

*"...do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body." 1 Corinthians 6:19-20*

The Third Article. -Of Sanctification.

*I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.*

What does this mean?--Answer.

*I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith; even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith; in which Christian Church He forgives daily and richly all sins to me and all believers, and at the last day will raise up me and all the dead, and will give to me and to all believers in Christ everlasting life. This is most certainly true.*

I went to a concert last night. Katie was playing. I sat in the bleachers.

Just before the first note sounded the woman next to me sneezed. I wanted to take a glass dome and put it over me. I knew that the air was in that moment full of creatures who wanted to attack me; an army was gathered for the assault, the scouts were entering my system. Any weakness in my defense they would exploit. If I was tired, if my diet was lacking in vitamins, if I was wearied by worry, the virus would find an opening and rule over me for a time.

War. That is what it is like within - war between the forces fighting to keep me healthy, and the virus, wanting to make me its own. Yet I don't even know the war is going in me, unless the virus gains the upper hand, and my life suffers from the results.

When you were baptized God's Spirit took up residence in you. Paul writes, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you which you have from God, and that you are not your own?"

The Holy Spirit is within you. I wonder what that means. I can't see the Holy Spirit. I can't feel the Holy Spirit like I can feel the wind or warmth. I can't see anything in me or in other Christians like a special glow or a mark that makes it clear that the Holy Spirit is within.

When we baptize a baby, I'm sure the parents notice no difference between the child they bring to church that morning and the child they take home.

I wonder what it does mean that you and I are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

When Martin Luther tells about the Holy Spirit in the catechism he writes these words: "I believe that I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in true faith."

Think about it this way: The Holy Spirit is God's army, which has invaded you. God wants to claim every bit of the territory of your life as God's own. You are not your own. When you were baptized, God possessed you - inhabited you.

But from the very start there has been a battle. You resist the invasion. Your power, your spirit, your control over you must die if God is to claim you as God's own. And we hate dying. Our whole being tells us that dying is bad. And that me, myself and I are the only trinity worthy of our worship.

That is why Luther teaches us to confess, "I believe that I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him." If it were in my power to claim God for me, then God would belong to me and be subject to me. But God wants me to belong to God - you to belong to God.

"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you , which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body."

"Glorify God in your body."

Will Jesus Christ be Lord? Or will I be Lord?

When I began to write this sermon this morning, I did not understand the battle. As I wrote about the sneeze and viruses attacking, I was thinking of God's spirit being our body's

defenses. And sin being the virus that tempts us looking for an opening, seeking to win a battle and harm us.

Behind that beginning was the belief that God is like me. That my spirit is like God's spirit, that sin is what is foreign.

I would like to tell myself that because then what I want will be what God wants. My happiness, my enjoyment, my dreams, my safety and security, are all blessed by God then. God and I have the job of keeping out the viruses that would make life unpleasant for me.

But with Luther's words I realize that God is the invader. I don't want to worship God, I want God to worship me. I want to be most important of all to me. That is sin.

God infected us in our baptism. God's spirit is not making us more like ourselves, but more like God, putting our spirit to death and making space for God's spirit to live in us.

God does this through the word and the sacraments. When you hear God's word, your own defenses are defeated, you are defeated and God wins a battle in you. When you taste the body and blood of Christ, Christ invades you, to make you a place where he is Lord.

“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God with your body.”