**DIDACHE:**

**Session 6**

 **The Holy Spirit and the Church**

**Summary of Session 5**

**God has revealed Himself to fallen sinful humanity as a personal Being, eternal (without beginning or end) and alone eternal, the Creator of all that exists in the universe, Creator of earth and of the human kingdom. At the time of creation, He brought everything into existence out of nothing in six days through His Word.**

**Genesis 1 reveals: *And God said, ‘Let there be. . .and there was!’*  The first words of the New Testament Gospel of John are *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* John explains that the Word is not only the speaking of our God, but is also a Person of the Godhead, the Second Person identified already at the beginning of the Bible. And that Second Person is sent by the First Person, God the Father, to come to earth and become a human being.**

**[The theological term for this miracle of the virgin (Mary) conception and birth is INCARNATION.] The central and critical truth in both the Old Testament and the New Testament is the Person and work of this Second Person of the Godhead--The Son of God. When He entered human space and time, He assumed this humanity into His deity, making Him the most unique human in all of history—He had two natures—He was truly God and He was truly man (Jesus of Nazareth).**

**In the previous session, we took a glimpse at the life and work of Jesus in His three-year public ministry. Some notable events during those years were the Baptism of Jesus, the Temptation of Jesus, the death of John the Baptist, and the Transfiguration. We also met His twelve disciples, who were in training to be future church leaders, 24-7. We looked at Jesus’ preaching, teaching, and healing work.**

**Finally we narrated the events of what we call Holy Week—the triumphant entry of Jesus and His disciples into Jerusalem on the first day of the Passover week (we designate Palm Sunday); His long days of work in the nation’s capitol on Monday and Tuesday and a partial day off on Wednesday; the Thursday evening celebration of the last true Passover in history and the institution of the New Covenant holy meal, which is an even more intimate and perfect Lamb to eat and drink in table fellowship; the day of execution, death and burial on Friday; the Sabbath day of rest as Jesus lies in His tomb; and the joyful new first day of the week—Easter Sunday.**

**Resurrection. Proclaiming His victory to Satan and his legions. Appearing to His disciples. Returning to heaven.**

**In this session, we become more familier with the Third Person of the Godhead, who also was actively present in creation. *The Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters*. The Holy Spirit and His work is to work through God’s Word, through Baptism, and through the Lord’s Supper to bring sinners to faith, to gather them into the family of the Church, to give them spiritual gifts that sanctify (make holy) them, and to preserve their faith.**

**OUTLINE OF THE PRESENTATION**

**Introduction**

1. **The Transition from Old Covenant to New Covenant—Acts 1:4-5; 12-26**

 **II. The Day of Pentecost—Acts 2 The Establishment and Institution of the**

 **Christian Church**

**III. The Person of the Holy Spirit**

**A. In creation and preservation Genesis 1:2 Psalm 104:30**

 **B. In redemption John 3:5-6 John 15:26 1 Corinthians 12:13**

 **Ephesians 2:19-22**

 **IV. The Work of the Holy Spirit**

 ***I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Christian Church, the communion***

 ***of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the***

 ***life everlasting.***

 **A. Conversion John 6:65**

 **Ephesians 2:8-9 1 Corinthians 12:3**

 **(Decision Theology John 1:13 1 Corinthians 2:14; 12:3**

 **Ephesians 2:1) The Altar Call/ “Jesus is My Co-pilot”**

 ***I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in***

 ***Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him, but the Holy Spirit has***

 ***called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts,***

 ***sanctified and kept me in the true faith***

 **B. The Means of Grace Romans 1:16; 10:17 Ephesians 1:13;**

 **1 Peter 1:23, 25**

 **C. Maintains and Grows the Church through the Means of Grace**

 **1. Fruits of faith—good words and good works**

 **2. The Church Matthew 16 1 Corinthians 12:13, 27**

 **Ephesians 2:19-22**

 ***In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and***

 ***sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and***

 ***keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this***

 ***Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all my***

 ***sins and the sins of all believers.***

 **3. The Forgiveness of Sins—humanity’s greatest need (not its greatest**

 **“felt” need) is satisfied by Christ’s greatest gift**

**Conclusion**

**The Church is not a voluntary organization composed of believers who, by virtue of their personal relationship with Jesus, decide whether or not they will join this church or that church on the basis of how it agrees with what they believe. The teachings and practices of a church are not designed and carried out by a group of like-minded people in competition with other churches and church groups.**

**The Church was instituted by Jesus Christ Himself, and He remains the Head of His Church. He has given the Church its doctrine and teachings, and any church that does not remain faithful to His Word is not a faithful church. He has designed how the Church is to work, what its mission and vision is, and what truths must guide its practices and methodologies.**

**The fact Luther confesses here is based on the Bible’s teaching that, because all human beings are conceived and born in sin—the original sin of Adam and Eve—**

**it is impossible for any human being:**

**\*to “find God,” even if he/she seeks earnestly to discover spiritual, religious**

 **truth;**

**\*to hear the Christian Gospel and decide for herself/himself to become a**

 **Christian, to create such faith and belief inside by his/her own will or**

 **power; and/or**

**\*to in any way or manner cooperate in the Holy Spirit’s work of conversion.**

 **(the transformation from being an unbeliever to becoming a believing**

 **Christian)**

**Faith is not a human response to the Gospel. Faith is a creation and gift of God, given freely by Him, and brought to the sinner by the Holy Spirit, solely out of divine love, through the means of the Gospel. Faith is completely God’s work and action. He plants faith, and it is that faith that enables a sinner to believe. Faith as God’s gift precedes conversion, belief, and good works!**

**Lutheran Christians, on the basis of the Bible, reject the teaching that faith is merely or mostly a human response, avoiding such statements as:**

 **\*I made my decision to follow Jesus in 1984.**

 **\*I found Jesus**

 **\*God is my co-pilot**

**The Biblical “altar call” is the administration of the Sacrament of Holy Communion in the Divine Service, topics we will discuss in the next session**

 **A young lady, 21, grew up in her family’s rural Protestant church. She cannot**

 **remember a time when her family did not go to church or when she did not know**

 **Jesus and believe He was God’s Son and her Savior. When she was 13, she made**

 **her formal decision for Christ; at an altar call she marched to the front of the**

 **church and surrendered and gave her life to Him. Even after graduating from**

 **high school and attending the local university, she continued to live an exemplary**

 **Christian life.**

 **We will name her Sherry. Sherry met a young man, a graduate student, 24, a very**

 **decent guy in his own right, a man of good character and personality. However he**

 **was not a Christian. His family had no religious background. He was not hostile to**

 **Christianity; he just didn’t understand how otherwise intelligent people could**

 **believe some of the things that Christians taught. We will name him Barry.**

 **But Barry was falling in love with Sherry, and, although Sherry knew she would**

 **never marry an unbeliever, she was quite smitten with Barry, and continued to**

 **date him. They became good friends. As Barry spent more and more time with**

 **Sherry’s family, he gladly went to church most Sundays with them, and he agreed**

 **to read some books Sherry gave him, but to his credit, he would not pretend to**

 **believe what he simply could not give himself to accept.**

 **Nearly two years into their relationship, Barry joined the family for a week of**

 **special, summer revival services. On the last night of these events, the guest**

 **evangelist was a missionary/Bible scholar, let’s call him the Reverend Doctor**

 **Williams. Remember Barry has been to 100 or so church services and sermons,**

 **most of them featuring an altar call. In all these opportunities he was never**

 **convinced that he could become a Christian. However, the Rev. Dr. Williams**

 **began to make sense. As Barry listened it was the first time ever that the story**

 **of Jesus actually seemed logical and possible to Barry. It was as if a light bulb**

 **went on inside his brain, and a resolution happened in his thought processes.**

 **After Dr. Williams finished and invited listeners to come forward and pray**

 **to receive Christ, Barry stood. To Sherry and her family’s surprise, he made**

 **his way down their row of chairs, into the aisle, and up to the altar, where he,**

 **along with a half dozen others, prayed with Dr. Williams and other ministers and**

 **deacons, and became a believer!**

**What happened?**

**Well, it is obvious that Barry became a believer in Christ’s Person and work. That’s what Dr. Williams preached about with clarity and conviction.**

**How did it happen? When did it happen?**

**Here is where belief and practice differ. Those who teach that human beings must make a decision as the final step of conversion would say that when Barry’s will finally stopped resisting the Holy Spirit and turned to Jesus, that he indeed did make a mental, emotional, and spiritual surrender. This change of mind and heart must be accompanied by public profession, so when he went to the altar and there gave himself to Christ, God then accepted him, and the conversion was complete.**

**The Bible (Ephesians 2:8-10) teaches that we are saved by grace through the gift of faith, and not of our own decisions, wills, and works, and that all glory for the conversion of an unbeliever goes to the Holy Spirit, who came again and again through His Word to Barry, who previously made the only decision a sinner can make—to reject God and His Word. But out of love for Barry (and in answer to Sherry and her family’s continued prayers for Barry), in His own time, the Holy Spirit chose this day, this preacher, and this service to give to Barry the gift of faith, which would enable even an intellectual skeptic like him, to believe in Christ and His Word. The planting of faith through the means of the Gospel is an act of the Holy Spirit, obviously invisible to us human beings. But the gift was given to Barry, and then he was enabled to believe what he was hearing. He became a Christian when this invisible work of God was done, while he was still sitting in his seat, listening to the sermon.**

**Questions and discussion to:**

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