

Easter IV

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Date: 02 May 2021

Preacher: Fr. Greene

[0 : 0 0] Nevertheless, I tell you the truth. It is expedient for you that I go away. For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you. But if I depart, I will send him unto you. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Amen. What could be better than having our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in his resurrected body, here on earth with us?

Imagine being able to look upon our Lord. Imagine being able to see the holes in his hands, the hole in his side. Imagine being able to look into the eyes of God. Imagine hearing his voice to you.

What conversation would you have if you could meet our Lord face to face, physically, in the flesh? What would you say? Let's think about this scenario for a second.

If our Lord did not ascend into heaven, where would he be now? In his glorified, resurrected flesh, he would not grow old, and he would not die.

[1 : 2 8] So if he chose not to ascend, he would still be with us, even 2,000 years later. What would he have done all these centuries? What impact would his physical presence on earth have been in the Middle East, in the Americas, in Africa?

What would he have done? Would he have set up a kingdom in Jerusalem? Would he have set up an empire there, surrounded, based in Jerusalem?

How would the average Christian come to see our Lord, if he was physically still here with us? Right now, we have over a billion Christians.

I'm sure if our Lord was here physically, that number might even be higher. So how would the individual Christian get a chance to see our Lord? He couldn't possibly spend much time with each person before having to go to the next man.

You couldn't have a long conversation with him. Think about how much that would cost to even be able to get to Jerusalem too seated. Kind of thinking about this scenario a little bit, I kind of thought of it as a Santa Claus situation.

[2 : 4 7] Where a person would come in, talk to our Lord for a couple minutes, and then get chewed off for the next person to come in. Now, this is ridiculous, of course.

And I'm trying to make you think about Christianity in a different way. How different it is that our Lord did the same. If Jesus Christ was still physically on earth, at one place and one time, we would actually have less access to him than we do now.

We think that that would be a good idea, but it's actually better that he ascended. And I think that's what he's trying to talk to his disciples about this morning. So even though we would love to still have him, it's still good, he can call it good, that he ascended into heaven.

So let's back up a bit, now that we're done with our theoretical situation, and look at our gospel reading this morning. Judging from where we are in the liturgical year, we can assume that our Lord, in the passage this morning, is talking to his disciples before he ascended into heaven.

That this was after his resurrection, as he is about to leave. But actually, this is a farewell talk that he gave before his crucifixion.

[4 : 21] Saying that he was going to go away before the crucifixion. He was speaking to them before he was about to offer himself up on the cross for our sins.

We sometimes forget that our Lord actually left twice, not once. He left for three days when he was dead and in the tomb.

And again, when he ascended into heaven. The first going away was necessary for the forgiveness of our sins. That he took upon himself on the cross.

And he took them into the grave with him. The second is also necessary. So that he could intercede for us in heaven as our great high priest before the Father.

Our Lord, knowing that his time was drawn short physically with the disciples, wanted to fit in as much teaching as he could.

[5 : 23] And so he really had a lot of talks and sermons and speeches with the disciples before the crucifixion and also after the resurrection.

He had an additional 40 days, which we are celebrating liturgically now with the disciples before he officially ascended into heaven.

We can see our Lord preparing the way for the role of the Holy Spirit. In this new church that was about, that was forming and was about to explode.

This new outpouring is something entirely different than what the world has experienced up to this point. The giving of the Holy Spirit to all Christians personally would have been unheard in Old Testament times.

Does this mean that the Holy Spirit was not around before Jesus? And he had to leave in order for the Holy Spirit to come? While God was on, while Jesus was on earth, does that mean the Holy Spirit had to withdraw?

[6 : 36] Why does he have to leave for the Holy Spirit to come? Well, no. The Holy Spirit was there with our Lord on earth. It was not like he could only have one person of the Trinity there at a time.

He was there, but he was there in a different way. And our Lord's death and resurrection opened up the Holy Spirit in a completely new way. The Holy Spirit, being the third person of the Trinity, has been on earth since its creation.

We see that the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters in Genesis 1. He has been present the whole time throughout the Old Testament. But in a more selective way.

He did not enter into every single person's heart. God selectively placed His Holy Spirit on different people. We see many examples of this in the prophets being anointed with the Holy Spirit.

The judges who God came upon and used. Even kings that were given an anointing of the Holy Spirit. But this was a precious few people that got to partake in this Holy Spirit.

[7 : 53] And sometimes for only a limited amount of time. Think about Saul who had the Holy Spirit taken away from him. And then we come to our Lord's own time.

We see that the Holy Spirit was with him at his baptism. In the form of a dove. The Holy Spirit was there. Just not in the way that Christians experience Him today.

He had not always... He had not been given to us. This was at Pentecost. Which we celebrate in a few weeks. Right now our Lord is preparing His disciples for this coming.

And trying to explain that it is good that He ascends to the Father. This giving of the Holy Spirit. Of God into our lives.

Is the best thing that could possibly happen. As I talked about in the beginning. Having our Lord physically with us would be fantastic.

[9 : 06] But it's not the same. And would limit our amount of activity. Actually our access to Him. Because of Him being physically saved. In this place. In this place.

God gave us the infinite outpouring of His Holy Spirit. That indwells in our hearts. That is with us all the time. That gives us access to God anyway.

We have unlimited access directly to God. Through the Holy Spirit. All three persons of our God.

Work together. To allow us to have communion with Him. The Holy Spirit being the closest to us. It is. He is not merely a messenger.

Up to God. Hearing our prayers. But He also unites us. The Christ saving work. To bring God's grace to us. He is our advocate and comforter.

[10 : 09] Actively working in our lives. To bring about God's will. He brings with Him knowledge. Of the divine. That He freely shares with us.

Our reading this morning. Tells of just three ways. In which He does this. By convicting of sin. Telling us of God's righteousness.

And informing us of the coming judgment. So what does this mean? He works in our life. To convict us of our own wrongdoing.

Trying to spare us the guilt of sin. He shows us who God truly is. And why He should be praised.

And finally. He will give us either dread. Or joy. Of God's coming judgment. In the world to come. While this movement of the Holy Spirit.

[11 : 08] Is noticed in Christians. This function of the Holy Spirit. Is actually given to all people. To the whole world. Finally. Finally.

We see that the Holy Spirit. Will lead us to all truth. Being Himself. The Spirit of truth. This is a very misunderstood passage.

And I think. It warrants. Looking at it a little closer. I hear a lot of Christians. Claim that. This verse. As they read it.

Is whatever they want. In the Bible. And. Their authority is that. The Holy Spirit. Led them to read it this way.

They claim. The power of the Holy Spirit. To prove that their interpretation. Of the Bible. Is the correctness. And I think. That this is.

[12 : 04] Demonstratively false. Just at a quick glance. There are. 33,000. Denominations. Of Christianity. All claiming.

The same. Spirit. Inspired truth. Well. Everyone. Can't be right here. And I see no evidence. Why a lone individual. Would have the right answers.

When so many other Christians. Have apparently. Got it wrong. So what are we to do. With. This giving of truth. That is promised. Does each Christian.

By virtue of them. Having the Holy Spirit. Have the ability. To figure everything out. I debated about this. And maybe. Maybe.

But I think. Individually. We allow our own thoughts. And our own desires. To creep in. That can lead us. A strategy. Notice.

[13 : 02] When our Lord. Is talking about. This giving of. This spirit of truth. That he is not talking. To an individual. But he is talking to. His group.

Of future leaders. His apostles. That would. Lead the church. He is promising. He is promising them. Collectively. That this spirit. Would lead them.

To all truth. The Holy Spirit. Is working among them. To produce all truth. He is promising. This assurance of truth. To his church. As a whole.

To have faith. That he has delivered. To them. To the faith. That he has delivered. To them. The best way. To find out.

If your interpretation. Of scripture. Is correct. And spirit led. Is to balance. Your interpretation. Of scripture. Against how the Holy Spirit. Has spoken in the past.

[13 : 55] We have the privilege. Of looking back. For 2,000 years. Of the spirit. Speaking. In the life. Of the church.

We hold. To the faith. Of this early church. To the same people. That our Lord. Promised the spirit. Of truth to. Just as Christ. Directly. Told his apostles.

Just as the Holy Spirit. Has led the church. For the last 20 centuries. We claim. And live. By this same truth. As I close.

I want you. To meditate. On the gifts. That have been given. To us. In the Holy Spirit. We have very God. Within us. In the Holy Spirit. And he brings.

Our prayers. Up to God. And brings. Down. God's blessings. A spirit. Who has inspired. The scriptures. To be written. For our benefit.

[14 : 56] Giving us. The very word. Of God. We have a church. That has been led. By this Holy Spirit. Working out. What all of this means. Doing so much.

Of the heart. Thanking for us. Allowing us. To believe. More fully. As we are about. To receive. Our Lord's body. And blood. Miraculously.

Concephased. Through the power. Of this same. Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit. Is the most. Under praised.

Person of the Trinity. And we. And he deserves. Our full honor. And praise. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[15 : 56] I'm sorry. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.