



GOSPEL FOR PENTECOST SUNDAY

John 14:23-31

Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. Whoever does not love Me does not keep My words. And the word that you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.

"These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But 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. Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. You heard Me say to you, 'I am going away, and I will come to you.' If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe. I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on Me, but I do as the Father has commanded Me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here."

1. Because we are supposed to preach on this day about the Holy Spirit, this Gospel reading should begin earlier with what precedes (which was otherwise read at Mass on Pentecost Eve), namely, where Christ says: "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, the Spirit of truth," etc. [John 14:15-21]. Everything here is connected. This is the beginning, or the first promise, which He gave to the apostles about the Holy Spirit. Thus He abundantly comforts them about what He has promised to give them before His bodily departure, namely, that He wanted to prepare a dwelling with the Father for them and to take them to Him [John 14:2-3]; likewise, here on earth they would do much greater works than He has done, and whatever they will ask in His name He will do [John 14:12, 14], etc. In addition, He promises them the Holy Spirit, who will be and remain with them, in place of His own, brief bodily presence, not just for a while, but forever. Thus in Him they were to have a Comforter who is more advantageous than the comfort that they had from His bodily presence.

2. This is a beautiful, glorious promise which Christ makes to His Church, that is, to the little flock who believe in Him (as He previously said, "Whoever believes in Me" [John 14:12], etc.). He assures them that the Holy Spirit would surely be with them and in them; that is, He was not only given to their office but also into their hearts, so that He rules, teaches, and guides them, gives them heart and courage, and protects and preserves them in every danger and need against the devil and his power, as He then says, "I will not leave you as orphans," etc. [John 14:18].

3. He describes the Holy Spirit here and everywhere in such a way that He does not merely name Him according to His being, as He is and is called the Holy Spirit. In that way He is intangible to us as someone we cannot see or perceive. Rather, He gives Him a name from His office and work so that He becomes tangible and "incarnate," so to speak, which is the office of the Word. He makes a preacher out of Him when He calls Him "the Comforter" and "the Spirit of truth" [John 14:16-17], who is with them and heard and seen by them through the Word or preaching office. These two offices—comforting and leading into the truth—cannot happen otherwise than through the Word or teaching.

Thus we know how and where we are to find and meet Him, and should not gape here and there in doubt and hesitation for special revelations or illuminations. Rather, each one should cling to the Word and know that through it alone and through no other means He enlightens hearts and wants to dwell in them and work both true knowledge and comfort through faith in Christ. Where it happens that the Word about Christ is believed and the heart finds comfort through it, there the Holy Spirit is surely present and does His work, as has often been said.

4. Both of these names—"Comforter" and "Spirit of truth"—are very delightful and comforting names. The word "Comforter," which is made out of the Greek word *paracletus* (which is almost what in Latin is called *advocatus* or *patronus*), means a man who is the supporter of someone accused or blamed, who takes an interest in him to defend him and make amends for him, to serve him with help and aid, and to admonish and strengthen him where it is necessary. "That," says Christ, "is to be the Holy Spirit's office after I go away from you. Then you will have no comfort or support in the world. Rather, all the world will be against you, and the devil will attack you vigorously and say the worst about you with his poisonous and slanderous tongue, and accuse and defame you before all the world as deceivers and rebels. Moreover, he will severely afflict your own conscience and heart inwardly and alarm it with fright at God's wrath, sorrow, and oppressive thoughts about your own weakness, so that you could and must despair, if you were left in it without comfort and strength. That is why the devil has the name *diabolus*,

that is, *calumniator*, “a false, evil mouth or slanderer,” who (as Revelation 12 [:10] explains) accuses the Christians day and night before God.

5. “Against this slanderer and accuser,” He means to say, “I want to send you the Holy Spirit as a Helper and Defender from My Father (in My place). The Spirit will intercede for you before God. He will comfort and strengthen your hearts, so that you do not despair because of the shame and slander, the accusations and fright of the devil and the world, but instead have fearless hearts and courage and may confidently open your mouths to maintain and win your case (that is, faith and the confession of Christ).” He says, “I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to contradict or withstand” (Luke 21 [:15]).

6. He describes the Holy Spirit for us in a very friendly and comforting way, so that we would look at and regard Him no differently than as such a friendly and dear Comforter and Helper. We are to know that He was sent from God the Father and from Christ for the purpose of showing this (through the Word) to us with certainty, so that He truly comforts us and points out to us only grace, love, and goodness from God. He reassures hearts that God (both the Father and the Son) is not angry with them, does not condemn them, does not want them frightened, because the Holy Spirit was sent by them both as a Comforter and has the command to proclaim nothing other than what He hears, as we have heard in the previous Gospel reading.¹

7. This comfort, then, also produces a fearless heart and courage against the raging of the devil and the world. Then it gladly suffers and overcomes everything that a Christian must suffer outwardly, just as the apostles and martyrs (and many weak women and girls) did. Such people know that in this faith and confession the Holy Spirit is with them, supports them, and directs and guides their struggle and battle (against the devil and the world), so that they must not succumb but be victorious through Him and carry out their work, regardless of what opposes them.

8. Second, Christ also calls Him “the Spirit of truth” [John 16:13] as a comfort for those who believe the Gospel, so that they know that the comfort they hear through the Word is true and genuine and does not lie or deceive. This courageous boldness which trusts and relies on it does not err but remains and stands certain, firm, and constant against all the storming and frightening of all the gates of hell [Matt. 16:18]. It is based not on something uncertain and changeable, as the world’s comfort and reliance is on perishable goods, might, power, etc., but on the Word of Christ and God’s eternal truth.

9. Christ also gives this name to the Holy Spirit in opposition to the devil, who is also a spirit—not a comforter and helper of Christians, but their harmer and murderer. He is not truthful, but a lying spirit, who misleads and

¹ See sermon for Fourth Sunday after Easter on John 16:5–15.

ruins both with false fright and false comfort, even under the appearance of the truth. It is also his nature to fill his own people—that is, the unbelieving, arrogant, secure, careless hearts—with sweet comfort (as said above in the Gospel on Easter Tuesday²). In addition, he makes them bold, obstinate, and arrogant about their own delusions, wisdom, and self-made holiness, so that they pay attention to no threats or fright of God's wrath and eternal damnation and acquire heads harder than any steel or diamond.

10. On the other hand, he does just the opposite with true, good hearts, which otherwise are timid and weak, since he torments them with everything frightful that can be imagined, spoken, or done, and shoots them through as with fiery arrows [Eph. 6:16], so that they expect nothing good or comforting from God. So he misleads the people on both sides through his lies and wants to lead them into ruin and eternal death. [He misleads] the former, who should be frightened into repentance, through false comfort and security, but finally, when their hour comes, he leaves them stuck in sudden fright and despair. He wears out the latter with unceasing affliction and anguish, and takes the comfort they should have in God away from them, so that they despair of His grace and help.

11. That is why we must learn to recognize and know the Holy Spirit correctly. He is and does nothing else than truly comfort people through the preaching of the Gospel in Christ; He comforts the distressed and timid hearts who know their sins and have already been frightened and distressed by the devil too much. He bids them to be cheerful and confident of God's promised grace in Christ and preserves them in it, so that they remain in that truth. So also their hearts feel and experience this truth, that all other teaching and comfort, through which people want to rule the conscience before God, are not the genuine truth (and thus there can be no Holy Spirit there) but the devil's lies and deception through which he wants to carry out murder. Therefore, they should let no fright, threat, or suffering on earth turn or tear them away from this true comfort through the Gospel.

12. However, this comfort and truth of the Holy Spirit are hidden very secretly and deeply in faith, so that even Christians themselves do not always feel them, but in their weakness much more have to sense the opposite. Because the devil everywhere hinders and prevents them both inwardly through themselves and through the timidity of their own flesh and outwardly through the wickedness of the world, they often can have scarcely any good, cheerful thoughts toward God at all, and it happens that—just as the high apostle St. Paul laments about himself—they always feel “fighting without, fear within” (2 Corinthians 7 [:5]). There cannot be only comfort and joy, but the much greater part is sorrow and anguish and the throes of

2 See sermon for Easter Tuesday on Luke 24:36–47.

death, as he also says, "We who live are always being given over into death for Jesus' sake" (2 Corinthians 4 [:11]). Likewise: "Because of our boasting [about you], which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily" (1 Corinthians 15 [:31]). We also see many godly hearts that are always sad and dejected, being anxious and troubled at their own thoughts, despairing in their temptations from the devil. "Where," say the world and our own flesh, "is the Holy Spirit about whom you Christians boast?"

13. Therefore, a Christian should be wise here so that he does not pass sentence and judge according to his own thoughts and feelings, but know that against just this temptation and weakness he must cling to the Word and the comforting sermon which the Holy Spirit preaches to all poor, distressed hearts and consciences. Christ says about the office which He is to carry out through the Holy Spirit: "The Spirit of the Lord is with Me. Because the Lord has anointed Me, He has sent Me to preach to the wretched, to bind up the broken hearts, likewise to comfort all the sorrowful" (Isaiah 61 [:1-2]).

14. From this you should learn (as you hear at this place and everywhere in the Gospel) that God does not want to have you sad and frightened, but cheerful and confident of the sure, truthful promise of His grace, which the Holy Spirit Himself preaches to you. He tells you that it is not the truth but your false delusion and the devil's deception which causes you to feel and think in your heart about the wrath and punishment of an angry God who wants to damn you to hell. Therefore, let God's Word and command be more and count more for you than your own feelings and the judgment of the whole world, so that you do not call Him a liar and rob yourself of the Spirit of truth.

15. Christ is giving this promise and comfort (against our feelings and fear) when He speaks the words: "I will not leave you as orphans" [John 14:18], etc. With the word "orphans," He Himself shows how the Church appears according to its own feelings and in the eyes of the world. It does not have the appearance of a beautiful, well-arranged, and constituted government, but it is a torn-up, scattered little flock of poor, miserable orphans, who have no head, protection, or help on earth. All the world laughs and scoffs at them as great fools for regarding themselves to be the Church and God's people. In addition, each one's own need and suffering oppresses and burdens him in particular so highly, as if he alone was at the bottom and most utterly forsaken.

16. Such misery and trepidation especially grows when the devil's power is truly felt, when he forces his bitter, poisonous, murderous stings into a heart, saying that it is forsaken not only by all people but also by God. Then the heart completely loses Christ and can see no end at all to its misery. We heard about this above in the Gospel reading where He says: "You will cry

and weep, but the world will rejoice. You, however, will be full of sorrow" [John 16:20], etc.³ That is what it really means to be orphans, that is, left altogether desolate and helpless (as it feels).

17. Just as Christ tells His Christians about this suffering ahead of time, so His intent is to give this comfort and refreshment ahead of time and to teach us not to despair because of it, but only to adhere to His Word, even if it seems to be too long delayed. He wants to remind us of the promise that He will not leave us stuck in such misery, and we should do Him the honor (which is the highest honor of God) of regarding Him to be faithful and true. He says that it will not last forever, but only be little and brief, as He also says, "I come again to you" [John 14:28]. Likewise: "In a little while, and the world will not see Me" (which will truly be your hour of sorrow, which will even seem like an eternal hour of death), "but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice" [John 16:16, 22].

18. This promise is very kind and comforting, if we only learn to believe it and so experience that in our highest weakness He rules, protects, and preserves His Church through miraculous divine power, so that it nevertheless remains and is delivered. Then in their highest sadness there is comfort; in the highest misery and loneliness there is joy and help; in death there is eternal life. When it breaks forth and is felt, then the heart, which has overcome everything and is flooded with the glorious joy of help and redemption, hears the cheerful, defiant words of victory that Christ speaks here: "Because I live, you also will live," etc. [John 14:19]. As the beautiful *Confitemini*⁴ rings out: "They sing with joy about victory in the tents of the righteous. The right hand of the Lord wins the victory. Now I will not die, but live, and proclaim the work of the Lord" (Psalm 118 [:15, 17]).

This is the same thing St. Paul says about this comfort and help for poor orphans: "We are always given over to death, and we always carry the dying of the Lord Jesus in our bodies, so that also the life of the Lord Jesus may be manifested in our bodies" (2 Corinthians 4 [:11, 10]). Christ once more says, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," etc. (Luke 12 [:32]).

19. This is the Christians' high wisdom and knowledge revealed through the Holy Spirit, about which the world understands nothing at all and must even confess that it knows nothing about this comfort. Moreover, it is driven by the devil to despise and push away the preaching of the Holy Spirit about this comfort. That is why Christ also passes judgment on it for the comfort of His Christians: "Whom the world cannot receive, since it does not see

³ See sermon for Third Sunday after Easter on John 16:16-23.

⁴ The explanation of Psalm 118 which Luther prepared at the Coburg in 1530 has the title *The Beautiful Confitemini*, the first word of the psalm in Latin (see LW 14:45).

Him and does not know Him" [John 14:17]. It is frightening to say that they cannot receive the Holy Spirit, for from this it must follow that [the world] has no part in the kingdom of God, is separated from Him forever, and remains in the devil's power and in hell's bonds! However, it is also a just and well-deserved punishment on the hardened world, which will not have it otherwise, because it so shamefully despises, slanders, and persecutes Christ, God's Son, together with His Word and the Holy Spirit.

That is enough about the office of the Holy Spirit, which is discussed briefly before this text. This Gospel reading follows it:

"Whoever loves Me will keep My Word, and My Father will love him."
[John 14:23]

20. Shortly before this, He began to say with almost the same words: "Whoever has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me. But whoever loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and reveal Myself to him" [John 14:21]. In response to these words, the good apostle Judas asks, "Lord, what does it mean that You will reveal Yourself to us and not to the world?" [John 14:22]. Together with the other disciples, he still had the Jewish way of thinking, that Christ would become a worldly lord and emperor, and they even hoped to become great and powerful lords over lands and people. They often disputed and quarreled among themselves about which of them would be the greatest and most powerful.

That is why this Judas is surprised at these words of Christ and cannot refrain from going ahead and asking what He means by saying that He will reveal Himself to no one except to them alone. He had to be thinking: "What kind of a king will He be if He lets no one see Him? Even though He has so far gone about only as a servant, nevertheless He has preached publicly and done miracles—but now He wants to begin His kingdom in such a secret and hidden way and wants it to have such a narrow extent that no one will see or know Him except those few who love Him. I thought," he would like to say, "that You would first reveal and let Yourself be seen by Your enemies, so that they all would have to embrace You. What does it mean that everything depends on people keeping Your Word? What would we accomplish if we did nothing more than that? Who will want to be subject to You if it is to depend on everyone's will and pleasure whether he knows and loves You?"

21. But Christ speaks and answers with those words just because He wants to root out their Jewish thoughts and to portray and represent His kingdom correctly. "No, dear Judas," He means to say, "it will not happen as you think. Here on earth the world has its honor and glory and its power and might, with which it makes people obey. That has nothing to do with you and Me. Rather, the important thing is that people love Me and keep My Word.

Where there are such people, I will rule, and to them alone I can reveal and show Myself, etc. My government does not prevail by means of compulsion and force (as must be done among the evildoers in the world), but I want to rule the hearts of those people who gladly and willingly come to Me. The others who do not believe in Me will not do this.”

22. Often in the past God had given much effort to ruling the Jewish people only with laws and punishment. Because of that, almost the whole nation was destroyed in the wilderness and afterward was always defeated, led out of their country, until at last they completely perished. He could not get them to be obedient from the heart and keep His Commandments.

What were they supposed to keep? In the beginning when God spoke with them and gave them the Ten Commandments, they could not tolerate or listen to Him, but prayed that He would have Moses speak with them, for they would listen to him [Exod. 20:19]. Yet when he did come and brought the Ten Commandments, they also could not look him in the eyes, but made a veil for his face [Exod. 34:29-35]. St. Paul says that this veil remains before their eyes to the present day, so that they will not and cannot see and understand (much less take to heart) what God wants to have from them, namely, that they should love Him with all their heart and be obedient to Him [2 Cor. 3:13-15].

23. If God could not get His own people, whom He specially chose and honored highly above all others, to do this through Moses and the prophets, what would He accomplish better with other people through only laws and compulsion? Therefore, He had to form a different government if He is to have people on earth who can truly be and remain God's obedient children. That must be done in such a way that He not only drives the disobedient nature with fright and threats (even though this is also necessary so that they recognize their disobedience and sin and are frightened of God's wrath) but also lovingly and kindly entices them, so that they obtain love and desire for Him.

24. However, this cannot happen otherwise than through the Word that proclaims grace to us instead of the fright of His wrath, which we have deserved with our disobedience, and points out that God wants to abolish His wrath and forgive sins. Christ now brings this kind and gracious Word with His Gospel. He begins His kingdom so that hearts would grasp this and come to know Him as the one who brought from God and gives to us grace and mercy through His suffering and death and, in addition, who has given the Holy Spirit and governs us so that we remain in His gracious kingdom. The Holy Spirit works in us, so that we again obtain love for God and begin to obey Him with love and joy.

25. About this He now says, "Whoever loves Me will keep My Word" [John 14:23]. Shortly before this He said, "If you love Me, then keep My commandment" [John 14:15, 21]. Whoever loves Him must keep His Word or commandment, that is, recognize and know what he has from Him (otherwise, no one will love Him). That does not mean Moses' words and the preaching of the Law, but the preaching of the love and grace which He shows us by taking our sins onto Himself and sacrificing His body and blood for them. He gives this to us so that we would take comfort and recognize and experience His love in it. If we believe this, He requires nothing more of us than that we be thankful for it and remain in this faith and confession, and so out of love and honor for Him help to advance His kingdom with words and works.

26. The presumptuous, untried spirits, who know they are so holy and strong, think that this is simple, since whatever they hear they easily do, and God's Word is such that it is done as soon as it is heard. "Who would be so evil," such a person who has no experience thinks, "as not to love Christ and not to keep His Word which preaches about God's grace?" Similarly, when Moses told the people of Israel in the wilderness all the words of the Lord, they all cried out with one voice: "All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do" (Exodus 24 [:3]). However, when it had to be put to work, the way they kept it made them remain in the wilderness a full forty years and all perish. Yes, if Christ with His Word were gold and silver, or brought honor and glory for our holiness and wisdom, then everyone would gladly and firmly keep it. However, He is none of those things that people desire on earth; rather, He is such a disagreeable figure that all the world is offended and flees from Him.

27. Experience teaches how difficult it is to keep this Word, because the holy cross has been laid on it. Without this, our own flesh and the old nature would still be rebellious and would prefer what is easy and nice. Then, if we begin to confess the Gospel, the devil is also there, forces his way in with all his followers and members, and afflicts them everywhere with the persecution of the world and all kinds of temptations. He does so inwardly with eternal conflict and alarms of the heart and outwardly with constant danger to body and life, so that we have to call and cry out to heaven for help. Experience certainly teaches that it is not so simple and easy to keep Christ's Word as it is otherwise with other antics, such as Jewish ceremonies, made-up worship, monasticism, and the like.

28. "Therefore," Christ says, "it is necessary for the heart to cling to Me and love Me, for in no other way will it survive in the world, which is the devil's kingdom, opposed to Christ. The Church on earth must be and struggle in weakness, poverty, misery, anguish, death, disgrace, and shame.

Necessity compels you to step out of yourself and not rely on human help, aid, or strength. Rather, you must have Christ in your heart so that you regard His name, Word, and kingdom higher, more precious, and more valuable than all things on earth." Whoever does not do this but loves his own honor, power, the world's favor, friendship, pleasures, enjoyments, and his own life more—preaching to him is in vain, as He Himself soon afterward says, "Whoever does not love Me does not keep My words" [John 14:24].

29. His Christians, with whom He is here speaking, as with people who recognize and know what they have in Him, should also be moved and pressed to this love. The love and kindness that He shows to us should (I say) move them, that is, that He has taken our sin, damnation, and eternal death from us onto His neck and carried it, and so full well deserves that we should love Him. That is why He shortly before reminds them of this and says, "If you love Me," etc. [John 14:15], as if He would say: "Recognize and accept that I have deserved your love, and so do this to please Me, etc. If you believe and bear this in mind, then you will surely also love Me."

30. However, loving is not done only with words, but it also must be a living work and proof of love, that is, "keeping My Word," etc. That kind of love struggles and conquers. It is also the nature of true love, wherever it is, that it does everything for the sake of the one loved, and nothing is too hard for it to suffer and bear that it does not gladly do it. We see this even in the natural love implanted by God (as a picture of His divine love toward us) in fathers and mothers toward their children, which burns for free toward the undeserving and impels them to do good for their children. Even Christ, when He was in His divine majesty, eternal God and Creator, showed the highest love toward us—toward us poor creatures, who were not at all related to Him and deserved nothing but wrath and damnation.

31. Love does this for those who did not previously love it and who deserved no love. Even apart from that, we would be obliged to love Christ, even if He had not so highly deserved it as our Creator and God. How much more should we love Him because He has so highly loved us! If this inexpressible kindness truly enters our hearts, then nothing at all which we are to suffer and bear for His sake would be irritating or too hard for us, if we only continue in His love. This is, then, not only gladly hearing His Word but also adhering to it and being conquered by it.

"And My Father will love him." [John 14:23]

32. There is no need for sharp disputing about the question of why Christ says, "Whoever loves Me," etc., as if we had to love Him first, when it is certain that He loves us first [1 John 4:19]. First John 3 [4:10] clearly says, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as

a propitiation for our sins." Yes, if He did not begin [to love], then we could never love Him. No one can love Him except the one who believes that he is first loved by Him and has a gracious God in Him; otherwise the heart flees from God and is secretly hostile toward Him as the one who wants to cast him into hell, as was said above.

33. However, when Christ says, "Whoever loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him," etc. [John 14:21], He is talking about the revelation of love. He Himself also explains this when He says: "I will reveal Myself to him" [John 14:21] and "We will come to him" [John 14:23]. If we remain firm in this love against the enemies of Christ and His Church—that is, the wrath, hatred, and persecution of the devil and the world—then we will also experience and find that He faithfully and firmly watches over us with His love and will come to our aid in this struggle and danger and give us the victory, etc. This is the *probatio*, or "experience," which comes from patience in suffering (as St. Paul says in Romans 5 [:4]). This happens, as has been sufficiently said, in such a way that the love of God toward us is so completely concealed that we feel nothing but the opposite, as if God had completely forgotten us and changed His grace and love into wrath.

34. Whoever perseveres in this and continues in love experiences that God is truthful and feels this comfort of divine love and certainty poured out into his heart, so that he overcomes everything thereby. St. Paul once again says: "In all these things we are more than conquerors for the sake of Him who loved us. For I am certain that neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities nor powers, neither things present nor things to come, neither height nor depth nor any other creature can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8 [:37-39]). This is the victory and redemption. Through it we experience that what we have believed is true: that He loves us.

35. Christ speaks specifically and carefully—in this way: "My Father will love him" [John 14:23]—so that He can draw us upward, show us the Father's heart, and represent it most pleasantly, as is highly necessary for poor, distressed consciences. It is exceedingly difficult for the human heart to expect with certainty all good, grace, and mercy from God—yes, it is completely impossible apart from the Mediator, Christ. Coarse and careless hearts can be all too strong and obstinate here; they sternly and stubbornly go off and think that what they do is all precious before God. They do this until they come into real danger and the fright of death (through the brightness and revelation of the Law). Then there is no people on earth more despondent and despairing, and if their hour comes, they suddenly sink down, and no one can raise them up again.

36. That is why it is much better, more comforting, and more secure for those who are always writhing and grappling with fright and fear of God's wrath—and are so anxious that the world becomes too narrow for them if they even hear God named—that this comfort be spoken precisely to them. Yes, for their sake God always had the promise of His grace and the forgiveness of sins written down and emphasized. In addition, He gave His Son and all the good He does in the whole world, and inundates them with good things, so that His grace and goodness would be made known to them. God's goodness "daily continues" and "extends as far as heaven" (Psalm 52 [:1] and 36 [:5]). We must see and grasp that it is the visible grace and help of God when a Christian lives and is healthy. The devil, in whose kingdom they are on earth, is a bitterly wicked spirit who strives day and night for nothing else than to murder and destroy them.

37. But however great and plentiful are both the promise, words, and works of God's grace toward those who fear Him, it is still not strong enough for them to lift their hearts and look cheerfully to God. They still always remain in worry and anxiety that God might still be angry with them, because they feel their unworthiness and weakness. They tremble at whatever they remember or hear of angry words or frightful examples of God's wrath and punishment, and worry that it will strike them. Similarly, on the other hand, the others (who should be frightened of it) obstinately and arrogantly despise it in their security and take fleshly comfort, as if God could not be angry with them. It is very difficult to straighten out the human heart so that in fortune and welfare it does not become secure but remains humble, and so that, on the other hand, in fright and misfortune it has comfort and confidence toward God.

38. For that reason Christ speaks everywhere in His consolations in such a way that He, as a faithful, good Mediator, always shows the Father in the kindest way. He wants to tell this to our hearts, so that no one would have any doubt about it, if he only loves Him, has desire for Him, can cling to His Word, and believes that for us He has borne and taken away all wrath, sin, and death. If he persists in this firm confession, then he surely has the true, fatherly heart of God, full of inexpressible, boundless love for him. God's earnest will and intention is that he would be afraid and frightened of nothing, but should expect everything dearest and best from Him.

39. That is a glorious comfort in which, as in your own kingdom of heaven, you can greatly rejoice and even jump for joy. Christ has assured you and made you certain that when, for His sake and out of love for Him, you suffer from the devil or the world, that is well-pleasing to God the Father in heaven and is the dearest thing you can do for Him. You shall also experience His love for you through His help and victory. Christians should know

this comfort and remember the treasure of the Gospel and the knowledge of Christ, so that they praise God for it and are thankful. He emphasizes this promise further and with more words when He says:

"And We will come to him and make Our dwelling with him." [John 14:23]

40. This will be a truly glorious, new Pentecost and an excellent demonstration and power of the Holy Spirit, a heavenly assembly or council on both sides, since the hearts are enlightened and kindled through the Holy Spirit with love for Christ, and, on the other side, Christ's and the Father's love shines and beams toward them. Both God and man stay together in such a friendly way when the Holy Spirit prepares man's heart and consecrates it as a holy house and dwelling, a temple and monstrance of God; and man obtains such a glorious, noble, dear, and honored guest and inhabitant, or housemates, who are God the Father and the Son.

41. This must be great glory and grace for those people who are thought worthy of being the glorious dwelling, castle, hall—even paradise and kingdom of heaven—where God dwells on earth. Yet they are such poor, distressed, fearful hearts and consciences, who feel nothing in themselves but sin and death, who quake and tremble at God's wrath, and who think that God is farthest from them and the devil closest to them. However, they are the ones to whom this was promised, and they can cheerfully take the comfort that they are the true house of God and Church, not smeared with rancid chrism by the suffragan bishop, but consecrated through the Holy Spirit Himself, where God desires to rest and remain. The prophet Isaiah says about them (against the proud saints puffed up by their own holiness and worship): "What kind of a house will you build for Me, and what is the place where I will rest? Has not My hand made everything there is? says the Lord. But I look to the one who is miserable and has a broken spirit, who trembles at My Word" (Isaiah 66 [:1-2]).

42. Where else should God dwell? He finds no other inn on earth. The other excellent, high, great, self-taught saints are much too proud, much too high, wise, smart, and holy—in addition, they have gone far through and above heaven—to be His dwelling on earth (even though they boast that they alone are the Church and God's people). So in turn He also is much too noble and fastidious; He will not and cannot dwell with such arrogant, boastful saints who, like their idol, the devil, want to be equal to God and brag to Him about their holiness. He does not regard them as worthy of the honor of looking at them, with all the pomp, fame, and finery of their beautiful, self-made holiness. Meanwhile, He is found in the poor, common huts of the poor, despised people who hear and believe Christ's Word and want to

be Christians, even though they regard themselves to be completely unholy, unworthy sinners.

43. This is an excellent, beautiful, and (as St. Peter says in 2 Peter 1 [:4]) one of "the precious and greatest of all promises granted to us" poor, miserable sinners, that we are also "to become partakers of the divine nature" and should be so highly ennobled that we not only are loved by God through Christ and have His favor and grace as the highest and most precious holy possession but also should have Him, the Lord Himself, completely dwelling in us. He means to say that it will not just be love when He takes His wrath away from us and shows us a gracious, fatherly heart, but we shall also have the enjoyment of that love (otherwise, His love would be vain and lost to us, as the proverb says, "Loving and not enjoying," etc.⁵). We are to have great benefit and treasure from it, and there must be a further effect⁶ in which this love is actually shown in a great gift.

44. These are the two things that Christians receive from God (as St. Paul distinctly names them in Romans 5 [:15]), namely, grace and gift. Grace forgives sins, produces comfort and peace for the conscience, and puts people into the kingdom of divine mercy. This is called "a kingdom of grace": "His grace and truth governs and rules over us forever" (Psalm 116 [117:2]). But the gift is that the Holy Spirit works new thoughts, mind, heart, comfort, strength, and life in people.

45. That is what He means when He says, "We will make our dwelling with him" [John 14:23]. What must follow the grace and love of God is that the human heart becomes a throne and seat of the high Majesty (which must be better and more exalted than heaven and earth). St. Paul says, "The temple of God is holy, which you are" (1 Corinthians 3 [:17]). Likewise: "You are the temple of the living God, as God says, 'I will dwell in them and walk in them'" (2 Corinthians 6 [:16]).

It happens in this way: Beyond the grace when a man begins to believe and to cling to the Word, God also rules in the man through His divine power and working, so that he becomes more and more enlightened, abounding and strong in spiritual understanding and wisdom, in order to know and judge about all kinds of doctrine and affairs. Then he daily increases and continues in life and good fruits; becomes a kind, gentle, patient man; serves everyone with teaching, counseling, comforting, and giving, in service to God and people, through whom and because of whom country and people are helped.

5 One such saying is: "Loving and not enjoying can annoy the devil" (Wander 3:168, "Lieben" no. 57). Similar sayings include: "Loving and not having is harder than digging out stones" (Wander 5:1560, "Lieben" no. 169) and "Whoever loves without desire drinks without thirst, eats without hunger, dies all the younger" (Wander 3:166, "Lieben" nos. 4, 115).

6 *Nachdruck*, or "another press," as of grapes in a winepress.

In summary, he is the kind of man through whom God speaks, lives, and works whatever he speaks, lives, and works. His tongue is God's tongue, his hand is God's hand, and his word is no longer man's word but God's Word.

46. His teaching and confession (which he makes as a Christian) is not the understanding and wisdom of a man but of Christ, whose Word he has and keeps. So also his office (which he governs and does as a Christian) is not out of a man's own undertaking and ability, but out of God's command, ability, and power, given out from God through the Holy Spirit, as St. Peter says [1 Pet. 1:12]. Everywhere he gives nothing but good from himself, just as he has received everything good from God. Outwardly, his body and members become also a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6 [:19]), so that as a Christian and a good tree he produces good yields and fruits, does good, and opposes and avoids evil.

47. Look at how great is the man who is a Christian or, as He says, "keeps His Word," etc. [John 14:23]. He is a true prodigy on earth. He is of more value before God than heaven and earth. He is even a light and savior of the whole world, in whom God is all and all, and who can and does do everything in God. However, before the world he is highly and deeply hidden and unknown. The world is unworthy of recognizing such people. Rather, [the world] must regard them to be its doormats or, as St. Paul says, "a curse and expiatory sacrifice"⁷ (1 Corinthians 4 [:13]), because of whom the country and people must be cursed and perish, and who should rather be put to death as a service to God and to cleanse the world.

48. How ridiculous it sounded in the ears of the Jewish saints, priests, and Pharisees when they heard that God would have His dwelling only in those who keep this man's Word! They were nothing but a small handful of timid, poor, despised people, as if God did not have a better and more glorious house and dwelling (which suited His majesty) in the holy, excellent people who were the bright lights and high heads in the people of God, in the holy city of Jerusalem and the glorious temple and worship. The Scriptures and

⁷ *Fegopffer*. Luther explains this term in his marginal note on 1 Cor. 4:13 in the 1546 German Bible: "'Curse, expiatory sacrifice': 'Curse' in Greek is *katharma*; 'expiatory sacrifice' is *peripsema*; in Latin it is *piaculum*. This is a man who has committed such an evil deed that people thought God would curse and destroy land and people on account of it. Therefore, when they got rid of him, they thought they had taken away the curse and cleansed the land. The prophet Jonah was this sort of 'curse' when he was thrown into the sea. Sometimes they also took an innocent man when this sort of great calamity was in the land, and thought they were sweeping [*fegeten*] the land of this calamity by means of this kind of death or sacrifice [*Opffer*], casting him into the sea and saying, 'May you be our expiatory sacrifice [*Fegopffer*], that we may recover and be saved!' So also the world thinks that the apostles and preachers of the Gospel are the worst, most pernicious people on earth. If they can be rid of them, then things would be well, they think, and they would be free of every misfortune and curse, and by doing this they would be doing God a great service (John 16 [:2])" (WA DB 7:97).

the prophets themselves call it God's holy city and dwelling, the chosen place where God would rest (Psalm 132 [:13-14]), and even forever. They bragged boldly about this and thought it would be impossible for their kingdom, priesthood, and worship to perish.

49. But now Christ goes ahead and forgets to mention any of this, as if He would know nothing at all of it, and speaks unusual, new words: that the Father's and His holy place, dwelling, and Church is to be wherever there is a Christian who keeps His Word. Thus He abolishes and breaks apart the old dwelling of Judaism and the temple at Jerusalem and builds a new, holy, glorious Church and house of God, which is not Jerusalem or Judaism but is spread into all the world without distinction of persons, places, or external manner, whether Jew or Gentile, priest or layman. It is not a house made by human hands out of stone and wood, but newly created by God Himself, namely, a people who love Christ and keep His Word.

50. He had certainly been a Master of the house in the Jewish people so far and had had His hearth and fire there, as He says (Isaiah 31 [:9]), for the sake of His Word which still remained there, proclaimed by the prophets and always believed by some. That was the true Church of God for whose sake the country and city were preserved. But when Christ Himself came, they did not want to listen to His preaching but persecuted His apostles and Christians and drove them out of the land, until finally no Christian could remain there. So the temple, city, and country must be destroyed, perish, and be eternally rejected with its priesthood and people, never to be raised again. Moses and the prophets had told them ahead of time that if they would not keep His Word and Commandments, then they would no longer be or be called His people, and His city and temple would no longer be His city and temple (Deuteronomy 32; Hosea 2).

51. So you hear once again the definition and answer to the controversial question of what the Church and its power are. We correctly and truly boast that it is ruled by the Holy Spirit. Yes, as He says, the Father and the Son also dwell with it, and what it says and does is said and done through Him, so that everyone at the risk of losing his salvation is obliged to obey it. From this and other promises we are agreed to an extent, that there is a people on earth who is called God's people, where He wants to be like a father in his house, a prince in his castle, God in His Church. God holds His Church to be so high and precious that He regards His whole heaven above as not as much as it, so that He even comes to it in this vale of tears and wants to remain with it until the end of the world. We do not need to gape upward in vain, seeking His Church in paradise, which He has deferred for the life to come.

52. Therefore, there is no controversy concerning the fact that there is one Church on earth and that we should be obedient to it as to the lady or

empress through whom God speaks and works. But the controversy concerns who and which one the Church is. Judging on the basis of human words and verdicts does nothing to solve this dispute and to find the true Church (as St. Augustine says), but we can become certain about the matter when we listen to how Christ the Lord Himself describes and portrays it in His Word. He baptizes and paints it as the little flock that loves Christ and keeps His Word (that is how we recognize and notice this love). "My Word must be there," He says, "and kept or held onto; otherwise it will accomplish nothing." The Word, which is called Christ's Word [Col. 3:16], must be the straightedge and test by which we know and find the Church and according to which it is oriented. Nevertheless, there must be a certain rule and limit of what the Church should speak and do. It is not right if everyone were to speak and do what he wanted, and then to assert that the Church spoke and did that from the Holy Spirit.

53. That is why Christ binds the Church to His Word and makes this the sign by which it is to be tested and discovered: whether it has, teaches, and preaches this and does everything according to it out of love for Christ. Where you find that, there you have truly discovered the Church, and you are obliged to obey it. You should certainly conclude that God dwells there and speaks and works through it.

54. St. Peter also gives this rule (as we heard above in his Epistle) when he says: "Whoever speaks should speak it as God's Word. Whoever has an office should do it as with the ability and strength that God supplies" [1 Pet. 4:11]. That is, whoever wants to speak in this house and do, produce, command, or give should think that he does and speaks God's Word and work; otherwise he should defer his doing and speaking and only speak and govern at home in his house or principality. Outside of this house, the world has its own words and works—every lord, emperor, prince, and head of a family in his government and affairs—where it is so ordered (if it is rightly governed) that everything happens according to the will and mind of the lord of the house or country. Even though the servants of the house or court may otherwise be wicked villains, yet it is and remains the lord's order and business, and what he says and commands is done. However, in this house where God is Lord and Prince, He also wants to speak and act alone, so that nothing else is commanded than His Word and His work, which happen by the strength of His command. Everyone can depend on this with certainty, take comfort from it, and rely on it.

55. This is a beautiful promise about the superabundant glory of Christians, namely, that God commits Himself so deeply to them and is so close to them that He wants to show Himself and be seen and heard nowhere else than in them and through their words and works, mouths and hands. So

He makes a big distinction between them and all other people, so that each individual Christian (no matter how ordinary he is) is a very different man and is honored before God higher than all kings, emperors, princes, and all the world together, since the world neither has nor knows anything about this glory and honor. Moses says, "Where is there such a glorious nation which has its gods so close as the Lord our God [is to us], as often as we call on Him?" (Deuteronomy 4 [:7]). For the sake of this point, indeed, we should favor the Word of the Gospel, be comforted and bold, cling to it, and leave behind everything in the world for it.

56. However, we must also know (as I have said) that among Christians on earth this remains still in the Word and faith, under their weakness, so that they certainly need to call out to God and pray for the help and strength of the Holy Spirit. A Christian has certainly begun to be and to be called God's dwelling, in whom God rules, speaks, and works, but this is not yet completed. It is a building or house at which God still works and furnishes daily, until it is completely prepared and finished on the Last Day. That is why Christ does not say, "We will find a dwelling made in him," but "We will make [Our dwelling] in him" [John 14:23].

57. He brings with Him all kinds of spiritual material necessary for building, carpentering, and preparing this dwelling, that is, the gifts of the Holy Spirit along with the Word. Although it has not yet been completely finished off, yet the grace and love, through which it is accepted by God and is called and is His house, are present. It is always being prepared through the use of the Word and through the Holy Spirit, and it increases and becomes stronger in understanding, wisdom, faith, gifts, and virtues. Moreover, that which is still gnarled and misshapen in them from the old birth is cut off and put to death through the cross, trial, and suffering, and He is always at work on the beginnings of grace and of the Holy Spirit's work.

58. That is why no one should take offense at another or despair of himself when he sees or even still feels much sinful weakness, provocation, and desires for unbelief, impatience, etc., even if at times he makes a mistake and stumbles (like St. Peter, who denied Christ [Mark 14:66-72]), as if for that reason God would withdraw from him and cast him off as a useless tool. Rather, he should raise himself up again through repentance and faith in the Word and take comfort that he is in Christ's kingdom of grace, which is much more powerful than sin (Romans 5 [:20]). The Holy Spirit is given in such a way that He is not only a present and a gift who gives courage and strength but also one who comforts in weakness and makes him into God's dwelling where God's love always remains, through which this weakness is covered up and not imputed.

59. So in the kingdom of Christ, the Spirit of grace and prayer is poured out (as the prophet Zechariah, chapter 12 [:10], says in beautiful words). This is the Holy Spirit who dwells in the hearts of believers together with the Father and the Son, speaks and works through them, and gives them comfort and victory to stand firm against sin, death, and the devil's power. However, He does not do this through an obvious, mighty demonstration of great power and strength, but, because they still feel their sin and unworthiness, He carries and covers it and comforts them with grace and forgiveness in Christ. Because they feel great weakness in this conflict, they are impelled by Him to prayer, that is, to call out for help and strengthening, and through that calling and crying out the Spirit conquers in them. St. Paul says both these things about the Holy Spirit: "The Spirit gives testimony to our spirit that we are God's children" (Romans 8 [:16]) and "The Spirit helps our weakness and intercedes for us with inexpressible sighing" (Romans 8 [:26]).

60. Even the great saints here feel and lament that they do not have enough comfort, joy, and strength. They also must take comfort in grace and sustain themselves through prayer and invocation. For example, St. Paul in many places laments his weakness. He especially says that the messenger of Satan gave him a thorn in the flesh, which pierced and tortured him so that he could not feel the Spirit's strength and power. Three times he anxiously implored God to take it from him. But (he says) he was told: "Be satisfied with My grace" (2 Corinthians 12 [:7-9]). His calling and prayer were certainly heard, even though the weakness was not taken from him. Nevertheless, the Spirit of grace was in him, comforting and preserving him in this struggle so that he did not sink under it. It was also said to him: "My power is mighty, or overcomes, in the weak" [2 Cor. 12:9].

"But whoever does not love Me does not keep My words." [John 14:24]

61. There you hear a short, plain verdict. Whoever wants to be and remain a Christian must love, and this means either gladly and willingly keeping His Word or completely omitting it, either having desire and love for Christ or completely lacking it. Whoever still wants to seek his own things from Christ—and does not consider Him so precious that he can and will for His sake abandon his own honor, reputation, righteousness, and everything—is of no use in His kingdom. Therefore, not all have the gift of being Christians, even though they may boast about Him. Even St. Paul says, "Not everyone has faith" [2 Thess. 3:2], for they have not known or tasted His grace and love. That is why they cannot love Him or cling to His Word, so that they would risk or leave something because of it.

62. The opposite of everything He has said so far now follows from this verdict. He breaks off abruptly, but leads them to understand the consequence

connected to this, namely, that whoever does not keep His Word surely does not believe in Him, dares not presume on any love from God, is already separated from the kingdom of grace, and remains under eternal wrath and judgment. As John 3 [:36] says, "Whoever does not believe the Son will not see life, but God's wrath remains on him."

63. Besides, these people have the disadvantage that they cannot be God's dwelling, the Holy Spirit is not with them, and they are unworthy of the grace that God should speak or work through them. Because they despise His Word, He also despises them. So the devil is allowed room to work on them according to his will so that they can think or do nothing godly. They are, as St. Paul says, "unfit for any good work" [Titus 1:16]; instead, they cause nothing but harm and misfortune in Christendom. And they are not helped, no matter how much they claim and have of great holiness, worship, good works, etc., imagining that they are dearest and nearest to God.

Although they are otherwise admirably and highly endowed with wisdom, understanding, and so on, yet they do not have the grace to do or produce anything good that is pleasing to God or has His blessing. Even if they undertake many good works, preaching, praying, and the like, all of it is corrupt, as Psalm 109 [:7] says, "Let his prayers become sins," etc. But, on the other hand, for those in the kingdom of Christ who love Him, even what is sinful and weak in them must be good, and everything will serve for their good and improvement. Again Psalm 36 [37:24] says, "If the righteous falls, he will not be thrown away, for the Lord upholds him by his hand."

64. Among the Jews at that time, such wretched people were then the most distinguished group. They were regarded as the holiest and wisest and wanted to be God's people more than all others. Afterward, in the church, heretics, sects, and false brothers claimed to have great spirituality and love for truth and holiness, and yet through them the devil introduced only misery and ruin.

The whole sect of our papacy is now similar, and yet much worse. Not only do they deliberately despise God's Word completely, but without any reason they also persecute it and will not tolerate it being preached and heard. These people are totally possessed by the devil; neither God, Christ, nor the Holy Spirit can dwell in them. They live publicly in such a way that they are nothing else than vices and blemishes on Christendom (as they are called by the Epistle of Jude [13; 2 Pet. 2:13]). Nevertheless, they want to use violence and shout louder than the people, using the name and reputation of the Church.

65. However, they are not the Church of Christ, and this needs no further proof, for from these words of Christ the conclusion is sufficiently clear. Whoever does not love Him does not keep His Word. But whoever does not

keep His Word is also not a member of His Church and has no part in His kingdom, as has been said. Their own deeds, in which they continue to this day, testify and publicly cry out against them into heaven that they do not keep Christ's Word nor love Christ. They are so hardened that they do not heave even one sigh of Christian repentance for the error and abomination which they know and of which they are convicted and with which they have led so many souls into damnation. Not even with the least thought do they take an interest in God's Word being preached correctly in the future and poor souls being helped. Rather, they fight against this by all means possible and would rather see the country and its people, even the entire world, in a bloodbath than repent and amend even one error or abuse. One must now see further how they are completely delivered over to the devil and how God's wrath will finally come on them.

66. Thus the Christians are separated by this from all other people on earth, not through some external custom or work, which all non-Christians and hypocrites can also have, but only according to what is called "loving Christ and keeping His Word," in which faith and love to Christ are shown and appear. The others do not do this, nor do they want to do it, and thus they separate and cut themselves off. As was said, that cannot remain secret and hidden, but it must be shown in both deeds and works. That is why it is not simply about hearing or knowing the Word, but keeping it—that is, testifying in deed and confession publicly before all the world and persisting in it. We should also leave everything for it. Whoever does or does not do this will certainly have to be seen and heard.

67. From this it is easy to understand why Christ at the beginning said that He wanted to reveal Himself not to the world, but only to those who love Him [John 14:21]. The world cannot and does not want Christ in the way He shows Himself, in the cross and an offensive form, not bringing what they desire: the power, honor, riches, glory, and praise for their own wisdom and holiness, etc. The world is completely sunk and drowned in its own desires and love for earthly goods. If it does not see and find such things, then it understands, sees, and knows nothing further, and its desire and love, hope and comfort cease; moreover, it cannot have the desire to be in danger of being robbed of such goods. But it especially cannot tolerate that its praise and glory for high gifts—its wisdom, virtue, and holiness—should be taken away and become sin and shame before God.

68. Therefore, Christ's kingdom must remain hidden from the world, the Gospel covered over, and their hearts blinded by the devil, so that they recognize neither Christ nor the Father. He can make no place or dwelling in them, lest they should experience some comfort, advantage, or strength from His Word and work. Thus the Gospel and the knowledge of Christ certainly

remain a revelation and, as St. Paul calls it, a “mystery” [Rom. 16:25], something hidden and secret—not that it has not been preached publicly before all the world and clearly brought to light, but that the world despises it and regards it as foolishness and an offense compared to its wisdom. It is only believed by a few simple people, who are not offended at the unpleasant image of the cross of Christ. Through that faith they learn and experience the comfort, strength, victory, life, and salvation hidden under it. The others are unworthy of knowing about this treasure and do not even want to have things better. It is just as Christ says, “I praise You, Father, that You have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children” (Matthew 11 [:25]).

“And the Word which you hear is not Mine, but My Father’s who sent Me.”
[John 14:24]

69. You can see that He is talking about the oral, preached Word which they hear from Him, and He makes that [Word] so great that whoever despises and does not keep it has despised not the man who speaks it, but the divine Majesty. In turn, He comforts those who keep this Word so that they are certain that they are doing God the Father’s will and purpose. He does not want to stop with Himself, but, as was said, He wants to raise us up to the Father through Himself, as He does everywhere in the Gospel of John [e.g., John 14:6]. He does this against great and dangerous temptations of which the devil is a master, in which he works on righteous, God-fearing hearts to separate and divide God and Christ from each other, so that even though we hear Christ’s Word, we will also presume to investigate God’s will and heart with our thoughts apart from [Christ].

70. The devil can still tolerate it if we cling only to the man Christ and go no further; he can even have the words spoken and heard that Christ is true God. But he forbids the heart to combine Christ and the Father so closely and inseparably that it concludes with certainty that His and the Father’s Word are completely one and the same Word, heart, and will. Then foolish hearts will think: “Yes, I certainly hear that Christ speaks kind words of comfort to distressed consciences, but who knows what my status is with God in heaven?” That is not one single God and Christ, but it is making for yourself a different Christ and a different God. It is missing the true God, who is never found and grasped except in this Christ. He said to Philip about this: “Whoever sees Me also sees the Father” (John 14 [:9]).

So He also says, “My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me” (John 7 [:16]). That is the same as what He says here: “What you hear from Me is certainly My Father’s Word and will. You need not investigate it any further or worry that God is angry with you or thinks evil about you. Rather, you

should be certain that He is gracious and friendly to you. He sent Me from heaven to declare this to you.”

71. Therefore, be on your guard against other thoughts or ideas that make you doubt this or which direct you to seek a different revelation of the divine will concerning you, apart from this Christ.⁸ You will surely go astray, or even meet up with harm and destruction, when you investigate the bare majesty or are deceived by the devil, who advances his own deception and illusion in place of God. He even knows how to pass himself off as the majesty in place of God, as he did to Christ who was supposed to worship and obey him [Matt. 4:9; Luke 4:6-7]. If he can do nothing else, he confuses people with all kinds of rambling thoughts and pictures which he suggests in order to tear the heart away from this Christ. Against this, a Christian must be prepared and wise, so that he learns to fasten and bind his heart and thoughts only to Christ's Word, so that he wants to know and hear of no God apart from Him, as I have often said elsewhere many times.

THE SECOND PART OF THE GOSPEL

“I have spoken these things to you while I was still with you. But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom My Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and remind you of all the things that I have said to you.” [John 14:25-26]

72. These are now simply farewell words which Christ is giving to His disciples at the close of His sermon and comfort, because He wants to separate from them. So He takes His leave and points them to further future comfort when the Holy Spirit is given to them, who will teach them to understand all things and actually to experience this comfort. It is as if He would say: “I have so far been with you and have done for you what I could and was supposed to do. I have given you My Word, and have comforted you orally, to which you should cling when I go away from you. It is true that the comfort of the words which I spoke is very great and high, but because I am still with you, those words do not go to your hearts so that you could feel their sweetness and power. It remains only the Word which I am speaking to you and is still no more than spoken and heard.

73. “However, if it is to remain not only in My words and speaking but also in your feeling and experience—not a mere empty sound or tone, but a living comfort in your hearts—this does not happen while I am with you, for you still have only the bodily and fleshly comfort of My presence. That is why I must be taken away from you, so that this comfort may work in you and the Holy Spirit may teach it to you. When you have lost Me and are left

⁸ See sermon for Sunday after Easter on John 20:19-31.

alone in danger, need, and anxiety, only then will you realize that you need comfort, and then you will sigh for it. Then the Holy Spirit will find you to be truly teachable students and will help and remind you to grasp and note what I have said. So you will understand and feel the comfort and power in your hearts that I and the Father reveal Myself to you and so dwell in you, so that others learn this comfort through your words."

74. Note this text well. Christ here binds the Holy Spirit to His mouth and sets Him the boundary and limit that He is to go no further than His Word. "Everything which came out of My mouth, of that He must remind you and tell others through you" [John 14:26]. Thus He shows that in the future nothing else is to be taught through the Holy Spirit in Christendom except what the apostles heard (but did not yet understand) from Christ and what the Holy Spirit taught them and reminded them. So it always goes out of Christ's mouth from one mouth to another, and yet remains Christ's mouth. The Holy Spirit is the schoolmaster who teaches and reminds us of these things.

75. Second, He also points out here that this Word must precede or be spoken first, and then the Holy Spirit works through it. We are not to turn it upside down and dream of a Holy Spirit who works without the Word and before the Word; rather, He comes with and through the Word and does not go further than as far as the Word goes.

76. Third, the example of the apostles teaches how Christ rules His Church in her weakness. In Christians, the Holy Spirit cannot always—or as soon as they have heard the Word—be so strong and powerful that they believe everything, correctly understand it, and grasp it all. Among us there is a big difference between hearing the Word and feeling in it the power and working of the Holy Spirit. Even though the apostles have come so far and the Holy Spirit works so much in them, so that they gladly hear Christ's Word and have begun to believe it, yet this preaching of comfort does not enter into them until the Holy Spirit teaches this to them after Christ's departure.

77. So this is how it still happens. We certainly hear God's Word, which is in fact the preaching of the Holy Spirit, who is always present with it, yet it does not always touch the heart right away and is not always believed right away. Even in those who, being moved by the Holy Spirit, accept it and gladly hear it, nevertheless it does not produce fruit right away. One can go for a long time without feeling at all improved or comforted and strengthened by it, especially if there is not yet any anxiety and danger, but peace and rest (as it was at that time with the apostles before Christ went away from them), when people think no further than about retaining that physical comfort. That is why in need and danger we must look around and sigh for this comfort.

Then the Holy Spirit can carry out His office and power, which is teaching and reminding the heart of the preached Word.

78. So, on account of this, it is always good and beneficial to hear the Word and deal with it, even if it does not always strike [the heart]. Nevertheless, at the right hour and time, when we need it, our heart is reminded of what it has heard, begins to understand it correctly and to feel its power and comfort. Similarly, the embers that have been under the ashes for a while will again catch fire and flame up if someone stirs and blows on them. So we should not regard the Word as powerless or as preached in vain, nor seek a different one, even if its fruit is not immediately found.

79. It is not worth the answer when the Papists take recourse to the words "He will teach you all things," etc. [John 14:26], to support their worthless invention, blabbering that Christ did not teach the apostles everything they were to know but left and reserved much for the Holy Spirit to teach them. Such blabber is refuted and destroyed by the text itself, which clearly and openly says, "The Holy Spirit will teach you all things and remind you of all the things that I have said to you" [John 14:26]. In the same way He had previously pointed them everywhere only to His Word alone, as He says, "Whoever loves Me will keep My Word" [John 14:23]. Likewise, He also says about the Holy Spirit: "He will not speak from Himself, but He will take from what is Mine and proclaim it to you" (John 16 [:13-14]).

80. However, it is sin and shame to hear and tolerate such assertions in Christendom: that the Holy Spirit will teach (I will not say "something contradictory") as the pope does with the open abominations of his doctrine. He emphasizes most highly the merits of our own works, the sacrifice of the Mass, the prohibition of the cup as well as of marriage, the invocation of dead saints, the lies about purgatory, and his invented power, which the true Antichrist teaches directly against Christ. But [it is sin and shame to hear] that He should teach something different and better than Christ, God's Son, taught, who is Himself the Preacher sent from heaven; or that He is supposed to have left something further and more necessary behind, which must be revealed and taught separately by the councils. The councils have treated very little doctrine (except for the first councils which preserved from Scripture the one article about the deity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit against the heretics), but only human ordinances and precepts, for which there was no need at all either to promise or to give the Holy Spirit. He has much higher things to teach and to reveal, about which human councils cannot ordain or prescribe anything, such as how we escape God's wrath, conquer sin and death, and trample the devil underfoot! About all these things, Christ teaches and says that whoever wants to come to Him must keep His words.

81. We should condemn and curse these shameful, corrupt glosses of the Papists as the devil's poison and lies only for this reason (if they were not otherwise to be faulted): they tear hearts away from Christ's Word. If we think that Christ has not taught everything, etc., then eyes and ears are immediately wide open to gaze at other things and to think: "There must still be something great left behind, which was not taught by Christ, but which the Holy Spirit must still teach! If I could hear and know that, then I would certainly be saved!"

82. From this, then, comes the harm and abuse that people do not pay attention to Christ's Word, but accept whatever is alleged anew as something precious and necessary for salvation. Nevertheless, Christ (to prevent this and warn us against everything that is not His Word, as against the devil's poison) not only binds the Holy Spirit to His mouth, so that He is to teach nothing other than His Word, but also Himself appeals with His preaching to the Father's command, saying that it is not His, but the Father's Word [John 14:24]. What, then, will people still boast about the councils, which can produce no testimony or command at all for their activity (when they teach or order something new)? Rather, only the apostles have the testimony from Christ and the Holy Spirit that they teach nothing other than Christ's Word, as they themselves testify. The councils and all people are obliged to remain with this and to prove that what they say is the very same doctrine.

"Peace I leave you; My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives." [John 14:27]

83. That is a friendly "good night." Christ wanted to speak most sweetly with His disciples, and He was able to do so. "Well, I must be gone," He says, "and cannot speak with you any longer. Therefore, I bid you a 'good night,' and may it be well with you! I wish and give you nothing else than peace, that is, that it may be well with you." According to the Hebrew language, "peace" means nothing else than to give and leave them everything good. "This shall be My departure and farewell, which I will leave with you. You will have no harm or lack from My departure. I will abundantly compensate you for it. In place of it you will have from Me the best that you can desire: the peace and good that you have a gracious God in My Father, who loves you with a fatherly love and heart. In Me you have a good and faithful Savior who will do all good for you and not forsake you in any need, but protect and help you against the devil, the world, and every evil. In addition, I will give you the Holy Spirit, who will rule your hearts so that you have true comfort, peace, and joy in Me."

84. That is what is meant by the words "My peace I give to you and leave to you, not as the world gives peace." The world cannot give such peace and

goodness, since all its peace and goodness is not only transitory but also fluctuating and changing each hour. The world bases peace and comfort only on temporal money and goods, power, honor, human friendship, etc.; when that is gone, then peace, heart, and courage are gone. Even if it were in its power to give and preserve all of that, it still does not have, and cannot have, the only peace that is true and eternal peace, that the heart has a good standing with God and is certain of His grace and of eternal life.

85. However, because this is not the world's peace, the holy cross is once again laid on it. In plain speech (that is, according to reason and our feelings), it is called not "peace," but "hostility, anxiety, fright, fear, and trepidation," as He says elsewhere: "In the world you will have distress. But take comfort; I have overcome the world" [John 16:33]. (This will be your peace.) Therefore, you have no right to think and hope that in the world you will have your kingdom and power and good days, or that people will accept your preaching, because you do not proclaim and bring what it seeks and likes. Only hold firmly to My Word and you will have peace against the devil and the world. They will not take that peace away from you with their hostility.

86. Christ has preserved and protected His Church so that it is called "peace," even though this peace is stuck in the midst of thorns and briars, that is, affliction and trial, in which both the devil and the world scratch and sting, torment and afflict you for the sake of the Word and confession of Christ. Just as the Word is a message of grace, love, and peace from God and Christ toward us, so the Word is here in the world a message of wrath and hostility. That is why this peace must always stand in faith. When through the devil's suggestions the heart feels oppressed, anxious, and even frightened enough to run away from God, let it enclose itself in this Word of Christ and guard itself, saying: "Nevertheless, I know that I have God's promise and the Holy Spirit's testimony that He wants to be my dear Father and is not angry with me, but grants me peace and all good through His Son, Christ. If I have Him as my Friend, then let the devil and the world be angry and rage with their hostility, so long as they do not want to laugh."

"Do not let your hearts be frightened, and do not be afraid." [John 14:27]

87. That is the faithful Savior's own true, kind voice. He would gladly write into the hearts of His Christians that they should have and expect from Him nothing else than peace and all good. He certainly knows how difficult it is to keep this peace and comfort in the heart and how the devil hinders it. Even if a person is bold and can despise and overcome the wrath and enmity of all the world, [the devil] still pushes him into fright and fear of God. Well, Christ certainly knows that flesh and blood are naturally startled and that no one can laugh when things are going badly for him, when all he has is taken

away or he is handed over to the hangman. Much less [can he laugh] when the devil puts the timid heart right between his spurs and torments it, so that it can scarcely catch its breath for anguish.

88. "But hear well," He wants to say, "what I am saying to you on behalf of My Father, namely, that His intent is not to frighten you, and you should not be anxious about any hostility or fright. Rather, you should know what wants to frighten you, and that is nothing other than the lying spirit, the devil, who under God's name and form wants to blind and deceive righteous hearts. Out in public he does nothing as the devil, for he knows that if he is recognized he has already lost. Therefore, do not let your heart be taken away, but be only all the stronger and more stouthearted against it out of love and obedience to the Father and Me, in order to defy and annoy the devil and the world."

89. Whoever can only believe these words and regard them as the Lord Christ's words would also be confident and cheerfully despise what all of hell can do to frighten him. Who would he have to be afraid of, if he knows that Christ and God through Him, together with the Holy Spirit, grant him grace and peace and tell and command him to be cheerful and not frightened? But there is the problem: we are so weak to believe Christ, and when our flesh and blood feels its unworthiness, it believes the devil with his false fright more than the true and gracious Word, in which, if we only begin to believe in Christ, God proclaims the forgiveness of sins and all salvation.

"You have heard that I said to you: 'I am going away and will come to you again.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice that I said to you: 'I am going to the Father,' for the Father is greater than I." [John 14:28]

90. All of it is aimed at His desire to comfort and strengthen them abundantly about His departure. That is why He speaks very derisively when He says, "If you loved Me," etc. Yet He intends it in an exceedingly friendly way, as one dear friend speaks with another. "I have said this to you," He says, "and it is true that I must go away from you. You do not like to hear this, for you know that while I am with you, you have sheer joy from Me. However, My dear disciples, if you have heard the one message, then hear also the other and accept what I say: that I will come to you again with better and greater comfort and joy than you have had from Me so far.

91. "Yes, if you truly loved Me (as you think you do), you would be happy that I am now going away from you, for it truly is in your best interest, and you and I should be glad from the heart to see it and reluctant to see anything else. It is not the kind of going away in which you would lose Me or that would harm Me or you. Rather, it happens only for your sake, so that I may come into My glory in My Father's kingdom and become a powerful Lord who sits at the right hand of the Father over everything in heaven and

on earth, where I can protect and help you against everything that attacks you. Now on earth, in My lowliness and smallness, where I have been sent to suffer and die, I cannot do this."

92. When He says, "The Father is greater than I" [John 14:28], He is not talking about the personal, divine essence, His own or the Father's. (The Arians falsely corrupt this text and do not want to see what Christ is talking about or why He says this.) Rather, He is talking about the distinction between the kingdom He is to have with His Father and His service or the servile form in which He was before His resurrection. "Now I am small," He wants to say, "in My office of service and servile form"—as He says elsewhere: "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His soul as a ransom for many" [Matt. 20:28]. This is what it means to become small and, as St. Paul says [cf. Phil. 2:7-8], humbling Himself or submitting to everything and letting sin, death, devil, and world walk all over Him. "This is the 'going' by which I am departing from you, but it shall not remain in such smallness, for that would come to nothing at all. Rather, it shall be only a transition, the way and means through which I come to the Father. There I will no longer be small, but will become as great and all-powerful as He is and will rule and reign with Him eternally."

93. That is the plain, simple meaning of this text, as is proved from the fact that He is here speaking properly about what He calls "going to the Father" [John 14:28], which is not a change in His person or essence. According to that property, it is not said that He goes to the Father or goes away and is separated from the Father, for He is and remains without beginning or ending in eternity with the Father in one divine essence and does not need to go higher or become greater than that. Rather, He is talking about the change of office from His servile or serving estate to His glory and eternal governance.

94. Therefore, this "going" and "the greatness of the Father" is nothing else than glorifying Christ as to what and who He is—not what He (in His person) should become or could be, for that is what He was already from eternity. However, it had not yet been revealed and could not be known, because He was in the servile, suffering, mortal office. Therefore, the Father was greater than He, not according to the essence of the two persons so that He is the Father and Christ is the Son, but according to governance and glory. In the schools people say: *Non actu primo, sed secundo*, etc.⁹

⁹ "Not in primary actuality but in secondary [actuality]." That is, they are distinct not according to their inherent quality but according to their actions. The distinction, sometimes translated "first and second act," is explained in Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, I q. 48 art. 5 (Blackfriars (1963) 8:122-27; Benziger 1:252).

95. "Therefore," He says, "you should much prefer that I take off this small, lowly state and this form or figure of a servant and step into the ruling state of My dominion, which is the Father's state; from there, in eternity, I have come. This present state, which I assumed through My incarnation from the Virgin, permits nothing else than that I must suffer and be subjected. There, however, I will have everything subject to Me and under My feet."

96. This is said not only to the disciples but also to all Christians. As it happened to the apostles, so it always happens in Christendom: they feel frightened and anxious, without comfort and help. This is what Christ's "going away" meant to the apostles. Such going away obviously causes pain and must cause pain; the apostles themselves fell into such despair because of it that they all denied Christ and were scattered [Matt. 26:56]. This is the hard hour of sorrow, when laughter and joy are scarce, and there is nothing but misery and danger. "Here," says Christ, "we should rejoice and accept it." Yes, if anyone could do that! Flesh and blood certainly cannot do it, as St. Paul himself confesses that according to the flesh he "had no rest" [2 Cor. 7:5], even though he was cheerful in spirit and faith and boasted about his affliction and weakness. Christ Himself says about this: "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" [Matt. 26:41]. It cannot act or think differently than it feels; it does not want to feel that it is oppressed and afflicted; it wants to be free of this.

97. Now, if you would learn the skill of rising and soaring above such feelings, then you must accept the admonition and hear and grasp the words Christ speaks: "Dear Christians, believe Me, it does not happen for your harm, but for your profit. I am not going away so that you will be forsaken by Me, but so that I will conquer through this 'going,' and you will share in My power and might as I am seated at the right hand of the Father, rule over your sin and over your enemies, the devil, death, and hell. Not one of them can touch you in the least (unless I want it) and must not harm you, but rather profit and benefit you.

"Therefore, let My Word be worth more than your feelings. If I have told you that I will go away from you, which you will now experience and feel, then I also will not lie to you on the second point about My coming again. You will truly find and experience that you will have to say: 'I could not have believed that my Lord Christ would be so close to me and would so wonderfully help me. Now I would not want Him not to go away from me.'"

98. The comfort of help and victory in our greatest need, when it feels like Christ is completely lost, is to be that we still keep the Word of Christ as a rod or plank which does not sink in danger, when the flood flows over crates, horse, and wagon, until we get out again. That is what it means to be cheerful about Christ's going away, though it is a weak and very secret joy according

to the flesh. But as long as faith clings to the Word, it is nevertheless joy, until faith overcomes and the experience follows that Christ has not forsaken us, but, sitting at the right hand of the Father, protects and rescues us. No one experiences this unless he puts it to the test. When water gets into his mouth (as they say), then he must learn to swim.

"And now I have told you before it happens, so that when it does happen, you may believe." [John 14:29]

99. This is said about experience. "I certainly tell you now in the Word, but it does not at all enter [your heart] and produces nothing now. However, I tell you this so that you will nevertheless have a little comfort when you think about it and remember that I told you beforehand that it must happen this way. Then, when I have rescued you from it, your faith will be strengthened, and you can contend further and overcome."

"I will no longer talk much with you, for the prince of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me. However, so that the world may know that I love the Father and do as the Father has commanded Me, stand up, and let us go away from here." [John 14:30-31]

100. "Well," He says, "now it is time for parting. Now it will begin. The devil is coming, will attack Me, and will think that if he has Me, then you have a bad case. He has murdered and slain so many (as the world's prince and lord) that he thinks he can remain as lord and prince over you when he has Me between his spurs and attempts to bring Me down. However, he will fail and will find Me to be someone other than he thinks. He has a case and right against the others, finding them in sin and guilty of eternal death. But he has lost his right over Me, and thus brings the verdict down on himself that, along with death and hell, he must lie at My feet and also not at all prevail over those who are Mine."

101. Thus in the hour of His highest conflict, He Himself takes hold of courage and reliance on His innocence and His right against the devil and death, so that they would be worn down and lose both their right and their power over those who believe in Him (for whose sake He offers Himself up). Thus with His blood and death He takes revenge on the devil for the blood and death of all others. This blood that cries out for revenge is a much more precious blood than Abel's blood (Hebrews 12 [:24]), which calls out to God about his murderer [Gen. 4:10] as the prototype of this blood, which daily calls out for the verdict of damnation on the devil and death for all the blood of His believers shed from the beginning to the end of the world [Matt. 23:35; Luke 11:51]. Thus not only by His divine power but also by the weakness

of His suffering and death, Christ wants to take away the devil's power and dominion (over those who believe in Him), so that he must be cast out, as He says in John 12 [:31], and must let Him be the prince and captain of life [Heb. 2:10].

102. Now, why does He do and suffer these things? The devil has no right over Him, and He could certainly escape him; but He is also man enough for him, so He must rush against him. "However, the purpose," He says, "is that the world may experience that I love the Father and fulfill His Commandments." Once again, this is the comforting word by which He reveals to us the Father's will and heart, so that we would see that all this which He does and suffers for our sakes was decided by the Father's good-pleasure, so that as the true, faithful Mediator He can remove all of God's wrath and hostility and make hearts certain of His fatherly grace and love. How could He still be angry with us or want to condemn us when He gives His only Son the serious command to give up all His divine glory and might and, for our sakes, throw them under the feet of the devil and death? "However, [it is] so that the world would know and believe," He says, "that I do this not of Myself, but out of great love, laying down My body and life in obedience to My Father!" Whoever can believe this is already saved and has escaped from the devil and death.