

## Origination and Destination

There's some old common sense wisdom that states that you can't get to where you're going if you don't know where you started from. Without a sense of origination, the destination isn't going to make a whole lot of sense. I begin with this because it's plain to see from our Gospel lesson that Jesus is referring to the Holy Spirit's coming at Pentecost. We get the destination part of Christ's words here. ***What about the origination?*** The Holy Spirit arrives at Pentecost. Where does the Holy Spirit come from?

Now, I know that this probably seems like a stupid question. "*Duh, pastor! Jesus Himself says very clearly that He will send the Holy Spirit.*" Okay...you're right. But what does this mean? **WHEN** did Jesus send the Holy Spirit? More specifically, **WHERE** did Jesus send that Holy Spirit from? I know the ***knee-jerk*** response to these questions. "*Jesus sent the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit came from heaven, where Jesus had already ascended to and sits at the right hand of the Father.*" Well...not so fast.

***What happened at Jesus' baptism?*** The Father's voice boomed from heaven, "*This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,*" and the Holy Spirit descended from heaven upon Jesus in the form of a dove for everyone to see. We often speak of this event as God's public anointing of Jesus for the office of prophet, priest, and king. Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit to begin His mission and ministry of salvation for all mankind. So...the Holy Spirit is with Jesus at the beginning of His earthly ministry in and through baptism, are you following me?

When does the Holy Spirit ***leave*** Jesus? St. John answers this question for us just three chapters later in his Gospel. "*When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished.' He bowed His head and gave up the Spirit.*" So often that's translated as "His spirit," as in, "He surrendered His soul in death." **But...that's not what the Greek says.** The original Greek uses the definite article "the," as in "The Spirit" (capital S). Jesus "gave over" the Holy Spirit.

I want you to think about all this. The Holy Spirit proceeds from Christ—***originates from Christ***—at the cross at the moment of His all-atoning death. "*If I don't go, the Helper/Spirit cannot and will not come to you.*" Jesus is saying so clearly here that He must die, for it is in His death that the Holy Spirit proceeds forth on His divine mission to all the children of Adam! And this [the cross] is precisely where the Holy Spirit ***takes all men back to*** when it comes to Law and Gospel; condemnation, conversion, and salvation. In terms of faith, here is the ***origination*** and here is the ***destination***.

This [the cross] is why Jesus says that Holy Spirit “convicts” the world—all people borne of Adam—**concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment**. And I will say at this point that “convict” is such a loaded word. We tend to think of it only in **negative terms**, which does make perfect sense when it comes to being convicted of sin and convicted in judgment. **But...what about being convicted in righteousness?** That Greek word—*elegko*—which we translate as “convict,” can also be rightly understood as “convince.” This makes more sense when you think about it. The Holy Spirit, proceeding **from** the crucified Jesus and taking all hearers **back to** the cross of Christ, is sent to convince the hearer of their sin, to convince them of their righteousness—their justification—in Christ, and to convince them of God’s judgment against the devil.

The next question is more of a **three-fold question** summed up in one word: **WHY?** Why does the Holy Spirit need to convince/convict us of our sins? Folks: Look at this cross! Here is God in the flesh! Here is the wage of sin, lifted up and on full display for all the world to see! Contrary to popular belief, God is not “cool” with our sins. He doesn’t wink at them or pretend they don’t matter. He has not **progressed with the times and evolved on His stances**. Like James says, there is no variation or shadow of change with God. His Word is eternal and unchanging. The wage and penalty of sin, from the get-go, is death—temporal and eternal death. Nothing has changed. So often, though, we don’t believe what God says about sin, **especially the sins we commit**. We can **always** find a way to justify our sins. This is why the Holy Spirit is sent to us—to convince us just how deadly and damning our sins really are in the sight of God. If they weren’t such a big deal, then Jesus wouldn’t have to die for them!

So why does the Holy Spirit need to **convince** us of our righteousness; our justification? Again, look no further than this cross. Here is where “*It is finished!*” was spoken in victory. Here is where your all your sins were forgiven. Here is where the full wage of your sin was paid in full; paid in full with the lifeblood of Jesus. **How often, though, we don’t believe it.** ***There’s gotta be a catch, right?*** There’s no such thing as “free.” That’s just how the world works. We’re so jaded that when God says “*it is finished,*” we still say, “*Yeah, but what do I need to do?*” And we **all** have our moments! Many a good Christian struggles in doubt simply because their feelings trump God’s justifying Word. “*I don’t feel saved.*” As if our fleeting emotions are **more trustworthy** than the unchanging Word of our unchanging God!

And what about the convincing/convicting regarding judgment? Here, again, we think we have this all figured out. The Holy Spirit convicts in judgment. All those who don’t believe are convicted and sent to hell. ***That’s true...but that’s not at all what Jesus is saying here.*** Again, “convince” is probably the better translation, **and we do need convincing regarding God’s judgment.** The important thing to remember here is that Jesus is talking about God’s judgment

**against the devil.** “*The ruler of this world is/has already been judged.*” That’s not what the devil wants us to believe though. He wants us to think that he’s still got a fighting chance. He wants us to think that eternity is in the balance—it may go one way, and it may go the other. In fact, the devil is working very hard to make it seem like **he’s actually winning the fight.** I’ll admit: I look around at the world today, and it’s hard to not believe him. And yet...the Holy Spirit convinces me, working in and through the words of Christ, that it is finished. The victory has already been won. The devil is judged. He’s already lost. He’s nothing more than a **neutered, toothless dog that’s all bark and no bite.** The serpent’s head has already been crushed by the pierced, yet victorious foot of the crucified Gospel promise in the flesh.

This is all very important when you consider the fact that Jesus was speaking these words to His apostles **mere hours** before He would be nailed to that cross. They would need convincing that Jesus wasn’t being defeated, **but overcoming and winning.** And—yes—that convincing would take place in all its fullness at Pentecost. That’s when the apostles were finally able to understand the necessity of Christ’s crucifixion and rejoice. That’s when they were, by God’s grace, empowered by the Holy Spirit to **boldly** proclaim Christ crucified to the nations. (*Notice where the message leads. Origination and destination.*) That’s when they were finally convinced, and that **blessed conviction and assurance** gave them a joy and a peace that surpasses all understanding.

**Dearly beloved: Nothing has changed. The sending continues.** God the Father continues to send His Son to us in His Word and Sacrament for our peace, our assurance, our salvation. The Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, still comes to us to work and nourish this saving faith in us; to convince us of these life-giving cruciform realities. He still comes to us in order to take us back to Christ and His cross; to convince us of our sin and our **need** of a Savior; to convince us of the fact that it is finished in Christ and because of Christ; to convince us of the fact that Christ lives, the victory’s won, and sin, death, and the devil have already been judged. They lost. It’s a done-deal. Nothing has changed.

May Almighty God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—grant you the conviction of sure and certain saving faith; faith that hears and believes and rejoices for and boldly proclaims all that Christ **has done and continues to do for you.** May this Good News of Christ crucified guard and keep your hearts and minds in faith unto life everlasting, for it is through this saving faith that we will be welcomed into the heavenly presence of the Lamb of God; the Lamb who eternally bears the marks of His crucifixion, eternally reminding His Father that it is finished. **Imagine that...origination and destination in the wounds of Christ.** Nothing has changed, and praise God that nothing will change.

To Him alone be all glory, praise, and honor. **AMEN**