

The Holy Spirit

Session 1 – The Neglection of the Holy Spirit

1. Introduction: The Lutheran Difference (TLD) begins its treatment of the Holy Spirit this way.

a. “Even in our increasingly irreligious society, people continue to talk about God, often in terms of His Fatherhood. The general public recognizes the name, person, and work of Jesus Christ.” However:

- 1) What do those outside the Church know of the Third Person of the Trinity?
- 2) What do those inside the Church know about the Holy Spirit?
- 3) When you think of the Holy Spirit what comes to mind?
- 4) What does God, the Holy Spirit, look like in your mind?
- 5) Why do you think it is easier for most people to “visualize” God the Father or God the Son than God the Holy Spirit?

2. The TLD says, “The Lutheran Church is perhaps especially open to the charge of neglecting the Holy Spirit. Consider your own experience at church with the presentation of the Holy Spirit.

- a. How often have you heard sermons on the Life and Times of Jesus?
- b. How many times have you heard the pastor speak about God the Father?
- c. How often is the Holy Spirit the subject of a sermon or Christian music?
- d. When you reflect on the Divine Service, does the role of the Holy Spirit seem to be prominent?
- e. Does it seem “fair” to seemingly neglect the Holy Spirit in the Divine Service?
- f. In our worship at AIC is the Holy Spirit mentioned as often as Jesus or God the Father?
- g. Even our prayers seem to neglect or lack an emphasis on the Holy Spirit. Consider the Lord’s prayer, which begins with “Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name.” In the same way, we emphasize Jesus by saying, “In the name of Jesus we pray.”

3. This of course begs the question, why is the Holy Spirit seemingly neglected in our teaching, preaching, and prayer? TLD explains. “While one will not hear a Lutheran pastor preach even the shortest sermon without proclaiming Christ, Lutheran preaching often does not explicitly mention the Holy Spirit. Although this may be noted and criticized at times, Lutherans can say truthfully—if perhaps somewhat surprisingly—that it is neither an oversight nor an accident. Rather, it is entirely in keeping with Scripture’s depiction of the office and work of the Spirit Himself.”

a. Does the intentional lack of emphasis on the Holy Spirit in Lutheran worship services surprise you?

b. The explanation for our *seeming* lack of emphasis on the Holy Spirit is addressed when Jesus gives us the purpose of the Holy Spirit in John 14:26, “The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”

1) How does knowing that the Holy Spirit brings Christ to our memories help explain the lack of emphasizing him in our worship and sermons?

2) In John 16:14, Jesus adds that another role of the Holy Spirit is “to glorify me.”

c. TLD observes, “**The Third Person of the Trinity has no desire to draw attention to Himself**; He has instead been sent for the purpose of directing our attention to God’s saving work in Christ.”

1) How does this help us understand why the Holy Spirit is SEEMINGLY neglected?

2) Martin Luther explained it this way: “The Holy Spirit’s office and work, is that He, through the Gospel, reveals what great and glorious things God has done for us through Christ, namely, ransomed us from sin, death, and the power of the devil, received us into His grace and care, and given us Himself wholly and sufficiently” (WA 28:82).

4. Summing up our introduction to the Holy Spirit, TLD says, “Where Christ is preached, Lutherans rejoice to believe, teach, and confess that the Spirit is always present and active. Far from neglecting the Spirit, Lutherans praise, honor, and glorify Him as God. This occurs not only when they speak about Him, but especially when in humble silence they allow Him to speak to them, to reveal the Savior and proclaim His salvation.”

5. Your thoughts, questions, concerns?