

Matthew 28:16-20

16 [Then] the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. 17 When they saw Him, they worshiped *Him*; but some were doubtful. 18 **And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in Heaven and on Earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."**

Ephesians 4:1-12

1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. 7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore it says, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN." 9 (Now this *expression*, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.) 11 And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints, for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.

The Creed, Article 3

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

What does this mean?

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

In Advent, we rejoice in our Lord making his Advent here on Earth.

Advent means entrance. He made his Advent by entering into our world history, being born of the Virgin Mary. He then appeared to people throughout Galilee, and then made his appearance among men in his death on the cross and his bodily resurrection from the dead.

But then we can speak of our Lord's final Advent, also, when he comes again bodily, on the last day, to judge the Living and the Dead. He will, as a flash in the sky, make his appearance to all people on Earth, gathering to himself all those belonging to him.

But if we can speak of our Lord's Advent in his coming in the flesh as Mary's son, and of his final Advent in his bodily coming again on the Last Day, we can also speak of how he comes to his people now, in the stretch of time between, on the one hand, when he ascended to Heaven after his crucifixion, and, on the other hand, when he comes from Heaven again on the Last Day.

We live in that period of time between his Ascension and his final day of judgment. As those gathered into his church in these intervening generations, our Lord makes his Advent among us, too.

But how does the Lord Jesus in Heaven make his entrance into our lives?

When he was walking around Galilee, people saw him with their eyes, they heard him with their ears, they sat down with him and with their mouths ate food and drank wine with him, they felt him touch them and heal their leprosy. When our Lord makes his appearance to humans, he does it in the way he created humans to be made appearance to. He gave us our senses, our eyes, our ears, our noses and mouths, and our sense of touch.

And so our Lord Jesus makes his appearance to us, in our lives. This is not the gauzy stuff of some sort of misty spirituality. It is rather the real-world stuff of humans having actual, distinct words spoken into their ears, having real food and actual wine put into their mouths, and having water poured over their heads so that they know they are, indeed, wet. It is as real, as physical as a baby squirming in Mary's arms, as a friend sitting down and drinking wine with neighbors, as a Man nailed on a cross and bleeding.

There is nothing misty or metaphorical about this. It is real.

Our Lord makes his appearance to us. When he appears, it will be real, and actual, and physical. The ears will hear it, the mouth will taste it, the skin will feel it, the eyes will see it.

Matthew 28:19:

Make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Baptize them, says Jesus. Pour water on them and get them wet, speak words into their ears that they cannot miss, put a Name on their head, that they will know they are mine—Baptism.

This is the work of the Holy Spirit, to bring the gifts of Jesus to us, bringing them from Heaven to us here on Earth, for all authority has been given to Jesus, both in Heaven and on Earth.

We may think that the Holy Spirit's work will be spiritual rather than physical.

But that's a false dichotomy. The Holy Spirit saves us, the whole of us, soul and body. He, along with the Father and the Son created us, and he knows that we are physical humans, created to receive things bodily.

So he has the Gospel spoken into our ears, and we know that we are forgiven. He has the water poured over our heads, and we know that we bear the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He has the bread and the wine put into our mouths, and we know that we have been given the Body of Jesus to eat, his Blood to drink. All for the forgiveness of our sins.

That's what the Holy Spirit is about—bringing to us our Lord Jesus, that he makes his Advent, his entrance, into our lives to forgive us our sins.

As we learn it in the Catechism,

[The Holy Spirit] calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.