Christ:

Have you ever tried to share your faith with someone and convince them of the Gospel truth, but they did not believe it or care? We may give a heartfelt witness to what the Bible says about our desperate condition as sinners and the Good News of Jesus our Savior; but finally, we cannot put faith into another’s heart. There is only One who can do that: the Holy Spirit. “*No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit*” (1 Corinthians 12:3).

If sharing our faith with just one person in the hope of their conversion seems like a huge task, consider what a monumental mission Jesus gave His disciples. He gave them the Great Commission to evangelize the world! And they were to do it without His visible presence!

Here, Jesus is preparing His disciples for His departure. Forty days after His resurrection, they would see Him ascend into heaven to His Father. It might seem like the worst thing that could happen, like saying goodbye to a loved one. It might seem like His absence would make it all the harder for them to witness to a world that was often hostile to His message.

Jesus reassured them: “*Because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you*” (vs. 6-7). They would not be alone. Jesus would be with them always, even to the end of the age, though unseen (Matthew 28:20). Moreover, He would send the Helper, the Holy Spirit, to empower them for the Great Commission of sharing the Gospel with the world.

We see the fulfillment of this promise on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit descended to where the believers met. “*And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance*” (Acts 2:2-4). From then on, the disciples who had hidden in fear of persecution preached

boldly, proclaiming repentance and forgiveness of sins in the name of the crucified and risen Christ. By the Holy Spirit's power thousands were convicted, believed, and were baptized.

When we feel it is a monumental task to share our faith with just one person, let alone to fulfill our place in the Great Commission of the Church, let us take to heart this Pentecost promise: **“Jesus Sends the Holy Spirit to Convict the World.”** What we cannot do, the Spirit does. Let us consider what Jesus means in this promise: *“When He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment”* (vs. 8).

1) Of sin

First, Jesus says the Holy Spirit will convict the world *“of sin, because they do not believe in Me”* (vs. 9).

The world has some sense of sin, even without God's revealed Word. Romans 2:14-15 says even those who do not have God's written law in Scripture have a sense of right and wrong. This is because God has written the law in every heart; and they *“show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them.”* The reason a person feels guilty and tries to hide the wrong he has done, said, or even thought, is because our Creator has put in our heart His moral code and a sense of accountability to Him as Judge.

But this natural knowledge of the law, written in the heart and witnessed by the conscience, never saves. The heart of fallen man is deceitful and his conscience is faulty. Natural man considers himself basically good. He regards sin as something only very bad people do, or as something he can overcome by his good will and effort. He has no idea how utterly fallen he is as a sinful being, unable to please the holy God by his sin-corrupted life.

Only the Holy Spirit can convict the heart and bring sinners to a right knowledge of sin, repentance, and saving faith. The Spirit does this through the revealed Word. God's written law tells us exactly what sin is. It is not only crass outward crimes some may commit, like murder; it is even the inner hatred in the heart God counts just as much sin. It is not only outward acts of immorality like adultery; it is even the inner lust in the heart which God counts just as much sin (Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28). It is not only outward acts of stealing; it is even the inner coveting and evil desire for what is not ours which God counts just as much sin (Romans 7:7). Just knowing the law and what sin is does not save us. Who of us has kept pure in every thought and desire, word and action? By the law comes only knowledge of sin and condemnation (Romans 3:20).

Therefore, the Holy Spirit reveals in the Gospel the only way God has provided for sinners to be saved. That way is Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God. In His love for a world of fallen sinners, God sent His own Son to the cross. There, Jesus gave His life to take away the sins of the world, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have

everlasting life (John 3:16). Through this Gospel, the Holy Spirit reveals that God forgives and saves sinners through faith in His crucified and risen Son.

So Jesus says the Spirit convicts the world *“of sin, because they do not believe in Me.”* Unbelief remains the sin that damns, because it does not accept God’s gift of salvation in Christ. Unbelief leaves the sinner in his sin, condemned under the law of God (John 3:18).

The Holy Spirit’s conviction works in two ways. Either it brings sinners to repent and believe in Jesus as their Savior; or it convicts those who harden their heart against Him. When Stephen preached to the Sanhedrin, he said it was their fault for rejecting the Gospel. He told them: *“You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit”* (Acts 7:51). But on Pentecost, when the apostles preached to the crowd, the Holy Spirit got the credit for converting thousands. Many were cut to the heart and brought to repentance, faith, and Baptism; and were united with Christ in eternal life (Acts 2:37-41).

2) Of righteousness

Second, closely related to conviction of sin, Jesus says the Spirit will convict the world *“of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more”* (vs. 10)

The world seeks an image of righteousness by covering up its sin and claiming innocence in its own way. When natural man feels troubled in his conscience by the witness of the law, he believes he must make up for sin by his own works. He believes that if he tries to do more good deeds than bad, God will accept that as a righteous life and let him into heaven. He has no idea that his sinful nature makes him unable to live the righteous life God requires. While God’s law demands perfect holiness, Isaiah 64:6 says: *“But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags.”* When sinful man parades his sin-filthy rags of works-righteousness, as if these made him fit for heaven, it is an offense to the holy God.

But the Holy Spirit teaches in the revealed Word what righteousness really is. It is not a status we sinners can earn from God; it is a gift Christ has earned for us. God declares us righteous, not by any works we do, but by the righteous work Christ has done for us. God took all our sinfulness and put it on His Son on the cross, counting Him guilty and punishing Him in our place. In exchange, God took His Son’s righteous life and put it on us, counting us innocent and free of all charges (2 Corinthians 5:19, 21). So Romans 5:18 says: *“Through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.”*

Therefore, Jesus says the Spirit convicts the world *“of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more.”* The Spirit reveals that Jesus, who died on the cross for our sin and rose again having won our justification (Romans 4:25), ascended to His Father. There, He who is our only Righteousness before God, intercedes for sinners. However, those who harden their heart in unbelief against His Gospel forfeit His gift of righteousness. They still seek their own righteousness in what is sinful and falls short of the glory of God.

But by the grace of God and His Spirit's work in us, we trust only the merit of His Son. Jesus intercedes for us, presenting us to His Father cleansed by His blood, clothed in His righteousness; and for His sake, God declares us holy and without blemish, fit for heaven!

3) Of judgment

Third, Jesus says the Holy Spirit will convict the world "*of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged*" (vs. 11).

As Jesus spoke these words, He was on His way to a final confrontation with Satan. As He had said: "*Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out*" (John 12:31). Satan expected to triumph over Jesus by working out sly plans for His betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion. Yet by His very death on the cross and resurrection, the Lord Jesus crushed Satan's head, saved sinners from his dominion, and sealed his doom.

Therefore, the Holy Spirit convicts the world "*of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.*" Satan and his angels who rebelled against God were cast down to hell, delivered into chains of darkness, reserved for judgment (2 Peter 2:4). Those who reject Jesus choose this world's prince as their leader. As long as they remain in the darkness of impenitence and unbelief, they share in his judgment.

But by the grace of God, through Holy Spirit-given faith, we have been enlightened by the saving truth of Christ and set free from the devil's dominion. God "*has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the Kingdom of the Son of His love*" (Colossians 1:13). "*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit*" (Romans 8:1).

So on this Pentecost day, we thank Jesus for fulfilling His promise. Having ascended to His Father, He sends the Holy Spirit as our Helper. When we feel like it is a monumental task to live in this world and share our faith, let us take to heart His promise. It is the Spirit who gives us the glorious Gospel of salvation to live by and to proclaim. It is the Spirit who convicts and converts hearts, bringing eternal life and joy in Christ to sinners. It is the Spirit who keeps us in the faith, until Jesus returns to gather us in His Church triumphant in heaven.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.