

[send this](#)[bookmark](#)[print](#)[close](#)

The Parish Paper

OF
ST. JOHN'S CHURCH
SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

Vol.35 No.28

Trinity Sunday

06/06/04

The Comforter is Come (II)

(III) And there is more. Love is the very means of our union with God. We must always remember: Christi-anity is finally not about Christ. Jesus did not come to reveal himself. He came to reveal God. He spoke of himself as the way to God, the truth of God, and life in God. Above every-thing else Christianity is the truth about God. The greatest evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit is the realization of God the Holy Trinity. This is the truth which perhaps could not be borne at the first, and it took hundreds of years to realize it fully. The story of the body of Christ com-ing to this measure of fullness of the knowledge of God which is her and our eternal life is a chronicle of won-der and mystery. It is the unique gift of the Holy Spirit.

Christianity, then, is first of all the truth about God. Loving Jesus, the Word of God Incarnate – abiding in Christ – is the one true and sure way for us to come to know and be in un-ion with God Himself: “My Father is greater than I.” Jesus states: “The prince of this world cometh and has nothing in me.” He means no com-munion, no sharing. The logic of his kingdom is the power of love. Force is the antithesis of love, its polar op-posite. Jesus is unmistakable about it: “My Kingdom is not of this world.”

“As the Father giveth me com-mandment, so I do.” This is the plain-est statement, not only that God is in Christ, but how He was. It is through the Holy Ghost, the giver of love. Je-sus is the Christ because of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the energy which binds together the Father and the Son, and binds up our loves in them.

(IV) And so the Holy Spirit is also the life-giver. For what is life without love? – dead; inert; material; mean-ingless; circumstantial; merely se-quential. The message is in truth very simple: “Love, or die.” Without love, life is death.

Why cannot the sin against the Holy Ghost, the giver of life and love, be forgiven? Because a person who for-swears love or refuses to receive it is already dead, in his mind, in his spirit, in his person. There is nothing living left upon which forgiveness can rest.

Such persons have become literally “the hollow men”. Nothing of sub-stance remains. Without love life is death, and our apparent vitality is the parade of the living dead. With love, death itself is overcome, for love is stronger than death. Shakespeare is the master of masters of this truth. One dare not venture too far upon the holy

ground of Cordelia dead in her father's arms, but in his mind Lear thinks her alive. And in his love for her, so she is.

(V) Finally, the only ground of hope we have that we shall ever see God, and abide with Him, to enjoy Him and live forever in His presence, is if we are pure in heart. Only the pure in heart are promised that they shall see God. This is the final terror and the final comfort. Should we not despair? For who is pure in heart? Who has ever been pure in heart?

Apart from the Lord himself, there is only one person of whom we can think in the entire history of the world. But in thinking of her, we re-member that this is not of her doing or making, just as it can never be of us that such purity comes. "The Holy Ghost shall overshadow these."

It is never of us. It is the Holy Spirit descending upon us and living within us. It is his fire of love, slowly and implacably burning away all that pride, envy, malice, hatred, and all uncharitableness have done to our imperfect hearts.

Such love may seem to our evil selves "an intolerable sheet of flame". But it is in truth the refining, life-giving fire. It is the Holy Ghost mak-ing room for himself within us. In making room for himself he is mak-ing a way for us to God. Not a way for God to enter into your heart so much as a way for you to go to Him, a way to be bound within the heart of God. It is as Dante says, "bound as the leaves of a book into one vol-ume." The charity of the Holy Spirit is the only likeness to God that we His creatures can ever have. But this charity is the golden chain which binds us `round His feet.

Since love is the substance of God's Holy life, and the bond of His own Being, so it is the only way we will have, and the only mode of access we will ever know, to the utterly Holy, unutterable Being God is in His very Person. So the last word is this: "God is love, and whoso dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." And that really is all there is to it.

The Rev. William H. Ralston, Jr.

send this

bookmark

print

close

[Report Errors](#) | [Comments](#)

Copyright 2003 - 2004 St. John's Episcopal Church in Savannah, GA. All rights reserved.