

With Labor of Heart

May 20, 2021 Scott Gunn

We should first seek from God with labor of heart and in faith, that He would grant us to find His wealth, the true treasure of Christ, in our hearts, in the power and effectual working of the Spirit. In this way, first finding in ourselves the Lord to be our profit and salvation and eternal life, we may then profit others also, as is possible and attainable, drawing upon Christ, the treasure within, for all goodness of spiritual words, and setting forth mysteries of heaven. —

Pseudo-Macarius (300-391), Spiritual Homilies 18

As we enter these final days of Eastertide, we are getting closer to our celebration of the Day of Pentecost. I love the flow of this season. We start with the shock of an empty tomb. We begin to grasp the meaning of Christ's utter victory over sin and death. We celebrate Christ's ascension into heaven, when he blessed us to continue his ministry on earth. And then we celebrate the Day of Pentecost in which Christ's followers are empowered by the gift of the Spirit.

Today's "Throwback Thursday" Patristic reading offers us a connection between the treasure of Christ's grace in our hearts and the work of the Spirit. It's perfect for this time between the Ascension and the Day of Pentecost.

As I wrote yesterday, if we begin to grasp the extravagance of God's gracious love for us, we will inevitably be pushed to share Christ's love and to invite others to know Jesus. This same sentiment is at work in the quote from Pseudo-Macarius, as we are reminded that in the Lord is our salvation. Surely, we will want to share that gift with others!

To share Christ's love and to invite others to know him, we rely on Christ alone as our guide. This is all made possible by the effectual work of the Spirit in our lives.

The Holy Spirit is not just a novelty we drag out once a year on the Day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit is, in fact, the transforming work of God in our hearts and lives, bringing us to love God and to minister in Christ's name.

As Pseudo-Macarius says, we must seek God with labor of heart and in faith. Jesus once said that where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. We lead our hearts with our money. So too, I think, do we lead our hearts with our faith. Spending time in prayer and with the scriptures can help us seek God. Prayer and scripture study are ripe opportunities for the Spirit to work in us, to change us.

In this Easter season, I hope we can make room in our hearts for the Spirit's work. As we bask in the glow of radiant Easter joy, we can also connect Christ's triumph over death to our own need to triumph over the sin in our lives and the sin of the world around us. Thanks be to God, we can be confident that we are never alone. The Spirit animates and equips us to be bearers of hope, grace, and mercy in the world.