

Let me begin by wishing each of you a merry and happy Pentecost! After all the weeks of preparation ... the special music ... the shopping, cooking and planning ... the Festival of Pentecost is finally here!

What? There was no special preparation ... or music ... or services leading up to Pentecost? While Pentecost, along with Easter and Christmas are the “Big 3” festivals of the Christian Church, most people probably didn’t even know we were celebrating a special festival today.

We can easily forget that. And what’s worse, we can easily forget the crucial work of the One we celebrate today. Every Christian can tell you that God the Son suffered for our crimes on the cross and triumphed over the tomb on Easter. And, almost every Christian acknowledges God the Father sent Jesus on a rescue mission at Christmas.

But God the Holy Spirit, what has he done? Paul tells us in today’s lesson from Galatians. He tells us:

Pentecost Reminds Us: The Holy Spirit Makes a Difference!

A number of Galatian congregations were started by Paul on his first missionary journey. Now he writes back to those same churches, reminding them of the difference the Holy Spirit makes by sharing two lists. Both lists identify actions. One is a list of 16 sins ... ***that’s our wretched life without the Holy Spirit.*** The other is a list of 9 fruits ... ***that’s our wonderful life because of the Holy Spirit.***

(1)

His name was Hugo and he was homeless. It was 7:30 am in New York when a man with a knife confronted a woman. Hugo stepped between the man and the woman, so the man with the knife stabbed Hugo. The lady ran away and so did the attacker. Hugo fell on the sidewalk bleeding. Somebody, anybody, needed to call 911 so the paramedics could come and save Hugo's life.

Within a short time, people were walking past Hugo. One person stopped, took Hugo's picture with their phone and kept walking. One person moved Hugo's head and shoulder, but when they saw blood quickly moved on. People kept passing by Hugo 1 2 3 4 5 ... 6

7 8 9 10 ... like the priest and the Levite in the Good Samaritan, but nobody helped!

Why did over 25 people walk by and not help? Psychologists will say it to do with fear ... they didn’t know what to do. Really? If somebody you loved is lying on the sidewalk and bleeding, you wouldn’t have a clue what to do to try and make the situation better? The problem is fear ... the person was homeless and smelled nasty. Really? If he had been younger, cleaner and better dressed, then someone would’ve helped?

The problem is sin. Sin makes the human heart cold and uncaring enough to stab someone ... enough to walk by. This story about Hugo highlights Paul’s first list in our lesson and illustrates our wretched lives without the Holy Spirit!

While a shorter list would have been less embarrassing for us, this list comes naturally because we all have our very own sinful nature. We were born with it. Paul now offers a collection of 16 sins. Our collection of sins can be divided up into 4 categories.

1) The first category is: sexual immorality, impurity and a complete lack of restraint. Our sinful flesh works overtime when it comes to sexual sins. God created sexual intimacy to be a good and beautiful thing for one man and one woman in the commitment called marriage. But sex has been twisted, warped and perverted; and because of that it has caused so much pain and so much heartache for so many.

2) The second category is: idolatry and sorcery. Idolatry is covered in the First Commandment and goes on now just as it did in the Greek and Roman world of Paul’s time. Self is a huge god of today. People are painfully self-centered and self-absorbed. Taking selfies and focusing on themselves and their rights. Sorcery is covered in the Second Commandment. It’s a fascination with the devil, horoscopes, drugs and the occult, re-incarnation, crystals and mystic eastern religions in an attempt to peek into the future rather than trusting in God.

3) The third category is: **hatred, discord, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissensions, heresies, envy and murders.** These are all sinful ways we've interacted with others ... hating them ... struggling to work together with them ... quickly running out of patience with them ... anger issues ... jealousy and envy for what they have and we don't. Never satisfied with life.

4) And the fourth category is: **drunkenness and orgies.** We're constantly being told that excess is good because we deserve it. We'd be a fool to deprive ourselves of things we want. And it doesn't matter if it's alcohol, recreation, entertainment, food or spending.

Did that list make you uncomfortable? Do you know why? It's not just any disgusting list, it's your disgusting list. It's my disgusting list. Those are our attitudes and actions.

What a miserable way to live, to build a life on things that make you sick, cause you pain, make you hate yourself, waste your days and leave you empty.

What a wretched LIFE to LIVE without the Holy Spirit! What a worse DEATH to DIE! That's why the Holy Spirit says: **I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.** These aren't the worst sins, or the unforgivable sins ... but if not recognized, repented of and forgiven, they can leave a soul on the outside of heaven looking in ... forever!

(2)

That first list ... the bad one ... are all things that come naturally to us. Nobody had to show us or teach us how to commit those.

That second list ... that's the good one ... **The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.** Since those don't come naturally, we need help which only the Holy Spirit can provide. As you grow in your Christian faith these will be more evident, more often to more people. This list is **our wonderful life because of the Holy Spirit** includes 3 sets of 3.

1) The first set of 3 are **fruits of the Spirit that build us up personally ... love, joy and peace.** Since agape or sacrificial **love** can only be learned from God, only Christians who have experienced it can express it.

That leads to a **joy** that runs deeper than a smile on a face. Having Jesus' forgiveness new every morning and lasting for an eternity, that creates joy to our hearts. An additional benefit is **peace.** When we don't get along with someone it tears us up. Our Savior was the peace maker and offering that re-established our relationship with God. We can take a deep breath whenever we close our eyes in sleep.

2) The next set of 3 are **fruits of the Spirit that build others up ... patience, kindness and goodness.** Even when others are agitating us, we know our suffering won't go on forever, that means we can have **patience** in an impatient world. We can be **kind** in an angry world. And, we can be **good** in a dishonest world. That's what sets you, as a Christian, apart and it will build up those around you.

3) The third and final set of 3 are **fruits that deal with relationships ... faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.** Your **faithfulness** to God is seen in your loyalty in using his Word and dining at his Table, while putting to use the talents he's given you. Your **faithfulness** to others is seen in how dependable and reliable you are. Your **gentleness and self-control** are evident when you don't retaliate but remain cool, calm and collected when others are trying to push your buttons.

So, I say once again, merry and blessed Pentecost to each of you! Christmas is for everyone, even if they don't realize it. God the Father sent his Son for all people. Easter is for everyone, too, even if they don't realize it. God the Son defeated sin and death for all. And Pentecost, it is for everyone, but it is unique for us, because **Pentecost Reminds Us: The Holy Spirit Makes a Difference!**

- He has brought us to faith in Holy Baptism.
 - He is instructing us through his Holy Word.
 - He is nourishing our faith in Holy Communion.
- That's our wonderful life, all because of the Holy Spirit.