"Keep the Change"

Text: John 7:11-16, 37-39

May our risen and ascended Lord continue to bless you with his grace, as he continues to intercede for each of you at the Father's throne. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians, do you see any real difference between *"I changed my mind"* and *"I lied"*? How about between *"I changed my mind"* and *"I broke my promise"*? Depends on the setting and circumstances, doesn't it? No big deal if you are in the drive-through at McDonalds – *"Forget the McDouble and water and set me up with a couple of Big Macs, a saddlebag full of fries, and a chocolate shake."* No big deal if you take those new jeans back to the mall and trade them in for a bigger size – made necessary by all those bad decisions at McDonalds. It is, however, a very big deal when you give your word to someone – when you make a promise – and then decide not to honor your word, your promise.

Some have actually accused Jesus of that very thing in connection with the events described in our text for this morning. Let's take a closer look on this Pentecost Sunday as we focus on that Word of God found in John's Gospel, the Seventh Chapter:

ESV **John 7: 11-16, 37-39** ***The Jews were looking for him (Jesus) at the feast, and saying, "Where is he?" 12 And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, "He is a good man," others said, "No, he is leading the people astray." 13 Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him. 14 ¶ About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching. 15 The Jews therefore marveled, saying, "How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?" 16 So Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me… 37 On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" 39 Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.***

This is God's Word. Simply reading words without thought or contemplation may hold some benefit, but we can be absolutely certain that studying God's Word *with* contemplation will surely afford great blessing, comfort, strength, and growth. With such confidence then, both in these holy words and in God's promise to bless us through them, so we pray, ***"Sanctify us by Your truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth. Amen."***

The accusation that has been leveled by Jesus-doubters concerning our text has to do with what he said just prior to our text in verse 8. Speaking to his relatives concerning their plea that he go to the festival in Jerusalem to make himself known, Jesus said, ***"You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come."*** You see the problem. First Jesus said that he wouldn't go, and then in our text we read that he did go after all. So what is it that we have here? Did Jesus break his word, or was this an example of a harmless *"I changed my mind"*?

Probably neither. A careful reading of the context always provides answers. What his relatives were urging Jesus to do was not just to go to the festival in Jerusalem but to go there to make himself known – to thrust himself into the national spotlight by going to the capital and there performing some of his spectacular miracles. Remember at this point his relatives (they were probably brothers but could have been cousins) did not yet believe in him. They did not yet accept the fact that he was the promised Messiah. The Apostle John tells us: ***Now the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand. 3 So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. 4 For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world." 5 For not even his brothers believed in him.*** John 7:2-5

What his family members were evidently saying to him was, *"If you really are something special, why stay here in weedy-seedy Galilee? Go to the big city and prove it there."* Again, they didn't encourage him to go because they had faith in him but as something of a taunt, a dare.

It was from *that* scenario that Jesus excused himself. In fact he *never* went to the festival to do what they had tried to goad him into doing – which, again, was to officially "come out" and declare his person and mission to the world. That mission was, of course, to sacrifice himself as their Savior-God. We know this to be true from Jesus' reply: ***"I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come."*** Jesus knew not only his mission but and the timing of that mission. The time chosen for him to go to Jerusalem to offer his life as payment for the sins of the world had not yet arrived. Therefore when Jesus did later follow his relatives to Jerusalem, it was quietly and with no fanfare. What Jesus actually said to his brethren, therefore, was *"I'm not going to do what you ask …yet."* Later he did go up to Jerusalem for a different festival – the Passover, where he himself served as the sacrificial Lamb. Then his testimony to his friends and enemies alike was unambiguous and, in the case of his enemies, had the anticipated effect: Matthew 26:63-66**:** ***And the high priest said to him, "I adjure***

you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." [64] Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." [65] Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. [66] What is your judgment?" They answered, "He deserves death."

Note in our text how carefully he yet again crafted his statements, always leaving room for puzzlement on the part of those who neither knew nor believed in him: ***"If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. [38] Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."*** As with so many of the other statements Jesus made prior to Holy Week, his enemies could make neither heads nor tails of exactly what Jesus was saying. They had an idea, but how silly they would have looked in court if they tried to condemn a man for offering a drink of water. The same when he said things like, ***"Destroy this temple and I will rebuild it in three days"*** and ***"No sign will be given to this generation but the sign of Jonah."*** More to the point, because they didn't understand his words, his enemies could not use them to condemn him.

Clearly Jesus' relatives needed a change of heart and mind. So (obviously) did the Jews in Jerusalem. At one time in the past, so did we. The popular opinion concerning Jesus had coalesced at this point in his ministry into two positions: he was A) a ***"good man"*** or he was B) a blasphemer and ***"one who leads the people astray."*** Interestingly enough, both positions were dead wrong, and yet this is pretty much the same two positions that have always been offered by Satan and society regarding Jesus – right down to the present. He's a good guy, or he is a fraud.

There are, in fact, two possible views of Jesus – neither one of which is that he was just a "good man." Jesus was either exactly who and what he said he was – the Son of God and Savior of the world – or he was exactly what the Jews claimed he was – a liar, deceiver, and false prophet. If Jesus wasn't exactly what he claimed to be, his enemies were correct, and they did to him exactly what they should have done, what the Law required them to do.

Clearly a change had to take place for souls to be brought to true, saving faith, and Jesus knew that there was really only one sure way for that to happen: Pentecost – the event we celebrate this morning. Note these words again from our text: ***On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. [38] Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" [39] Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.***

The people needed that special outpouring of the Holy Spirit that was given on Pentecost. Yet for reasons we cannot now fully comprehend, the Holy Spirit could not be sent, could not be poured out, unless and until Jesus returned to the glory of heaven. Later in the 16th Chapter of this same Gospel of John, Jesus said: ***"But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you. I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. [5] But now I am going to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' [6] But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. [7] Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. [8] And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment… [12] ¶ "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. [13] When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. [14] He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you."***

That is exactly what Pentecost is all about, and why we would do well to cherish this day as one of the greatest gifts God has ever given to his Church, and to you and me individually.

Not even the chosen Apostles fully understood Jesus prior to Pentecost, not even after they had spent three years at his side hearing his words and seeing his miracles. Even then they could not grasp the real significance of exactly what he was doing. They acknowledged that he was the Promised Messiah, but they were all befuddled as to exactly what that Promised Messiah was sent to do.

This is exactly why this event is so important to you and me. This is not only why we need to understand it but why we ought to be filled with gratitude to our God for making it happen. You and I needed to have our hearts and minds *changed*. We couldn't do that on our own. We *still* can't do that on our own. Without the Holy Spirit, who now lives

within us, we wouldn't understand Jesus any better than his enemies, let alone his Apostles. Our options would be the same ones available to the citizens of Jerusalem in our text: a good man or a deceiver of the people. That's it. What's more, both ideas about Jesus would damn us eternally. Obviously no one gets to heaven by believing that Jesus is a liar and fraud. But no one gets to heaven by regarding him as just a good man either.

Saving faith means that we believe everything Jesus said about himself. It means that we trust that when he died on the cross he erased our sin debt and washed us clean in God the Father's sight. Saving faith means not that *we* are good, but that we place our hope and confidence in the fact that God credits Jesus' goodness, his perfection, to us *when the Holy Spirit creates faith in our hearts.* As prone as we are to wander, and to accept the devil's lies, we still need that Holy Spirit working through his Word in our hearts on a daily basis. We need him to continue to change our hearts and minds whenever we wander from the truth and embrace what is false and evil.

Do you then understand the value of Pentecost? No Holy Spirit, no faith. No faith, no salvation. It is just that simple, that desperate.

Jesus knew us, *knows* us – collectively and individually. That's why he said that it was actually a good thing for us that he was leaving. *We needed the gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost even more than we needed to walk side by side with Jesus on a daily basis*. Think of the significance of that fact for a moment. As great as it would certainly be to have Jesus visibly walking among us today, *the gift of the Holy Spirit poured out on Pentecost is even greater*, even more amazing and necessary. The Apostles had Jesus for three years, and yet Pentecost gave them in an instant what three years at Jesus' side did not. The Holy Spirit has worked that change in you – the change you absolutely want to keep.

Look finally once again at the end of our text and the declaration Jesus made there: ***"Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"*** That's why you and I are still here, isn't it – so that the mystery of the gospel may flow from our changed hearts and minds. That's exactly what the ***"rivers of living water"*** are. They are our sanctified Christian words, which are the means the Holy Spirit uses to enter and change other hearts, other minds. Jesus himself has commissioned us to fill this absolutely vital, life-changing role. Pray each day that the Holy Spirit, who because of the gift of Pentecost lives now within each one of you, would fill you with the love and courage necessary to carry out the work he has given you to do. Pray that such ***"rivers of living water"*** would flow also from you. Nothing else in life could ever compare to such service, such life-changing work. Amen.

ESV **Numbers 11:24-30** So Moses went out and told the people the words of the LORD. And he gathered seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the tent. 25 Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. And as soon as the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied. But they did not continue doing it. 26 ¶ Now two men remained in the camp, one named Eldad, and the other named Medad, and the Spirit rested on them. They were among those registered, but they had not gone out to the tent, and so they prophesied in the camp. 27 And a young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." 28 And Joshua the son of Nun, the assistant of Moses from his youth, said, "My lord Moses, stop them." 29 But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!" 30 And Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.

ESV **Acts 2:1-8, 12-18** When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. 3 And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. 5 ¶ Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. 6 And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. 7 And they were amazed and astonished, saying, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language? 12 And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" 13 But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine." 14 ¶ But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. 15 For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. 16 But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: 17 "'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; 18 even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

ESV **John 7:11-16, 37-39** The Jews were looking for him (Jesus) at the feast, and saying, "Where is he?" 12 And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, "He is a good man," others said, "No, he is leading the people astray." 13 Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him. 14 ¶ About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching. 15 The Jews therefore marveled, saying, "How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?" 16 So Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" 39 Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

St Paul Lutheran Church

Bismarck, North Dakota

ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

2510 E. Divide Ave. Bismarck, ND 58501
Parsonage and Office: (701) 223-4885 Cell: (701) 425-5483
Website: www.bismarcklutheran.org
Mick Johnson, President Angela Pfennig, Organist
Michael Roehl, Pastor

Pentecost Sunday – May 28, 2023

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 226 (Verses 1-5) *(Red Hymnal)*
"Come, Oh, Come, Thou Quickening Spirit"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. *(Brown Hymnal)*

The Scripture Lessons: *(Printed on the back page of this bulletin)*

The Old Testament Lesson: (Numbers 11:24-30) Since we hear much about the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon the *New Testament* Church at Pentecost, some Christians are surprised to hear that the Spirit was also given to Old Testament believers. Our first lesson tells of one such occasion in the Old Testament where some of the Jewish leaders were visited by the Spirit.

Psalm 91 (Supplement page 33) *(Brown Hymnal)*

The New Testament Lesson: (Acts 2:1-8, 12-18) This is the account of the event we celebrate this morning – the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Though the Holy Spirit was obviously also at work in the Old Testament, He was given to the New Testament Church in a very special way at Pentecost. Note that the speaking in a different language was a special, visible sign that proved the visitation of the Spirit. It represented neither the gift itself nor the greatest aspect of that gift.

The Confession of Faith -
The Nicene Creed – *(Projected on screens)*

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 227 *(Red Hymnal)*
"Come Holy Ghost, in Love"

The Sermon – Text: John 7:11-16, 37-39 *(Printed on the back page of this bulletin)*
"Keep the Change"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Prayers

The Pre-Communion Hymn – 224 *(Red Hymnal)*
"Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord"

The Preparation for Holy Communion *(Brown Hymnal page 17)*

The Distribution

The Nunc Dimittis and Thanksgiving *(Brown Hymnal page 20)*

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 226 (Verses 6-7) *(Red Hymnal)*
"Come, Oh, Come, Thou Quickening Spirit"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors worshipping with us this morning and invite you to join us each Sunday at this time. We are glad you are here! **To our Visitors seeking Holy Communion** – In obedience to God's Word, we practice "Close Communion." This practice stresses both our concern for others, not wanting anyone to receive the sacrament to their harm (1 Cor. 11:27-30) and the importance of unity in confession and faith (1 Cor. 10:16-17). For this reason we ask that anyone who has not established this unity through membership in a CLC congregation please meet with the pastor to discuss this Scriptural doctrine before communing. This is a practice that we follow out of love and concern for you, and out of obedience to God's Word, not in judgment of anyone's Christian faith.

Attendance – Sunday (35) Average (42)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	**-10:00 a.m.**	**–** Worship Service w/Holy Communion
	-11:15 a.m.	**–** Fellowship Hour
Next Sunday	**-10:00 a.m.**	**–** Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	**–** Fellowship Hour

CLC News – Pastor Matthew Hanel is considering the call to Messiah of Eau Claire. Pastor Sam Naumann is considering the call to Calvary or Marquette. Grace School of Valentine has call Caleb Noeldner to serve as a 4th teacher in their Christian Day School.

Church Council Notes – Five of six Council members were able to attend the meeting on 5/21. Treasurer Mantz reported strong April offerings that fell just short of budgeted needs. The St Paul Endowment Fund has been established and can now accept offerings. The balance in this fund will be invested and the proceeds used to supplement our weekly offerings in perpetuity. Options are being explored to improve the reliability of our service projection system. Mark Johnson will represent St Paul at the upcoming WCDC in Watertown. Prof. Paul Naumann will serve as guest speaker on June 4th. Next Council meeting is scheduled for June 8th at 7pm.

Delegate Conference – Papers from this year's West-Central Delegate Conference are available upon request from either Delegate Mark Johnson or Pastor Roehl.

Man Up! Weekend - The 2023 ManUp! Men's Weekend has been scheduled for September 21-24, 2023, at Wyalusing State Park near Prairie du Chien, WI. For more information go to: www.manup.clclutheran.org