**Faith Must Be Fed, or It Will Die**

Based on [John 16:5-15](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Jn16.5-15)

Preached on May 19, 2019

The Fifth Sunday of Easter ~

Cantate

Pastor Nathan Fuehrer

*Salvation comes through believing in Christ, not seeing him. Belief or Faith is both created and sustained by the comfortor, the Holy Spirit whom Jesus sends. The Holy Spirit creates and sustains faith through visible, tangible means…word and sacrament ministry.*

Do you think that trusting Jesus and following Jesus would be easier if he were here? Do you think you are at a disadvantage with Jesus because you don’t see him? Faith is required of us to believe in things not seen, and to act and structure our lives accordingly. Do you think that sight is better than faith. “Should I do this or that…oh if I could only see Jesus and ask him he would tell me what I should do, and I would understand and readily obey.”

Not so. It is telling that Jesus’ own disciples had weak and vacillating faith precisely when Jesus was with them. It wasn’t until he sent them the Holy Spirit that they believed that his death had won forgiveness and peace. It wasn’t until Pentecost they preached the gospel for the first time, and lived and died in witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

So Jesus says to them on the night of his arrest, “**But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, “Where are you going?’ But 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 Hepler will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you**.”

The Helper is the Holy Spirit. And here’s how he helps. ***He will guide you into all truth.*** It is the Holy Spirit who gives you faith to believe things unseen. And this faith *believes* them to be real and true, but treasures and adores the mysteries of Christ. Faith relies upon Christ, trusts his words and provokes the believer to structure his whole life around what he commands. To those whom God calls Christ equips them, through the work of the Holy Spirit He gives you spiritual sight, a sight that depends not on the eyes, but on faith.

Some say that they don’t have faith because they have science. Well, that’s just not true. Even in matters of science, seeing is not required for believing. Even science demands faith. A month or so ago, a physicist recorded the first actual image of a black hole. For the first time physicists could see with their own eyes what they had only known about theoretically. // But here’s the thing…I hadn’t heard of anyone disclaiming the existence of black holes before this. No scientist in the last century has seriously doubted the existence of black holes *before they saw one*.

Physicists believed in black holes before they could see them. Historians believe that Julius Caesar existed and did the things recorded about him. And people believe Jesus Christ existed even though they have never seen him. But that is a natural faith, not Spiritual. Spiritual faith is what causes us to believe that Jesus is still living and active in the church. It causes us to trust him with our sins and for our salvation. The Holy Spirit encourages us to listen to Jesus words and obey his commands. The Spirit whom Christ sends compels us so that we would rather die and lose everything we have, than lose the grace of God given us in Christ Jesus.

Jesus says to those who have been clinging to him with their eyes, that there is a better way. He will remove himself from their sight, but will send them the Holy Spirit who will guide them in all truth. The Spirit will not take over Jesus’ role, or be a new dispensation and orientation to God. The Holy Spirit will reveal the truth of what Christ has taught, and give them conviction about what He has said to them. And the Spirit will cause them to cling to the invisible Jesus more fervently than their eyes would formerly allow. And thought the Spirit is invisible, He is sent to work in visible things.

These visible things are called the means of grace. Better yet, we might call them the means of the Spirit. Don’t think that, because the Spirit is invisible, that we cannot find him. ***Whenever*** the called and ordained servant of Christ opens his mouth to preach the scriptures or to forgive and retain sins, the Holy Spirit is working. ***Whenever*** water is applied to anyone in the Triune name, the Holy Spirit is convicting the world, making the sinner righteous, and Judging the devil. ***Whenever*** bread and wine are given according to Christ’s words, the Holy Spirit is creating Spiritual Food in Christ’s body and blood for forgiveness.

Someone might say, “I already have faith, I don’t need the means of grace. I don’t need to hear a pastor preach and teach. I don’t need to eat and drink the Lord’s Supper very often, because I already believe.” But what they fail to understand is that *faith must be fed, or it will die*. And it must be fed, not by the world, but by the Spirit where and when and in the way Christ sends Him. The means of Grace that he instituted are your Spiritual, Spirit giving food.

And just as God gave different foods to nourish the body meats and vegetables and grains, so too he gives preaching, baptism, holy communion, all of these different means of his varied grace for a well-balanced salvation and measure of His Spirit for you.

Jesus sends his Holy Spirit through Preaching and the Sacraments, and every Sunday he holds a feast. Do you have faith right now? You do well, many have had faith only to lose it and die in their sins. Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. You have faith, but faith must be fed by the Holy Spirit who comes in Word and Sacrament. Christ promises that this feeding is not merely physical, but a Spiritual Food, served up by Christ and carried out in the Spirit of Truth, whom he has sent.