

A Sermon on the Gospel of St. John, Chapter 4, Verses 24 to 26

by Pastor Steffen Dittmer held Pentecost Monday, the 21st of May, 2018, in Dresden
Translation: Peter R. Bayer

God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.
(KJV)

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Pentecost is the feast of the Truth that changes our „hol-low“ lives into „ho-ly“ lives filled with God.

In today's text, the Evangelist St. John tells us about a woman from Samaria who came to draw water from the well rightly known as Jacob's Well. She comes there sad and quite confused, meets Jesus, and leaves full of joy, for she just received not only a new meaning on life, but indeed, a new life!

She arrives at midday, in the greatest heat, knowing that few people would be about. Why? Because she doesn't want to be seen. Her life is a mess, and yes, she is a sinner, and everyone knows it. People point fingers at her.

Then, out of the blue, this man approaches her who doesn't point fingers at all, and he is of all things he is a Jew. He goes on to ask her for some water from the well. She is shocked: Jewish men considered people from Samaria unclean, *and approaching a lone woman like this was equally out of the question.*

Her jaw drops, but even as she is trying to pick it up, this man, whom she has never seen before, goes on to tell her about her whole, pitiful, hopeless life: ***You have had five husbands, and the man you are with now is not even your husband!*** That struck home, and she now knew that something new and wonderful was going on, *as if some one was reading the book of her life and now turning the page. What is on the next page? What will he say next?*

And what did he say?

God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

The next page says: „This is your new life. P.S.: It is all about spirit and truth. Signed, God.“

Brothers and sisters, the truth is not the opposite of a lie, but rather that which is simply there. It is that which surrounds us and makes up our lives. The truth is the reality of God: He exists! He is there! And we exist, because He made us and upholds and keeps us. Truth is being in touch with God himself, a living relationship with the Holy One!

God is not somewhere way out there in the universe. Rather, He has come down from Heaven and become a human being. He wants to be our father.

It is truly hard to grasp: Almighty God, Maker of Heaven and Earth, wants US, that means YOU and ME, to call HIM father, just as children call their father and trust in him at all times.

He literally wants us to call him „Abba“, or „Daddy“!

Can you imagine a relationship closer than that?

And it get's even better: This father is a true father who places our well being before his own. He cares for us, and he stays with us, no matter what. He is and remains your God and Father, through thick and thin. That is the truth, and that is very comforting, indeed!

And now for the second truth. And this truth hurts!

It is something we don't like to talk about, and we often play it down or just simply deny it.

Jesus didn't.

Talking to the woman at the well, Jesus did not beat around the bush, but cut right to the point. In nearly seconds, He brings to the surface that which she has long kept secret, and her five previous husbands are just the tip of the iceberg. Jesus reveals her longing for love and security, and she is made aware that she tried, but could never obtain it, and that her life became more and more sad. She did not have the love of God.

And suddenly, there He was, the Love of God, in person! She can't grasp it at first, but it soon overwhelms her: this Jesus, God himself, is there for her, right this minute, right here, talking to her, telling her personally that she belongs, where she belongs and that her life is not hopeless and spinning out of control, but rather firmly in His hands.

That is the reason why He came to Earth, died and rose again, so that he might redeem her from her sinful and burdening past, and to free her for a new life as a child of God.

This truth is what our celebration of Pentecost is about:

- believing in the joyous truth of being surrounded by God's presence, even within us,
- while acknowledging the truth of our sin, so that
- we can accept the happy truth of His forgiveness.

Yes, it is all there, yet it must enter our hearts

by hearing God's word,

by confessing and receiving absolution of our sins, and

by receiving Christ's body and blood in Holy Communion.

Jesus says:

They that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

We need God's Holy Spirit to lead us to all truth, for by nature, we humans are unable to recognize God, neither His might nor His goodness.

We are mortals, we think like mortals and simply lack the necessary equipment. We have no antenna and no way to listen to God. *He is on a completely different wavelength!*

That is where Pentecost comes in. God Himself enters into our world, *even passing through closed doors*, and gives us access to His Gospel. He enlightens us with His gifts and upholds us in the true faith. His Holy Spirit works within us, here and now.

He speaks to us and reminds of all that Jesus said and did. He enters into us and establishes a living communion between us and the Father and the Son.

He repeats His message: Jesus died for YOU. Yes, that means YOU! You are to know this, that He is there for you in the face of all the sadness and evils in your life.

He rose again for YOU. For you! Thus giving proof that He is with you at all times, be it in light or darkness.

Pentecost – that is the feast of truth and the reality of God, which we easily overlook and often forget. But the Holy Spirit won't let go: God is our Father, and God is our Savior. With Him at our side, we will safely walk through this life unto eternity! Amen.