



GOSPEL FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

John 16:5-15

But now I am going to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, "Where are You going?" But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. 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. And when He comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see Me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When 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. He will glorify Me, for He will take what is Mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is Mine; therefore I said that He will take what is Mine and declare it to you.

1. We have often heard the meaning of this Gospel reading elsewhere. The problem is that people do not always understand the words as speaking about things we know. Therefore, we will explain it a little, so that people see that the very same things are in these words which nearly all other Gospel readings contain.

2. This is a part of the beautiful sermon that the Lord Christ preached after His Last Supper with His disciples. He especially wants to comfort His dear disciples about His departure, because He is now about to die and to leave them alone in danger and distress, in the hostility of the world, in persecution, and in death for His sake. He Himself announces to them with many words that they would be excommunicated, and those who killed them would boast that they were serving God [John 16:2]. It was very difficult and frightening for them to hear this, and they became distressed on account of it, both because they were about to lose their dear Lord and because they would be left in such misery and distress.

Therefore, it was necessary for them to be comforted about this, as Christ then did through these three chapters [John 14-16] of His last sermon with all diligence and faithfulness. The summary of it is that, in place of the loss

from His departure, He promises to send the Holy Spirit, who will both comfort and strengthen their hearts, and then set up the kingdom of Christ and extend it throughout the world. He tells them plainly what His kingdom is all about, what it consists of, and what the Holy Spirit will accomplish in the world through them.

3. That is why He first says: "I know and plainly see, dear disciples, that you are very frightened and distressed because I told you that I am going away. My going away should abundantly delight you, for in place of Me you will have the consolation of the Holy Spirit and in addition the power by which He will accomplish through you what I cannot do now while I am present with you. By this bodily mission I am required to suffer and die, and so make My way to the Father. Afterward I will send the Holy Spirit. Through you He will do many greater things than can now happen through Me. He will place on you a great and excellent office and work, through which My kingdom will be spread in the world."

4. He first points out what His kingdom on earth shall be, in order to take away from them their old deeply rooted delusion about the external, worldly dominion and government over the Jewish people and all the world in this life. Against this He has said plainly enough and in many words that He would go away, leave the world, and no longer be seen, etc. However, if He dies and leaves the world, He cannot ever in a worldly way govern and rule externally and visibly, like a king and emperor on earth.

Likewise, He made this still clearer when, with so many words both before and after this text, He announced to them how things would be for them after His departure, namely, that they will be hated, persecuted, excommunicated, and even killed by their own people [John 16:2]. Likewise, they will mourn and howl and be afraid in the world; and the world, on the other hand, will be confident and cheerful [John 16:20]. This does not at all agree with their hope for a worldly kingdom on earth; rather, they should expect just the opposite. Nevertheless, they must know that He wants to have and preserve His kingdom in the world; for that purpose, then, He promises the Holy Spirit.

5. What kind of a kingdom is it, and how is it ruled? He shows this in the words He speaks: "The Holy Spirit will rebuke the world" [John 16:8]. It is not to be a government conceived and organized in a worldly way by human wisdom, power, might, law, and order, but a government of the Holy Spirit, or a spiritual kingdom, in which Christ rules invisibly and not with external, bodily power, but only through the Word, which the Holy Spirit will preach and through which He will work in people's hearts. "The Holy Spirit," He says, "will rebuke the world." This does not mean compelling the world with armor and weapons and worldly power, but using an oral word or preaching

office. That means that the Word of God, or of the Holy Spirit, sent by Christ, should go through the world and attack it, so that it is proper to say that the world has been rebuked, that is, not only some people, one or two races or countries, but both Jews and Gentiles, the learned, the wise, the saints, who have conceived their government most beautifully and laudably.

6. By "the world," He does not mean the ordinary common crowds and mobs, but the best and most laudable part in the world, whose external government has nothing to be rebuked. He means especially those who want to be holy above all [others], such as the Jews, who were called God's people and had Moses' Law. About them Christ said previously that they hate Him and His people without cause, as is written in their Law [John 15:25].

7. So Christ gives His apostles power and might, and even a mandate over all the world, which is to be exposed to their preaching and must listen to the apostles. He strengthens them and comforts them for this, because their office is despised by the world and not respected, since they are plain, ordinary people. Moreover, even apart from that, they are hated, oppressed, and must suffer in the world, when their reprimands run counter to the world. Nevertheless, their office will have power, force, and vigor, so that the world must listen to them and leave them alone, not abolished, and unrestrained—irrespective of how they are angry and storm against them with persecuting, banishing, and killing, with all the power and might not only of the world but also of the whole kingdom of hell.

8. "Therefore," He says, "you really should not be frightened of this and distressed that I am going away from you bodily. By doing this I will give you something much better than you had before while you were with Me. Then you will accomplish much greater and more glorious things than can now happen, namely, the Holy Spirit will accomplish through you what belongs to My kingdom much more gloriously and strongly than you now think. Then you will not, as now, think and strive for how you may become lords on earth and have great kingdoms under you. All of that is transitory. That is of no interest to God; it has always produced more evildoers than godly people. Rather, He will put you into such a government that you will judge all people's consciences, and what is highest in the world (that is, all its wisdom and holiness) will be subject to you. You will pass judgment on it, rebuke, and condemn, so that no one who does not want to listen to your words and obey them will be able to escape sin, death, and hell, nor come into heaven."

9. So He will also give you this comfort and courage, so that you will not, as now, be frightened or afraid to death of the threats, anger, and bluster of the world against your preaching, but confidently continue to rebuke, irrespective of what both the world and the devil can do and are doing against it with persecution, murder, and all the power of hell.

10. This is the promise about the work which the Holy Spirit will begin in the kingdom of Christ. It is the teaching office of the apostles; its character is that it must rebuke the world however it finds it (outside of Christ), no one excepted, great, small, learned, wise, holy, of high or low estate, etc. This means, in short, to invite the world's wrath onto themselves and to begin the quarrel and to be punched in the mouth for it. The world, which has the government on earth, will not and cannot tolerate it when people will not let their ideas be right. That is why there must be persecution, and one part must yield to the other, the weakest to the stronger. However, because the office of the apostles is to be nothing but a teaching office, it cannot operate with worldly might and power, and the world retains its external kingdom and power against the apostles. But, on the other hand, the apostles' office of rebuking the world, because it is the office and work of the Holy Spirit, will not be suppressed, but will overcome and pierce through everything, as Christ has promised: "I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your opponents will not withstand" [Luke 21:15].

11. The Holy Spirit has certainly previously rebuked the world through preaching, ever since its beginning (for Christ always rules and "is the same Christ yesterday and today and forever," Hebrews 13 [:8]). He did this through the holy fathers, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Elisha, and John the Baptist. This rebuke is still preserved by divine power.

However, now is when it will really begin. Christ wants to institute a public rebuke, which will happen not only among the Jewish people but also over all the world until the Last Day. This will be much more powerful and piercing, and hearts will be struck and wounded. (It was said about the first sermon of St. Peter on Pentecost that the apostles' sermon pierced their heart, Acts 2 [:37], and so they were enlightened from their blindness and were converted.) However, if they will not accept this preaching, then it will have the effect of condemning and offending them, so that they fall and are hurled into eternal ruin. So it is a power unto life and salvation for the believers, but a preaching and power unto death for the others, as St. Paul says (2 Corinthians 3 [:6; 2:16; 1 Cor. 1:18]).

12. Now, what will the Holy Spirit rebuke, or about what will He teach? He tells us this plainly in the words He speaks:

"And when He comes, He will rebuke the world concerning sin and concerning righteousness and concerning judgment." [John 16:8]

13. This means taking a lot in one bite and loading plenty [of trouble] onto themselves: the poor beggars, the apostles, will interfere in the world and severely scold everything it does. Obviously, they must have a large back and strong supports. He shows that this rebuking is not to be a joke, nor is

it concerning frivolous, insignificant matters—not even concerning government, land, people, money, and goods—but concerning the highest thing by which the world's government exists, which is its reputation for wisdom, justice, and its judgment or punishment, especially in the high matters that concern worship and what avails before God.

14. Whatever concerns the earthly government over house and home, money and goods has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit and Christ. He lets their wisdom, rights, and order go and remain as they are, for the world has the command to rule and judge what is to be praised or rebuked in such things. So also He does not rebuke the offices and various estates of the world, which are God's creation and order. Rather, the reason He rebukes the world (that is, the people who rule in their government most laudably) is that they want to interfere in God's matters and government with their reason and wisdom, and they presume to find and judge how people are to serve God. They think that God must let whatever they assert be right and pleasing to Him.

15. The Holy Spirit's rebuking is against this, and it does not happen piecemeal regarding certain works and activities, but He destroys and condemns everything that reason and worldly wisdom undertake. In summary, He rebukes and faults them just for that point where they refuse to be rebuked, but instead want to be praised and glorified for teaching and acting correctly. He accuses them of sin and shame with all their glory, and openly blames them for knowing nothing at all about these things and being unable to teach people how to recognize sin, how to be freed from it, how they are to be helped to righteousness, and how wrong is to be rebuked. What good can any longer be left when they boastfully knock down all of this as with a thunderbolt? He Himself explains what each of these three points means and how we are to preach them. First, He says:

"Concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me." [John 16:9]

16. The world itself must confess that it does not understand anything Christ says about these three points. Who of all the wise and learned on earth has ever heard this before? What reason has produced this? And in what books is it written that "sin" means not believing in this Jesus of Nazareth? Does not Moses himself and all the world call "sin" that which happens against the Law, whether it deals with doing or refraining, in words or deeds or even thoughts? Now the baby has been named, and the article has been decided and fixed by the Holy Spirit: the sin of the world is that it does not believe in Christ—not that there is no sin against the Law except this, but that this is the true chief sin which condemns all the world, even if it could be charged with no other sin.

17. So now this reprimand begins, which is to bring people to the true knowledge of salvation. The first [point] is that it makes all people—learned, high, and wise—into sinners: sinners because they do not believe in Christ. So even those who are blameless before the world and also seriously strive to live according to the Law and the Ten Commandments are subjected to God's wrath, and the verdict of damnation and eternal death is pronounced on them (for that is what it means to "rebuke concerning sin"). Such were Paul before his conversion and Nicodemus at first and similarly many others among the Jews. St. Paul testifies that they have zeal to serve God and followed righteousness, and yet they did not obtain righteousness [Rom. 10:2; 9:30–31]. Thus this word "sin" briefly and simply includes however people live and whatever they do without faith in Christ.

18. Here you will say: "How does this happen? Is it, then, sin to live obediently, honorably, and chastely according to the Ten Commandments, as well as not kill, not commit adultery, not steal, not lie and deceive?" Answer: Surely not! However, it is still not enough, and the Ten Commandments still have not been kept, even if externally in works we do not act against them. God's commandment not only demands external conduct and appearances, but it also lays hold of the heart and demands its perfect obedience. Therefore, it also judges a person not only according to his external life and behavior but also according to his innermost heart. However, the world does not understand and pay attention to that, for it knows nothing more than public, external sins, such as murder, adultery, theft, and whatever the lawyers label as "sin" and rebuke. But it does not know and does not see the true problem and its root, such as despising God; the innate, inward impurity of the heart; disobedience toward God's will; etc. These things are and remain in all people who are not sanctified through Christ.

Everyone finds this in himself, if he will confess it, no matter how good he is (even the true saints ardently lament about this). Even if he wanted to keep God's Law, his flesh and blood—that is, his whole nature, with heart and all members—strive against it. St. Paul says, "I find another law in my members, which struggles against the law of the mind and takes me captive in the law of sin" (Romans 7 [:23]), etc. This happens much more in those who are without grace and the Holy Spirit, who outwardly live blamelessly only from fear of punishment or because of boasting and vainglory, and yet would rather do the contrary if they did not fear hell or punishment and shame. The heart always remains hostile to the Law and strives against it with inward disobedience.

19. Now, because no one fulfills God's Commandments and can be without sin before God, and so all people through the Law are condemned under God's wrath to eternal damnation, God found a remedy for this evil.

He decided to send His Son into the world so that He would become a sacrifice for us, atone for our sins by shedding His blood and dying, take away from us God's wrath (which otherwise no creature could appease), and bring us the forgiveness of sins. Moreover, He would give us the Holy Spirit, so that we could get and receive this, begin to become new people, and so come out of sin and death into righteousness and eternal life.

20. This is what He now has done, and He has commanded us to preach it through the Gospel. He requires from all people (as we heard in the Easter sermons¹) repentance (that is, true knowledge of their sins and serious fright before God's wrath) and faith that in this repentance God wants to forgive their sins for the sake of His Son. Whoever now believes this preaching has forgiveness of sins through this faith and is in God's grace. Even though he does not satisfy the Law, yet his remaining sin is not reckoned to him but is under forgiveness. Together with this faith the Holy Spirit is also given to him, so that he acquires love and the desire to do good and to resist sin, etc. So he is no longer condemned by the Law (as a sinner), even though he does not fulfill the Law completely. Rather, he is accepted and kept before God through grace and forgiveness as if he had no sin.

21. But, on the other hand, whoever does not have faith cannot be freed from sin nor escape God's wrath. He has no forgiveness and remains under damnation, even if to the utmost he seeks to live according to the Law. He cannot fulfill it, and in addition he does not accept Christ, who brings forgiveness and gives the fulfillment [of the Law] to believers and who, moreover, gives them the power to begin to keep the Law from the heart.

22. Therefore, wherever this preaching is not accepted, sin and damnation must certainly remain there. Yes, then this unbelief becomes the true chief sin. If faith in Christ were present, then the sins would all be forgiven; but now, since they do not want to accept this Savior by faith, they are justly condemned in their sins. It does not help them at all if they observe many works of the Law and outward worship, reasoning that if they sinned with works, then they will pay for them with works or put away sin and merit God's grace. By doing that, they do nothing else than either presume to blot out sin with sin, even to atone for big sins with little ones, or commit big [sins] in order to put away the others.

They go on in disobedience and sins against God's Commandments and are in such blindness that they neither see nor pay attention to it. Without repentance and fear of God's wrath, they still have the audacity and arrogance of wanting to please God with their own works and merits. Besides all that, they go on not only to despise this preaching about Christ, which admonishes

¹ See sermon for Easter Tuesday on Luke 24:36-47; and Easter Tuesday—Another Sermon on Luke 24:36-47.

to repentance and faith, but even to persecute it. That alone would be enough (even if they had no other sins and fulfilled the whole Law) to bring eternal wrath and damnation on them.

23. So the Holy Spirit rightly and justly rebukes as sinners and condemned people all who do not have faith in Christ. If [faith] is not present, then other sins in abundance must follow, so that people despise and hate God and so are fully disobedient to the entire First Table [Exod. 20:3-8]. Whoever does not know God in Christ cannot expect anything good from Him nor call on Him from the heart nor honor His Word. Rather, he holds to the devil's lies, persecutes and slanders true doctrine, and continues in obstinacy and defiance, so that he even reviles the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, he is also disobedient to the other commandments in his station and life, so that he does to no one what he should do, has no true, sincere love, kindness, gentleness, patience, desire for chastity and righteousness, faithfulness, and truth in his heart, but only works at the opposite, except where he has to fear disgrace or punishment.

24. Look at how unbelief must be followed by the dragon's tail of the devil and all of hell [Rev. 12:9]! The reason is that whoever does not believe in Christ has already turned away and completely separated from God. Therefore, he cannot have the Holy Spirit nor conceive any good thoughts nor have a true, sincere desire to live according to God's will, even if he outwardly pretends like a hypocrite, behaves and acts differently, so that he is not reproached or rebuked. He is like an evil, badly behaved household servant who is hostile to his master and only does what he does not want to do because he must. When he gets the opportunity, he does nothing good. Those are the excellent, beautiful fruits that all come from this source and root, when people will not accept and listen to Christ as the Savior given to us by God to blot out our sins and take God's wrath away from us.

25. So here you can see depicted what the world is like, namely, nothing other than a great crowd of such wicked, stubborn people who will not believe Christ but despise God's Word, praise and accept the devil's temptation, and defiantly run against all the Commandments of God. They take all God's benefits and blessings, and then repay Him with ingratitude and slander. Yet in all of this they want to escape being rebuked or reproached; instead, they want to be called laudable, good, holy people. They are like the Jews who crucified Christ and persecuted His apostles, and then wanted to have the glory of having done God a great service. Therefore, against this, the Holy Spirit must oppose the world and always use and work at His rebuking office through His divine power and might until the Last Day.

26. He has not begun to rebuke with the intention of ceasing and letting His mouth be plugged. Rather, He must continue rebuking in the devil's

kingdom, since there is nothing good there, and knock all of it under God's wrath and damnation, irrespective of how the world is angry and blusters about it. Some might be brought by this rebuking to repentance and faith, which is why this preaching was begun. However, the others, who do not want to be rebuked, must nevertheless be convicted and condemned by this preaching. All flesh and blood must be rebuked, either unto salvation or unto damnation. The verdict which Christ commanded to be preached to all creatures must stand: "Whoever believes will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" [Mark 16:16], etc.

That is enough about the first point of the Holy Spirit's preaching. The second point follows:

"Concerning righteousness, because I am going to the Father, and from this time you do not see Me." [John 16:10]

27. The world is rebuked not only because it has sin but also because it does not know how to become righteous² and what justice or righteousness is. However, He is not talking here about the justice of which the philosophers and lawyers speak, by which they mean keeping the civil or imperial laws and doing what reason teaches. Rather, He is talking about the righteousness that avails before God or that He regards as righteousness. Now, what kind of righteousness is this? Of what does it consist? "It is," He says, "that I am going to the Father, and from this time you do not see Me." The world regards this as unintelligible and ridiculous speech. If the first statement was strange and obscure (that the world's sin is that it does not believe in Him), then this one sounds much more peculiar and unintelligible (that this alone is righteousness: that He is going to the Father and will not be seen).

28. What should all the world say about this—the world that strives for justice and wants to be righteous before God? They are Jewish, Turkish, and papistic saints, who stumble against this as an offensive, even a foolish, doctrine. How can it be that all good works, devotion, good intentions, fine obedience, and the serious and strict life of many people are nothing at all before God? Why does He give such a peculiar and absurd definition, that we should be righteous before God because He is going to the Father and we will not see Him? How does it harmonize to be justified from what we cannot see or feel?

29. Well, you hear how strongly and powerfully He concludes that this alone is the righteousness that He calls "righteousness," and the world is rebuked because it does not have this. It is as if He would say: "Why are

² *from*, sometimes translated "pious" or "godly." In Luther's usage it usually means simply "good" or "righteous."

you disputing so long and so much about good works, holy living, and what you think about how we are to be justified? If you do not grasp that I am going to the Father, then all of this is and counts for nothing before God. If you strive to death and invent, think and study, and live and strain for righteousness with all your powers, you will still not think it out or hit on it. There must be another righteousness than what you understand and undertake, namely, that you should undertake to be obedient to the Law and live according to it. It must be far and high above all of that, where there is no law or commandment at all, or any human work and life, but only what I do, namely, that I am going to the Father," etc.

30. How does that happen? Answer: In the previous section, we heard that all people are rebuked concerning sin. From this it follows (as was explained) that no one fulfills the Law or the Ten Commandments. If someone did fulfill them, then he would obviously not be rebuked as a sinner and would be called and be righteous through this obedience or fulfilling of the Law, as St. Paul says: "If a law had been given which could give life, then righteousness would truly come from the Law. But Scripture has enclosed all under sin" (Galatians 3 [:21-22]), etc. Because no one can fulfill the Law, we have no righteousness from the Law in and of ourselves with which we can stand before God against His wrath and judgment. Rather, if we are to come before God, then we must have a different righteousness, the righteousness of another, which God regards and which is pleasing to Him.

31. The rebuke concerning sin applies to all human life and conduct on earth, so that even the saints and Christians must still let this rebuke apply to their best life and work and confess that they have sin that would still be wrong and damnable if it were judged according to God's commandment and before His judgment seat. The prophet David, who was holy and full of good works, prays and says, "Enter not into judgment with Your servant, for no one living is righteous before You" (Psalm 143 [:2]); and St. Paul says, "I am unaware of anything against myself, but I am not for that reason righteous" (1 Corinthians 4 [:4]). The only reason that they are not condemned like the others is that they accept this rebuke, confess and lament that they have sin, believe in Christ, and seek the forgiveness of sins through Him. In this way they have the righteousness of another, which is entirely the Lord Christ's own work, power, and merit. This is what He calls "going to the Father."

32. These words—"because I am going to the Father"—contain the whole work of our redemption and salvation, for which God's Son was sent from heaven and which He did for us and still does until the end, namely, His suffering, death, resurrection, and His whole reign in the Church. This "going to the Father" means nothing else than that He surrenders Himself as a sacrifice by shedding His blood and dying in order to pay for sin. Afterward He again

conquers through His resurrection; brings sin, death, and hell under His power; and, alive, sits down at the right hand of the Father, where He invisibly rules over everything in heaven and earth and gathers and extends His Christendom through the preaching of the Gospel. As an eternal Mediator and High Priest, He intercedes and prays to the Father for those who believe, because they still have weakness and sin remaining in them. Moreover, He gives the power and strength of the Holy Spirit to conquer sin, the devil, and death.

33. The Christians' righteousness before God means and is that Christ goes to the Father, that is, suffers for us, rises, and so reconciles us to the Father that for His sake we have the forgiveness of sins and grace. That is not at all because of our work or merit, but only because of His going, which He does for our sake. That is the righteousness of another (for which we have done or merited nothing nor can merit anything), presented and given to us as our own to be our righteousness, by which we please God and are His dear children and heirs.

34. But it is only through faith that this righteousness, which was presented to us, is in us and that we can take comfort in it as our treasure and chief possession. It must ever be received and accepted by us. Now, it cannot be grasped other than with the heart, which clings to the "going" of Christ and firmly believes that for His sake it has forgiveness and redemption from sin and death. It is not something external that we can accomplish with human works, ordinances, or exercises, but a high, hidden treasure which cannot be observed with the eyes or comprehended by our senses (as He also Himself says, "Because from this time you do not see Me" [John 16:16]), but it must only be believed.

35. So now, all at once, what all the world seeks, disputes, and asks without end—namely, how we can become righteous before God—is ended and cut off. Each one says something different; one teaches to do this, another that; and yet none has ever attained it, even if they have heard, learned, and practiced every doctrine of the Law and good works. We justly should ask this Master Christ and listen to what He says about it (as each one should wish to do; if this preaching were not present, they would gladly run to the ends of the world for it). Of course, everyone hopes that He will add something to it that we must do, something much higher and better than all others have taught.

36. But what does He say? Not one word about our deeds and life. Rather, He says: "All of that is still not the righteousness that avails before God. But if you want to be righteous before God, then you must have something else, namely, what neither you nor any people are or can do, which is this: that I am going to the Father. This means that no one will be justified before God

except by and on account of this, that I die and rise again." It is the "going" which alone accomplishes that God graciously accepts a man and regards him as righteous, if he clings to Christ with faith.

37. Therefore, these words are to be carefully noted, in which Christ is such an astonishing man speaking against the understanding and ideas of all people, especially of the wise and holy. All of them, when they speak with each other about what it means to be righteous, can talk about nothing else than what they call *justitia formalis*, that is, the sort of virtue that is in ourselves or which we ourselves do or which is called our work and obedience.

38. Then again you say: "What about the doctrine of good works? Is this, then, to be nothing? Is it not beautiful and laudable when someone seeks to keep the Ten Commandments and is obedient, chaste, honorable, and truthful?" Answer: Yes, indeed! We should do all of this, and it is also a good doctrine and life, but only if we leave it in its place where it belongs and keep the two doctrines distinct, about how we become righteous before God and how and why we should do good works. Although the doctrine of good works must be proclaimed, yet alongside of it and even before it we must also carefully teach (so that the doctrine of the Gospel and of faith remains pure and unadulterated) that all our works, no matter how good and holy they may be, are not the treasure or merit because of which we become acceptable and pleasing to God and obtain eternal life. Rather, it is this alone: that Christ is going to the Father, and through His "going" acquires this for us, and gives and shares with us His righteousness, innocence, and merits. Thus He begins His kingdom in us so that we (who believe in Him) are redeemed by His power and Spirit from sin and death and shall live with Him eternally, etc. It is not the kind of righteousness that only remains here on earth and then ceases, but a new righteousness that lasts forever in the life to come with God, just as Christ lives and rules above eternally.

39. For this reason I have often said, in order to speak and judge correctly about these matters, that we must carefully distinguish between a good man (what the philosophers call *bonus vir*) and a Christian. We also praise being a good man, and there is nothing more laudable on earth. It is God's gift just as much as sun and moon, grain and wine, and all creation. However, we do not mix and brew those things into each other, but let a good man have his praise before the world, and say: "A good man is certainly an excellent, precious man on earth, but he is not for that reason a Christian." He could even be a Turk or a heathen (as formerly some were highly renowned). It cannot be otherwise than that among so many wicked people a good man must at times be found. However, no matter how good he is, despite that goodness he still is and remains Adam's child, that is, an earthly man under sin and death.

40. However, when you inquire about a Christian, then you must go much higher, for he is a different man. He is not called Adam's child and does not have father and mother on earth, but is God's child, an heir and nobleman in the kingdom of heaven. He is called a Christian because he clings with his heart to this Savior who has gone up to the Father, and he believes that for His sake and through Him he has God's grace, eternal redemption, and life. This is neither captured nor seized, attained nor learned by our life, virtue, and work (from which we are called good people on earth), nor by righteousness according to the Law and the Ten Commandments. As has been said, these things are also necessary and are found in every Christian, but they are far from obtaining this chief point and righteousness about which Christ is here speaking and which He calls "righteousness."

41. Even if a man his whole life long did these things and did everything he could more and more, he still could not arrive at the point that he could be certain that God is pleased with these things and is truly gracious to him. So in all of life the heart always remains uncertain and in doubt, as all experienced consciences must testify. Even the monks testify with their books, in which they publicly taught that we should doubt, for no person can know whether he is in grace or not, and it would be great audacity for someone to try to make this boast about himself, etc.

42. From this it must follow that, because the man is in such doubt, he can have no true heart toward God nor turn to Him and call on Him from his heart. Rather, he is fearful and flees from God and must at last fall into hatred of God and despair. When the real struggle comes and he must stand before the tribunal, he feels and sees that with his life and works he cannot withstand God's wrath, but sinks into the abyss with all of it.

43. If now in such dangers we are to withstand and overcome despair, then we must have another basis than our righteousness or the Law's righteousness, namely, this eternal righteousness of Christ, which stands at the place (the right hand of the Father) where the devil cannot overthrow it and can bring no accusation against it before God's tribunal. The devil can overthrow me whenever he wants, along with all my life and works, by presenting God's tribunal and wrath and by blowing away all [my life and works] as the wind blows a little down feather. However, when I point him away from me and my works to the right hand of the Father where my Lord Christ sits, who gives me His righteousness (that is why He went to the Father), he will certainly be unable to overthrow Him—yes, even to attack Him.

44. Therefore, Christ is acting like a faithful, good Savior when He takes all of this away from us and all people, and takes it to Himself alone, and establishes and builds our righteousness only on His "going" to the Father. Thus we should know where we can remain secure against every onset and

storming of the devil and his gates of hell [Matt. 16:18]. If it depended on us and on our worthiness—that we had done penance purely enough and had done enough good works—then our hearts would never have any rest and finally could not endure.

45. From this we see how shamefully cursed has been the doctrine of the monks and of the whole papacy. With it they have misled the world. They taught not a word about Christ and faith—and not only that, they have also shamelessly asserted that their monasticism is a much higher, nobler, and more perfect estate than that of ordinary Christians. Hearing this should be an abomination to all Christians. No matter how highly one might want to put and exalt the life and goodness of all people, the chastity of virgins, the discipline and mortification of hermits, the laudable deeds and virtues of great, excellent, godly lords and regents, and whatever may be called “good people,” yet it can never equal a Christian, that is, one who has this Lord sitting at the right hand of God and His righteousness. We will gladly let that [life] remain in its honor and praise it as a precious gift. But we should exalt a Christian as a lord far and high above all of that, as one who has this eternal benefit and inheritance in the kingdom of heaven at the right hand of God with Christ, his Brother.

46. Whoever understands and can distinguish these things can also teach and judge correctly about all of life, act correctly in all matters, and guard against all error, for he judges and measures everything according to the rule and standard which Christ teaches here. The Christian’s righteousness is not the kind of righteousness that has grown in us (like the other righteousness, which is called the righteousness of the Law or human righteousness), but it is a completely heavenly and divine righteousness apart from and beyond us.

47. Therefore, if someone comes and wants to deceive you and put great illusions and miracles before your eyes concerning great, special holiness, directing you to live up to the example of this or that great saint so as to please God and become a Christian, then you can say in reply: “My friend, I will let all of that be good; I want to be righteous, live according to God’s Commandments, be on my guard against sin, etc. However, you must not teach me that in this way I am to become a Christian or attain to something greater and higher. Those people did not become Christians by fasting, working, and suffering so much.

“That would insult my dear Lord Christ and would mean that His going away was in vain and equal to human works. Rather, I want to be called a Christian from clinging to this Savior—as He has taught me and as all saints who wanted to stand before God have had to do. As St. Paul says, I am ‘found not having my righteousness according to the Law’ [Phil. 3:9], but His righteousness, which He gained for me by this going away, by which He overcame

my sin and death, and which He proclaims and gives to me through the preaching of the Gospel." When you have that, then go ahead and do as many good works as you can, but do them in accordance with God's command. Without this and before this you can do nothing good, because you are still in unbelief, do not have or know Christ, and therefore are under sin with all that you do, as we have heard in the first part.

48. This is what it means to speak in Christ's way and with His words about the righteousness that He regards as righteousness. It is not an external, human way of life on earth, but one that is incomprehensible and invisible in this life. It is not found on earth among us people nor attained through people but is a new, heavenly righteousness that He alone has made and established by His death and resurrection. We now must grasp it in faith (because we do not see it). It is prepared as an eternal, endless way of life where He rules in a new, heavenly way.

49. This does not happen with this life, because all of this has been ruined by sin and death and will finally come to nothing. For that reason the Son of God from heaven has instituted a kingdom that does not have to do with external, worldly affairs and government (as the Jews and the apostles imagined about His kingdom [Luke 19:11; Acts 1:6]), nor with the poor, beggarly righteousness of this life. Rather, He makes a new, eternal righteousness, by which all of nature is changed and renewed, so that there is no longer any sin or death, but only perfect, divine works and life. This is the work that He has begun through "going to the Father" and has already fully accomplished in His person. He always promotes this kingdom in this life through the preaching of the Gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers until the Last Day. However, in the life to come it will completely and perfectly live and be found in us.

50. "That is," He wants to say here, "what the words mean: 'I am going to the Father, and from this time you do not see Me' [John 16:10]. I am not speaking about this temporal way of life on earth, which in this corrupt nature cannot be without sin and death. Therefore, there can be no perfect righteousness and life there. My kingdom does not have such a transitory existence. Rather, it must become something different; what must happen is that you no longer see Me when I rule eternally apart from this bodily, visible existence. I will also bring you there, where there is only the new, perfect righteousness and eternal life, which I am now beginning in Christendom by the preaching and work of the Holy Spirit."

*"Concerning judgment, because the prince of this world has been judged."
[John 16:11]*

51. In the previous two points, He spoke about doctrine and summarized the whole Gospel. First, everything which is human nature, ability, activity, and life is sin and under God's wrath, because they do not believe in Christ. Second, we are justified—that is, are redeemed from sin and death, please God, and have eternal life—only because He goes to the Father. The third point follows, both how the world acts toward this preaching and, on the other hand, how the Holy Spirit will press on through His preaching.

52. About it He says that He will go on to rebuke the world concerning judgment. That sounds somewhat strange and obscure in our ears, since we are unaccustomed to the Hebrew language. The word "judgment" means nothing else than (as we also say about it) that we deal with and pass sentence on which of two disputing parties is right or wrong. At the same time it includes the two points which must always be present in a lawsuit, namely, grace and wrath, help and punishment. The one is present so that the innocent party is acquitted and helped to his rights. Yet the second point of judgment or verdict is used most often, namely, for condemnation and its consequence or execution.

53. That is what Christ is speaking about here. He points out that when the Holy Spirit proclaims the two points of His preaching in the world and rebukes it concerning sin and righteousness, the world will not receive this, nor does it want to be rebuked for being in sin and without righteousness, nor is it moved by being offered the righteousness of Christ. Rather, it opposes this teaching and rebuking of the Holy Spirit, condemns it, and persecutes it. The world alleges that it is right and must not suffer its wisdom, righteousness, etc., to be nullified, which it regards as divine gifts and worship; rather, it forcibly resists this. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit must once more proceed to rebuke the world concerning judgment and in turn urge the sentence of condemnation, telling it that it and its verdict are condemned, together with its prince and head, the devil.

54. This is where strife arises and begins, with one judgment running against another. The world puts its verdict and its wisdom against this and despises this teaching, not only because it does not come from its wisdom or from the great, excellent people of the world but also because it is preached by poor, unimportant people. It opens its mouth wide against this and says: "What else is this but some worthless beggars revolting against established authority? They want to reject and do away with everything previously observed by everyone and even established by God Himself." It condemns, bans, and curses both the doctrine and the preachers. It proceeds to shut their mouths with powerful threats and takes up severity and the sword. It simply refuses to let its error and idolatry be attacked or rebuked, and even

maintains and defends it against God and Christ as wisdom and holiness. It wants to have the preaching of the Gospel rooted out and abolished.

55. But then Christ says that the Holy Spirit will retain the supreme judgment and continue rebuking this verdict of the world until the Last Day. However, in this matter Christians get pinched between the door and the hinge, when the cross and persecution begin. Because the kingdom of Christ (as we have heard) is not of the world, but spiritual and invisible now on earth, the might and power that the world has on earth are directed against Christendom by means of condemning, persecuting, tormenting, harassing, killing, and murdering with sword, fire, water, and whatever it can. Moreover, the world is also egged on and strengthened by the devil's sharply furious wrath and hatred against Christ, as he desires and strives completely to abolish and root out Christendom. The result is that it appears to the eyes of the world and of Christians that the Church must completely perish because they exert such persecution, cruelty, and murder on the Christians who confess and conduct this preaching of the Holy Spirit.

56. So, with this point, Christ first gives the prophecy of how this preaching will be received by the world and what will happen to the apostles because of it. The world will despise them because they come without any public authority and command and bring a new doctrine against the established government, priesthood, and teaching office that were ordained by God, rebuking and faulting all they do as if it counted for nothing before God—and not only because of that, but also because they continue to preach and will not cease. So the world will go ahead and issue the verdict and its consequence against them, as against people who are not sent by God and do not preach God's Word but must be the devil's messengers and slanderers of God. They are seen as disobedient and insubordinate to God's Law, God's people, and the worship of God and are declared to be deserving of death and should not be allowed to live. This is what the Jews cried out regarding St. Paul: "It is not right to let such a man live" (Acts 22 [:22]); and they gave the reason: "This man does not cease to speak against the nation, against the Law, against the temple and the holy city" [Acts 21:28], etc.

57. Second, against this scandal of judgment or persecution of the world, Christ gives this comfort: they should know that by His divine power and strength He will maintain His preaching and preserve His Church against the wrath and raging of the world and the devil. Then the devil with his kingdom, being conquered by Him, will have to yield to Him and must not carry out against His Church what he wants according to his fierce, furious wrath and hatred. For that reason, even though the Christians must suffer from the devil and the world because of this preaching, this Word shall nevertheless not be overthrown but shall finally be victorious and hold its

ground and make it plain before all the world that their verdict against the Gospel is unfair. Finally, they will have to be ashamed of it themselves and in fact confess about themselves that they have condemned and persecuted the Gospel unjustly and unfairly. Similarly, when Christ was suffering, His judges and even His betrayer themselves had to testify about His innocence [John 18:38; 19:4, 6; Matt. 27:4].

The reason (he says) is that this King Christ by His going to the Father has already overcome both the world and the devil. He now sends the announcement that He is the Lord over all and has the power and might to condemn and to punish with eternal hellfire whatever opposes Him, together with the devil and his angels.

58. What He says means that this punishment will continue against the world which persecutes the Gospel, and finally maintain the victory against it, so that He overpowers its verdict and condemnation and in turn condemns and puts it to shame—not only the world but also its god, the devil himself (who urges the world against Christ). He is (He says) already judged [John 16:11], the verdict of condemnation has already been spoken against him, and the only thing still lacking is its *executio*, that the punishment be carried out on him in eternal hellfire. Similarly, when a thief or a murderer has been convicted by his judge, after wrath and the court have already proceeded and death has been pronounced, he is simply led away and receives justice.

59. So this judgment proceeds from the power and might of the Lord Christ sitting at the right hand of the Father, and this verdict is publicly proclaimed through the preaching office, namely, that the prince of the world and his adherents are already finally condemned and can do nothing against Christ. Rather, he must let Him remain the Lord and lie under His feet eternally and let his head be trampled [Gen. 3:15]. He sends this preaching into all the world, that whoever does not want to believe in this Lord will be condemned together with the devil, no matter how high, mighty, learned, or holy he may be—irrespective of how he tries to condemn this doctrine or to suppress and abolish it, no matter if he is called the Roman or Turkish emperor, king, and lord over all.

60. Even if the world meanwhile goes away and despises and makes fun of this verdict, which has already been spoken on the devil and all his members, because it does not see it happening before its eyes—just as it also despises the first and second parts of this preaching—Christ still proceeds against it and confidently lets Himself be despised. However, He shows the devil and the world that He is the Lord, who can break and put a stop to the devil's wrath and raging and overthrow His enemies (as Psalm 110 [1] says about Him), "until He makes all of them His footstool." The ax has already been laid to the tree [Matt. 3:10; Luke 3:9], and chains and ropes have already

been thrown on him (as St. Peter says [2 Pet. 2:4]), with which the devil is bound for eternal darkness in hellfire. No one will believe this except the Christians, who regard their Lord's Word as true, recognize His power and kingdom, and take comfort in their King and Lord. The others will have no other reward than what they seek with their lord, the devil, so that in eternal darkness they must sink into the abyss of hell, overthrown and perishing because of their raging against the Christians.

That is the first part of this Gospel about the kingdom of Christ and the preaching of the Holy Spirit in the world. Now follows:

THE SECOND PART

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, comes, He will guide you into all truth." [John 16:12-13]

61. This part also belongs to the promise about the Holy Spirit and His office in Christendom. However, He breaks off here from what He had begun to say about the doctrine and what the Holy Spirit will preach, which He had summarized in a few words. He points them instead to the fact that the Holy Spirit Himself will come and teach them these things, so that they will understand them and in fact experience them. "It is not now the time," He means to say, "to speak much about doctrine," since He is saying farewell and comforting them about His departure. Moreover, even if He were to speak long and much about it, they are not yet ready to grasp and understand correctly how it will be in His future kingdom.

They are still so deeply drowned in the thoughts and hopes of an external, bodily kingdom and worldly glory that they cannot conform and take into their hearts what He is saying to them about His spiritual kingdom and office, which He will perform through the Holy Spirit. They cannot think otherwise than that, if He is to be a King, then He must Himself be present and either bring the world to Himself with His preaching and miracles, so that it is willingly obedient to Him and accepts Him as its Lord, or, if it will not voluntarily do that, then compel it by external force and punishment.

However, if it is to happen (as He has now said) that He will go away from them and no longer be seen—that is, die—then it is no longer to be hoped that He will become a king and carry out such great things. So they are and remain very confused until after His resurrection, because they do not at all understand what He told them earlier, except that they sense the beginning of the misery, sorrow, and persecution of the world which He here announces to them.

62. This is what He says, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now" [John 16:12]. What has been said and is yet to be said about this is still much too difficult for you to grasp, for it all goes completely against your thoughts and hopes. If you understood it, you would receive comfort and a cheerful heart from it, as He also said previously: "If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced when I said, 'I am going to the Father,' etc. [John 14:28]. Now, however, what I am telling you for your comfort about My glorification, ascension, and the glorious kingdom which I will begin through you only makes you frightened and distressed, etc. It is obviously correct that 'you cannot bear them now.' Therefore, I must also defer it until the time comes when these things (what I am telling you now beforehand) begin and the Holy Spirit comes. He Himself must teach it to you and lead and guide you out of your present erroneous thoughts and misunderstandings into the truth and correct knowledge."

63. His office, then, is (He says) that "He glorifies Me" [John 16:14], that is, gives the revelation and testimony about Me that, raised out of suffering and death into glory and seated at the right hand of the Father, I am reigning Lord over all. He is to proclaim in all the world that this has been the Father's plan. The Holy Spirit will be sent so that the world may know this and be brought to My kingdom, etc. Now, when it happens that I am taken from you and the Holy Spirit comes, that itself will teach it (much differently than you now think and understand). So you will yourselves experience everything I have now said to you and much more that I still must say (to explain and amplify it further).

It is with just this thought that He later concludes this chapter (as we will hear in next Sunday's Gospel reading³) and says, "I have spoken these things through a proverb" [John 16:25]; that is, what I have so far said to you about My suffering, resurrection, and your suffering, and how in the midst of them you are to ask the Father in My name, are now only strange, dark, and hidden sayings to you, which you do not understand. "However, the time is coming when I will no longer speak with you through parables, but will tell you plainly about My Father" [John 16:25], namely, when I have ascended to heaven and will send you the Holy Spirit. Then you will experience what I am telling you, which now are only proverbs.

This is the true, simple meaning of the text "I still have many things to say to you" [John 16:12].

64. However, these words have suffered and still must suffer from our Papists. These words must let themselves be distorted and interpreted to strengthen their worthless inventions and to be the basis for their alleging

³ See sermon for Fifth Sunday after Easter on John 16:23-30; and sermon On Prayer on John 16:23-30.

and babbling that we must believe and hold much more than the Gospel and the Scriptures teach, namely, what the councils and the fathers have said and ordered. For, they say, Christ promised here that the Holy Spirit will say much more to them than He has said and will guide them into all truth, etc. It is just as if the apostles had understood very well what Christ says to them here, though they themselves testify the opposite by the fact of their unbelief about His suffering and resurrection. Or it is again as if this were so easy to understand that we had no need of the Holy Spirit for it, though to this day no Papist understands anything of it. I know this from experience, for I also learned what they know. The books they write make it clear that they still understand nothing of this. Therefore, we must answer these fools in order to do away with their lying inventions.

65. First, you hear that He says, "I still have many things to say to you" [John 16:12]. Who is this "you," or to whom is He talking? Without a doubt He is talking to the apostles, to whom He also says: "You cannot bear them now" and "The Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth." Therefore, if Christ did not lie, then these words must have been fulfilled at the time when the Holy Spirit came. In them and through them He must have carried out everything of which the Lord here speaks and must have guided them into all truth. How, then, can we conclude from this that Christ did not say everything to the apostles, nor did the Holy Spirit, but left behind much that the councils are supposed to teach and decide? Nevertheless, according to their assertions, the opposite was supposed to follow, that the Holy Spirit has said everything to the apostles, and Christ is emphasizing that He will explain everything to the apostles and will bring into the world through them what they have learned from the Holy Spirit. How, then, does this agree with their trickery, that what we are to know, believe, and do in Christendom will first be spoken, taught, decided, and arranged after the apostles, at the end of the world?

66. Likewise, if what the councils taught and established after the apostles must be regarded as truth (as having been revealed anew by the Holy Spirit), then the apostles themselves did not come into the truth—much less did those to whom they preached. Together with them the Church would have been fully deceived by Christ, since He promised them that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth.

67. Second, Christ plainly says, "I still have many things to say to you." With those words He is not saying, "I have something far different to say to you, and the Holy Spirit will teach and explain something different to you than what I have said to you." That is their addition, which they smear on the words of Christ, and so distort the words that teaching "many things" (*multa*) is supposed to mean teaching "other things" (*alia*). We would certainly grant them the word *multa*, if only they had the grace from the Holy Spirit to

teach "many things." However, it is not to be tolerated when with the word "many" they want to introduce and have power to teach "different" things. For example, they again shamelessly assert that by inspiration of the Holy Spirit the church has established and arranged many things after the apostles which must be observed, such as, among others, the article about one kind in the Sacrament, the prohibition of the marriage of priests, and the like.

That is not teaching "more" or "further," but something completely different and even contrary, against the clear ordinance and command of Christ, as they themselves must confess is correct. Yet it is supposed to be heresy and wrong when we act according to Christ's command against their law, for "the church," they say, "has ordered it differently." If you ask, "On what basis?" they answer, "Christ says, 'I still have many things to say to you'"—yes, even what is contrary to His own words and command!

68. That would truly be an excellent church: one that would take for itself the power (as the anti-Christian church of the pope does) to teach whatever it wants against Christ and to change His ordinance, and then would want to make it good and confirm it with the words "I still have many things to say to you"! Nevertheless, Christ clearly says about the Holy Spirit, establishing His limits and goal, that He will glorify Him and not speak about Himself, but will take and proclaim His things, that is, Christ's words and command [John 16:13–14]. Therefore, the crowd that teaches differently must not be from the Holy Spirit or Christ's Church, but the rabble of the devil.

69. The Christian Church and the Holy Spirit Himself remain only with what Christ has said and commanded. They certainly increase it—that is, amplify it in length and breadth—but they do not make it different. This "many things to say" means that even though one thing is proclaimed in many ways, yet always the same thing is being proclaimed. For example, John the evangelist could have written many more things than Christ said here [John 20:30; 21:25], but he always remains with the one point, thoroughly proclaiming the article about the person, office, and kingdom of Christ (about which Christ Himself also speaks), and always has his *scopus* or "main point" pointing at this Lamb of God [John 1:29]. Similarly, St. Paul in the letter to the Romans and almost throughout Galatians repeatedly stresses and repeats the one point of the righteousness of faith [Rom. 1:16–17; 3:21–24; Gal. 3:6–9, 22].

70. Now, that is what it means to preach "many things" and say more than Christ does with these few words, but yet to preach the same one thing and nothing different. A good preacher has the ability to take up a matter and briefly grasp it and bring it to a close in two or three words, and then, if it is necessary, also amplify and explain it with sayings and examples, and thus make a whole meadow out of one flower. Similarly, a goldsmith can beat one

piece of silver close and thick on top of itself into one ingot, and then again beat it flat, curly, curved, and into a thin sheet. So a sermon can be long or short, but it is always the same one thing and not contradictory. "God's Word should dwell in us richly," says St. Paul [Col. 3:16], so that we are powerful in Scripture and can demonstrate the true doctrine from it.

This is what the Epistle to the Hebrews does. The greater part of it speaks about the priesthood of Christ and develops a long sermon from the passage "You are a Priest forever" (Psalm 110 [:4]), to which it adds many other passages, texts, and examples. Yet when we look at the summary of it, all of it is nothing more than the one point that Christ is the only eternal Priest. That is certainly "saying much more" than David did in that psalm, but still saying nothing different. So, since the beginning of Christendom, much more has been taught and preached (through the Holy Spirit) than Christ did, and still more may be taught each day, and it may be amplified most abundantly and in every way, since more is revealed to one than to another, or more is more abundantly allotted or given to one to speak than to another. However, this happens in such a way that when it is all finally brought together, it all refers to one Christ. How many illustrations we can cite from the entire Bible, and even from all creatures, which all agree in the doctrine of the Gospel, none of which He taught or said, and yet it is the same doctrine!

71. St. Paul also talks about this when he speaks about the gift of prophecy or interpreting Scripture and gives this limit and rule by which it is to be judged: "If anyone has prophecy, it should be in conformity with the faith" (Romans 12 [:6]); that is, it must agree and be in keeping with the doctrine of faith. For example, someone might want to introduce the example of Abraham, who led his son Isaac up the mountain to sacrifice him there but left his servants and the donkey at the base of the mountain [cf. Gen. 22:1-5]. Such an example can be explained for faith and as agreeing with the faith, or also against faith. The Jewish preachers and teachers asserted that whoever would let himself similarly be sacrificed and slain would do the very highest work and go immediately to heaven. For that reason, kings who wanted to be excellent saints sacrificed their own children alive to God and burned them up. Our monastic saints explain it the same way, that if we want to come to God, then we must leave the servants and the donkey at the base of the mountain, that is, stamp out the five senses and have nothing to do with any external, worldly concerns or matters, but, separated from all of this, live in spiritual contemplation. This is not "explaining and teaching in keeping with and in conformity to faith," but against faith.

But you can explain it this way: Whoever wants to come to God must go above human understanding and thoughts, so that he has God's Word through which he learns to recognize and lay hold of God. There he must

bring the sacrifice before Him—that is, Christ, God's Son, who was given as a sacrifice to God for us—bringing forth this sacrifice through faith (so that the conscience can stand before God). Meanwhile, we can leave our donkey with the servants below, that is, whatever is our own work and activity, etc. I have adduced this example in such a way that it is just the same as the Gospel teaches everywhere, not against faith but for it—even if this does not correctly explain the actual, sure meaning of this history.

72. Our papistic donkeys, swine, and fools pay no attention to this. Rather, they want to persuade us to accept anything they assert and teach in the name of the church or the councils as if the Holy Spirit had taught it, without any regard for whether or not it agrees or harmonizes with the doctrine of the Gospel. All of this is supposed to be confirmed by the words "I still have many things to say to you" [John 16:12]. No, dear friend, even if He has more to say, it is wrong for you to say whatever you please or what each monk has dreamed or what an insolent Papist wants observed. I will gladly allow you to amplify these words of Christ and be a fertile preacher, making a thousand words out of one, in order to make it beautiful, clear, distinct, and bright so that everyone can understand it—as long as you remain with the one genuine and pure doctrine.

But if instead you bring forth a new doctrine and assert that whoever becomes a monk has a new baptism and becomes as pure as a young child, just baptized—the Holy Spirit has not told you to say that, but the devil! That is not teaching more, but something completely different and the opposite of what Christ says. For that reason a Christian must be wise and, as St. John teaches, be able to distinguish the spirits [1 John 4:1; cf. 1 Cor. 12:10] (according to God's Word), so that he does not let someone tell him something different (whether much or little is preached) or point him and lead him on a different path.

73. Third, He says, "You cannot bear them now" [John 16:12]. Here He is speaking about very great matters that are too difficult for them, and only for this reason does He not want to say more about them now: because they are too imperfect and weak. This is, of course, nothing else than what He had begun to speak about, namely, His kingdom, what its course in the world will be, how He must die the most shameful death and be cursed, and yet that people would believe in Him as the Savior, God's Son and Lord over all. Likewise, He was saying that they will be persecuted and killed by the world, and nevertheless the Gospel will continue, and because of it the whole Jewish people, along with their priesthood, temple, worship, and all their glory, will fall to the ground, etc. At that time they could understand none of this, even if He had preached to them about it for many years, until the Holy Spirit would teach it to them through experience in their preaching office.

74. But tell me, instead of this, what has been further arranged and established after the apostles by the councils or the popes? Would it be a difficult thing which they could not understand or endure (without the special revelation and power of the Holy Spirit) to grasp which rules should be observed in this or that monastic order, or whether black or gray cowls should be worn, or that meat is not to be eaten on Fridays, or that only one kind is to be used in the Sacrament? Should not the apostles have been able to understand and bear those things, which every unlearned, godless evildoer can easily understand and do?

There are much higher matters which the apostles could not bear and higher skills than these useless gossips dream about! I consider it certain that what the apostles could not understand and handle you also could not easily understand or endure without the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of faith is very difficult to grasp and is not so easily understood as these inexperienced spirits dream. A person must step outside of himself—that is, out of his own life and works—and cling with all his confidence to what he does not see or feel in himself, namely, that Christ is going to the Father. It is a difficult skill to despair so much of himself that he abandons whatever he has of both good and bad life and clings only to the words of Christ, and because of them parts with body and soul. What power of reason could fathom or teach this, even if we searched the whole world? Just give it a serious try with a real conflict of conscience, and you will learn! The devil and our own nature, along with many sects and false doctrines, will strive harshly against it.

Let that be enough against the Papists' lying babble and asinine skill with which they defile and smear this beautiful text in order to confirm their lies.

75. However, as for what it means when Christ calls the Holy Spirit "the Spirit of truth" [John 16:13], this will be discussed in the other Gospel readings, and it is abundantly explained elsewhere [John 14:17; 15:26].⁴ It is intentionally stated here "the Spirit of truth" and "He will guide you into all truth" (that is, into the true, pure, clear doctrine that preaches about Me and, as He says right after that, "glorifies Me" [John 16:14]). Here He is looking very far ahead to how the lying spirit, the devil, will be active and show himself in the church and assert his ideas with great pretense and commotion. He would gladly say, "How many sects will arise, who will all brag about their great spirit, and yet they will only lead people away from Christ and the truth into error and ruin."

76. For that reason He also describes the Holy Spirit and gives Him His true sign, by which He is to be known and tested: "He will glorify Me, for He

⁴ See sermon for Sunday after Ascension on John 15:26–16:4, paragraph 1; and sermon for Pentecost on John 14:23–31.

will take from what is Mine" [John 16:14]. He alone is the one who explains Christ as He has made Himself known through His Word, so that we would know that whoever teaches something different and claims to be and decks himself out as a spirit is not Christ's Spirit. He will teach nothing different but will remain with the same doctrine of Christ, except that He expands it further and makes it clearer and brighter. That is why He says, "He will glorify Me."

77. Likewise, He says, "He will not speak about Himself" [John 16:13]. Here He again distinguishes the false [spirits] and this true Spirit, for the others all come from themselves and speak what they have invented about themselves. Now, He says, that is not a property of the Holy Spirit, but of the devil. "When he speaks lies, he speaks from his own self, for he is a liar and a father of them" [John 8:44], etc. Therefore, He wants to say that if you hear a spirit who talks about himself, he is surely a liar. The Holy Spirit will not speak about Himself, but what He receives from Me and what He hears Me and the Father speaking with each other, etc.

78. This is certainly an astute text on the article of the three persons in the divine Being. The Son of God is the Word of the Father in eternity, which no one hears speaking except the Holy Spirit. He not only hears it but also testifies and proclaims it in the world. In summary, it all is aimed at this: God has resolved that the Holy Spirit alone is to proclaim and teach the article of Christ (how we are justified before God for His sake). That is why He concludes: "He will glorify Me, for He will take what is Mine" [John 16:14]. This means that He will certainly produce more than I and speak more plainly and bring to light; but He will only take what is Mine and speak about Me, and not about people's own holiness and works. This shall be His true office and work by which He will be known, which He will proclaim without ceasing until this Christ is well-known. When you have finished learning this completely, then you can seek a different Holy Spirit. However, we will, I hope, all remain students of this Master and Teacher until the Last Day.