

Acts 1:1-5

Wait for the gift where it appears!

The gift based on God's promise

The gift that provides necessary nourishment

A Father and child stand beside a busy street. They wait to cross. The Father takes the child by the hand. He tells the boy, "Wait until the road is clear. Then we'll cross." The child grows impatient, so he leans forward a bit and slightly tugs on his Father's arm. Finally the boy asks, "When can we cross, dad?" I told you, "Wait until the road is clear. Then we'll cross." So still they wait. To the boy, it seems like forever. He tries to step out, thinking his Father will follow. So again, the Father repeats his promise, "Wait until the road is clear. Then we'll cross."

This young boy showed some impatience as he waited. He also showed a lack of trust. Instead of listening to his Father's promise—Wait until the roads clear, then we'll cross—the boy tried to take matters into his own hands.

In our Scripture text today, we have a similar situation. Jesus tells the disciples to **wait for the gift where it appears**. There are two reasons for waiting. Wait, because the gift is based on God's promise. Wait, because the gift provides necessary nourishment. So Jesus is really asking for trust. "Trust me," Christ says, "by waiting."

Today, we have the same encourage before us: wait. Really, Jesus is asking for our trust. He asks that we trust him by waiting. So, fellow Christian, **Wait for the gift where it appears! The gift is based on God's promise. The gift provides necessary nourishment.**

This morning, the gospel writer Luke supplies us with a window. It takes us back across space and time. As you look through this window, it is of the utmost importance to focus on some of the fine details. Luke fixes our eyes on the risen Jesus, engaged in conversation with his eleven apostles. In particular, we hear these words from Jesus: "**Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.**" Did you notice one of the fine details portrayed in this scene? Jesus called to mind a promise.

Our Lord originally gave this promise to the apostles. We heard a portion of that promise in our gospel lesson for today. Christ said: "**And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth.**" Ah, now you see. When Jesus says, "**wait for the gift my Father promised,**" he refers to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the specific gift promised to the apostles.

Now a promise today may not mean much. Politicians, for example, are notorious for breaking their promises. "Read my lips: no new taxes!" Since things change only to stay the same, I suppose that in Jesus' day a promise didn't mean much either. But this is no politician who speaks about a word of promise!

Remember, the living Lord makes this promise. So often he deals with us in promises. For example, the book of John records this promise from Christ, "**Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.**" The Lord made a promise that he would rise from the dead. Then Jesus rose. Jesus even proved himself alive many times. Verse three of our text says, "**After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.**" Since Jesus fulfilled his resurrection promise, the disciples could rest assured that everything Christ said was trustworthy. So the apostles could wait for the Holy Spirit where he appears, because the gift was based on God's word of promise.

Today God deals with us in a similar way. The Lord gives us his Holy Spirit. This gift is based on God's word of promise. In fact, God reveals his love for us through words of promise. For example, we need not fear the future, because God promises to watch over us. We need not despair when tempted, for God has promised to help us. The reality is that God shows his loving heart to us in words of promise.

But sometimes we choose to view another reality. We become weary of how God only deals with us through a promise, because God fulfills promises on his time table. We grow impatient while waiting

for God, that is, we grow tired of trusting his promise—especially when we realize that things in this world aren't perfect. Problems abound while it seems like God is no where to be found. So my impatience shows itself as I complain about my lot in life, basically saying, "God, your promises aren't good enough." Or my lack of trust shows itself as I worry about tomorrow, basically saying, "God, your promises aren't reliable enough." These attitudes are distasteful to God. In fact, they are sinful, plain and simple.

So look once again through Luke's window towards your risen Lord. See there the nail marks in the hands and feet. See the pierced side. Note well the reality that stands before you: Jesus is alive, just as he promised. Since Christ fulfilled his resurrection promise, rest assured that everything promised by Christ is trustworthy. His promises are as certain and sure as the reality of the resurrection. Therefore, you stand forgiven by the Almighty God for your impatience that shows itself through complaints and your lack of trust that shows itself in worry. You have God's promise. His word is reliable.

Now that we've established the reality of God's promises, I want look at this gift more closely. The gift identified for us is the Holy Spirit. Well then, preacher, you may ask, what's so good about God's gift of the Holy Spirit?

Let's go back to the window Luke provides for us. There we see an encouragement to wait for the gift where it appears because God's Holy Spirit provides necessary nourishment. Notice what Christ said, **"Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."** As soon as we hear this, our mind might fill with questions. Let's be clear: Jesus does not intend to downplay baptism with water. Jesus also does not imply that the Holy Spirit was absent in John's water baptism. Where you connect water with the Word, as we do today, there the Spirit is present and at work.

The stress here is on the passive role played by the disciples. In this instance the disciples would not baptize, they would be baptized. The Spirit would equip the disciples for their labor. That happened at Pentecost. At Pentecost God poured out the Holy Spirit in a special way. Through God's gift of his Spirit, the disciples were given the nourishment they needed.

Now again, as you look through this window provided by Luke, it is of the utmost importance to focus on the fine details. The risen Lord is about to depart visibly. This would put the apostles in need. They would need leadership, guidance, and direction. So Jesus acts to meet their need. He tells them to wait for the Holy Spirit where he appears. **"Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised...."** The Lord promises them a gift—they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit. This gift would provide necessary nourishment for the disciples. And this gift would appear in Jerusalem. With that comforting knowledge, the disciples could wait for the Holy Spirit to appear.

As you go through this life, the Lord promises you a great gift—the Holy Spirit. We *need* this gift for nourishment. For example, you look out into this world, you see beauty, but you also see death. You see decay. You see problems of every kind. Basically, you see a world saturated with sin.

We are surrounded by all this death. We are covered in all this decay. We suffer from disease, sickness, pain, and loss. We face problems that overwhelm us. We need a gift that comforts us. We need a gift that gives us peace amid the trials of life.

And God's Holy Spirit gives us what we so desperately need. So wait for the gift where it appears! For us the Holy Spirit appears in Word and Sacrament. Here, God restores and maintains your faith. God gives you the comfort, peace, and rest that our weary souls crave. Through this outpouring, God provides you with the nourishment necessary to face each new day. So here, in front of these means, we gladly wait on the Lord to do exactly what he says.

This is our prayer today. That God would fulfill his promise to us. That he would send us his Spirit so that we may have comfort, peace, and life. God grant it for Jesus' sake. Amen.