

Between Going and Coming

As the Church of Christ, we find ourselves between His going and His coming. Last week we celebrated His Ascension into Heaven, that He is now enthroned in glory, and is in power of all things, and we see Him no more. And on Sunday we shall celebrate His coming again to His Church.

For Pentecost is that. The coming of the Holy Spirit to the Church of Christ is His own coming to His Church and His Christians; for the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, and our Lord Jesus is Himself God from eternity, and the Holy Spirit is His Spirit. And with His Spirit, our Lord Jesus Himself lives in His Church. As He said it to His disciples, with reference to the coming of the Spirit: "I will not leave you fatherless: I will come to you!"

And so we live, as His Church and His Christians, in the tension between Him having gone and His coming. We see Him no more, and do not feel His presence. We wish that we did, though. And our yearning to see Him, or just to feel His presence, so often it is a painful one, particularly when the burdens of life in a world of suffering and sorrow and sin drive us to the edge of despair. And yet, how can we despair, when we know that He comes to us in the life of His Church, in the Word and worship of His salvation, and gives Himself to us, with all that He is, and all that is His.

And we do know this, for it is what Holy Scripture teaches, and so it is His promise, who is Himself the eternal Word of God. "The Word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart", as He has had His holy Apostle Paul write it, "namely the Word of faith which we proclaim." And He Himself has said it, that "if anyone loves me, he will keep my Word; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him."

As we live in the Word He has entrusted to His Church, He Himself lives with us. And this is the proper response to our yearning to feel His presence: not to manipulate ourselves into thinking that we do, but rather to keep His Word, as in custody - which is what the Greek word means. For with that Word, God Himself lives with us in His fullness as Father and Son and Holy Spirit, and gives His own life to us and keeps us alive to Him, until the Son shall come again to take us to Himself for ever, and we shall see Him in the fullness of His goodness and His glory. This is what is real, and so much more important than what we do and do not feel.

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