

To Unhinge the World... or To Put a World that Has Gone Off the Rails Back in Place

Sermon for the 6th Sunday after Easter (Exaudi)

Sermon Text: John 16:5-15

But now I am going to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?'⁶ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.⁷ Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you.⁸ And when He comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see Me no longer; ¹¹concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. ¹²I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak, and He will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify Me, for He will take what is Mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All that the Father has is Mine; therefore I said that He will take what is Mine and declare it to you.

Archimedes, the famous mathematician, came to a mathematical finding about 200 years before Christ that is still used today. His earth-shattering sentence was: "Give me a place to stand and I will move the world." By this, Archimedes wanted to express that with a long enough lever, heavy masses can easily be lifted. Now, whether one should unhinge the world... perhaps not such a good idea because there are enough people that have already done that. That's why we have the mess that we can see in every direction. Perhaps it's better to say: "who will put the world back in its place?" In fact, there have been repeated attempts to find such Archimedean points that change the world. For example, Erich Kästner named 4 Archimedean points after the Second World War which are based on people's spiritual or humanitarian efforts to heal the broken world. But these exact points that Erich Kästner names, can't be Archimedean points because they aren't based on the external characteristics of people, rather on our internal characteristics and therefore have no leveraging effect.

And this is precisely the confusion that is always present in many religions. It is clear that religions want to tell us something about God. But when it comes to their practice, religions don't talk about God at all, but about what people should or should not do. You could also say that the man-made "religion of Christianity" works in exactly the same way because here, it's about the good things people do and not about what God does to and for us. Nowhere is it clearer than when it comes to the Holy Spirit because when we talk about the Holy Spirit, we are talking about the point where God becomes a reality in us. And above all, there is a great danger at this point that we confuse the human spirit with God's Spirit. Indeed, people can experience strong feelings of love for God, we can even sacrifice our lives along this path. But in the end, we always lose our way and come up against the concrete wall of our own human weaknesses. We sense the horrible reality that we aren't divine. As well as the sad reality that nothing godly comes from within us. And that is ultimately the reason why the world is falling apart and no matter how hard we search for this unattainable Archimedean point, we won't find it, at least not with our resources.

In our sermon text for today, Jesus addresses this world that is falling apart. First, His words are for the disciples. Jesus' disciples were well aware of the imperfection of their own efforts – that's exactly why they followed Jesus. In Jesus, they found Emmanuel – God with us! Or you could say, they found the Archimedean point on which one could move the world. And Jesus actually moved the world. He broke the laws of nature just like that by calming the sea during a storm or by healing the sick, even raising the dead. Furthermore, this Jesus spoke to people's hearts so that they understood His words as God's words speaking to them in their lives. They understood the leveraging effect of God among them, but in Jesus'

speech to His disciples, it wasn't all good. Jesus told His disciples that He would leave them and His whole speech is marked by this farewell and grief. Behind this is the question of what will become of the disciples when they are without Jesus, when this God was no longer among them. Surprisingly, Jesus says that it is good that He is going away. At first this sentence completely floored the disciples. How would it be good that Jesus is going away? Hadn't Jesus said: "whoever has seen Me, has seen the Father!" If Jesus is gone, then the connection to the Father also no longer exists! What the disciples at that time didn't yet understand was that the Spirit would give nothing else but this Jesus to them. The Holy Spirit can't be understood as a further development of Jesus' thoughts nor as a preservation of the ideas that we have memorized from Jesus. No, the Spirit Himself is Christ, the living Christ who guides His church throughout the ages and stands constantly by our side. Jesus says all this with the words: When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth. Now I know that we modern people have a problem with this word, "truth." There were many and there are many people who want to reinforce their own arguments with the word "truth." And especially when someone speaks of the pure truth, we must listen carefully. The meaning of truth as Jesus describes it to us and to His disciples is not based on an argument that must necessarily be supported by a claim to truth. No, the truth as written here in the book of John is the truth that concerns and addresses us and our life. The truth according to this idea is God's attention and promise to us. Seen in this way, Jesus Himself is the Truth, like He said: "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life." So Jesus Himself is the Archimedean point that works in us and in our world. When the Holy Spirit comes to us, then that doesn't mean that we can fulfill a list of moral qualities. Nor does it mean that we can understand a number of teachings from the Bible. No, the Holy Spirit leads us on a path and this path is the living person, Jesus Himself! When Jesus comes to us through the Holy Spirit, then this Jesus Himself becomes truth in us and in our lives! Here we truly come to the point where we can feel how God moves the levers in our lives. The disciples were therefore able to feel the impact of the Holy Spirit in their life, language, culture, and with their own abilities. However, this impact is not one where people scale ever higher spiritual mountains. I know there were such mistakes in the early Church. No, the impact of the Holy Spirit goes in a completely different direction. He reveals us and our conscience before God. We are therefore confronted with the full severity of the law and with our forsakenness before God. Jesus means all of that when He says: *And when He comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.*

This encounter with the Holy Spirit can certainly be a painful experience. We also experienced this in Peter's first Pentecost sermon. Peter showed the people of Jerusalem their sin in such a stark way that it went straight to their hearts. The Holy Spirit doesn't do all of that just to make us sad or to make us hide from God like little mice. No, the Holy Spirit does all that because He knows that because of what Jesus did, there is no sin that cannot be forgiven. That's why He is particularly concerned that people are confronted with their sins and therefore can be forgiven. In the history of the Church, the Holy Spirit's breath has always been noticeable when people were confronted with their sin and then fled into the arms of our Lord Jesus.

The Holy Spirit works in complete harmony with God. What God says, Jesus also says. And what Jesus says, the Holy Spirit also says. In this complete harmony between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God works in us. This is what Jesus promised: *for He will take what is Mine and declare it to you.* Dear congregation, can we notice when the Holy Spirit works in us? Of course, we can notice it when the world is turned upside down and when it is put back in its place, we will notice it too. But we don't hold onto that. Instead, we hold on to what Jesus Himself promised – *When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth.* Amen.