

# “Sin, Righteousness, and Judgment”

John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

Today we celebrate the feast of Pentecost. What was a Jewish harvest festival has come to be celebrated as the birthday of the Christian Church. On that first Christian Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit arrived as the sound of a great rushing wind. A crowd of people gather and the crowd is puzzled that these men from Galilee are able to speak in various languages from around the world so that each person can hear the Gospel in his mother-tongue.

Of course, there are those who mock the disciples, who say they must be drunk and mumbling – because no matter how clearly the Gospel is spoken, there will always be some who refuse to hear it. Nothing has changed in 2000 years.

God still desires for you hear His Word using the words your mother spoke to you, and there are those who still refuse to hear.

When Peter stands up and preaches, we see the immediate fulfillment of what Jesus promised would happen when He would send the Helper, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth proceeding from the Father. Jesus says, “When He comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.”

He will convict the world. Jesus uses legal “courtroom” language – literally, He will expose the error of the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment. The world is in error concerning all three.

It would be easy for me so say, “the world being in error concerning sin is obvious. Look around.” But that is the problem. It is the same problem that the crowd listening to Peter had. Their sin wasn’t obvious; at least it wasn’t obvious to them.

Many of the people visiting Jerusalem for Pentecost were probably also there at Passover when Jesus was killed. If you are going to travel all the way from Rome to Jerusalem, you aren’t going to just stay for the weekend. It would pay to stay and celebrate more than one feast day.

The people living in Jerusalem all knew about Jesus and the empty tomb. And many of these same visitors had been in town for the past couple months. Next week, we will hear the continuation of Peter’s sermon: “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works . . . as you yourselves know – this Jesus . . . you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised Him up . . . therefore know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

He convicts them of their sin. Before these words are spoken, that crowd of thousands of Israelites were like the valley of dry bones we hear of in Ezekiel. Those people gathering in Jerusalem for Pentecost thought of themselves as the people of God, but they had no clue how far away they were from the Kingdom and how truly dead they were.

Our world is no different. Nothing has changed in the last 2000 years. This generation, like many other generations, does not understand what a great weight and burden sin is. Sin is not the “fun” part of life. Sin kills you. It drags you into the depths.

The church, beginning at Pentecost, through the work of the Holy Spirit, has the task of exposing the error – convicting the world concerning sin. Exposing the error is not judgment. Judgment comes later. Exposing the error concerning sin is convincing the world that sin is actually a problem.

In regard to sin, righteousness, and judgment, it all boils down to whether or not you believe that there is absolute truth. The prevailing philosophy of our day is that my opinion is “truth” for me just as your opinion is “truth” for you. Therefore, there is no real truth in the absolute sense, there is only opinion. This is the basic teaching of post-modern philosophy. It is the basic philosophy of the past couple generations. And we are reaping the fruit of these very bad seeds of thought.

It is interesting to me, that when someone is going in to have heart surgery, everyone wants a surgeon who believes there are absolute truths in life. However, in regard to spiritual things, the vast majority believe that their own person beliefs are correct and they are simply looking for affirmation of those beliefs.

Exposing the error of sin and false thoughts, words, or deeds is not easy or obvious – especially in our post-modern world. But this does not mean that we are to meekly sit in the corner and say nothing. The philosophy and culture of today is eerily similar to the culture of the 1<sup>st</sup> and

2<sup>nd</sup> centuries. The Church throughout the Mediterranean was mocked and challenged by a culture which, as we have seen in our Sunday morning Bible class on Revelation, was very much like our culture today in regard to encouraging even the Christians to limp along with one foot in the proverbial gutter.

The Church founded by the apostles on Pentecost did not overcome the hostile world by being timid or conforming to how the world thought the church should be. This meant not only speaking out and exposing the world's error in regard to sin, but the world's error in regard to righteousness and judgment.

The world wants a righteousness apart from Christ. The world wants our works to be enough to get us into heaven. And our world wants God to be silent, or off in the distance, or with us to give us good things and when we need Him to fix our lives when bad things happen. But our Old Adam does not want to look into the mirror of God's Law and see who we truly are and that there is no salvation outside of Christ and His death and resurrection.

We live in a world that the Holy Spirit has convicted in regard to sin, righteousness, and judgment, because the world doesn't take any of these seriously. Sin is a serious matter. Judgment is a serious matter. Thankfully, Christ came to deal with sin and judgment is a most serious way and His righteousness covers you. And His church, the church founded on Pentecost by His apostles through the work of the Holy Spirit, speaks to you like a mother speaks to her children. And this has not changed for 2000 years. Amen.