

Believe it or not, I was watching a documentary about the making of Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith. Episode Three. I know you’re shocked. But anyway, it made this claim: there is a sequence that lasts no more than a minute, but because of the special effects involved, it was the result of 910 artists and workers; and that same sixty second sequence represented 70,441 man-hours of labor. Those figures are staggering, but think about it: just an average film is the result of a Producer; a scriptwriter; Concept artists; computer technicians; a director; props are needed, as well as costumes; set designers and builders; hair and make-up artists; catering; not to mention sound designers, composers and musicians for the musical score; stuntmen; a production office to pay the bills; and of course there are those behind the camera to record all that happens. All of those people work behind the scenes so that the focus can be on the actors and the story.

On this Day of Pentecost, the Christian Church traditionally highlights the person and work of the Holy Spirit, the third “person” of our triune God. The Day of Pentecost recorded in Acts chapter 2 is a dramatic story, filled with cinematic flourishes; the Holy Spirit’s arrival is signaled by the sound of a rushing wind; his presence is indicated by the appearance of fire over the heads of the apostles; the same Spirit gave the gift of communication to the apostles, so that religious pilgrims to Jerusalem could hear the news about Jesus being proclaimed in their own languages. This sounds like summer blockbuster stuff. But that’s where we have to be discerning with Pentecost. Did the Holy Spirit show up simply to show off some special effects magic and “wow” the crowd? Or was there something deeper going on? And by the way, how does this spectacular event relate to you and me? Today I invite you to think of the Holy Spirit as the ultimate “behind-the-scenes” worker, whose mission is to put the focus not on himself, but on Jesus. The Holy Spirit works to put the spotlight of faith on the main actor. Jesus the Savior.

It’s worth remembering that Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to his followers. In John 16 He says, “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.” Before His death, resurrection and ascension Jesus had told his disciples what to expect. When he was sent, the Holy Spirit would guide them into all the truth about who Jesus was, what he had done, and why it mattered. Jesus said “He”—that is, the Holy Spirit—will glorify me. The Holy Spirit would aim the camera at Jesus, the suffering Servant and risen Lord. The Risen Lord would go on to tell his followers, just before His ascension, “Stay in Jerusalem until you are clothed with power from on high.”

That’s where we a group of about 120 believers gathered on the Day of Pentecost—a festival day on the Jewish calendar—when the effects of the Spirit were felt. Jesus had kept his promise. The Spirit blew in and ignited something in the apostles—something that enabled them to glorify Jesus as never before. The Holy Spirit worked “behind the scenes” in the apostles’ hearts and drove them to speak out. He worked “behind the scenes” in the apostles’ minds and caused them to communicate God’s truth in foreign languages, so that the travelers to Jerusalem

could benefit from the Gospel message. You have the list of nationalities and cultures in Acts 2: 9—11. By the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the story of Jesus was clearly communicated—as evidenced by the comment in verse 11, “we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God.” And then the Holy Spirit works “behind the scenes” in the apostle Peter. Now, this is the same Peter who was intimidated by a couple servant girls the night before Jesus was crucified; the same Peter who denied even knowing Jesus of Nazareth. Forgiven and restored, this same Peter, now clothed with the Holy Spirit’s fiery confidence, launches into what certainly has to be one of the greatest sermons ever delivered. It is one of the most Christ-centered sermons you will ever hear or read. It leads to the repentance, forgiveness and baptism of some three thousand souls. The climax of Peter’s sermon is heartfelt invitation: “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

What is the gift of the Holy Spirit? It is the Holy Spirit working “behind the scenes” in you, causing you to repent of yourself and your sin and to trust in Jesus alone for favor and standing with God.

The Holy Spirit shines the spotlight on Jesus, convincing you that sin is a grave threat...and that Jesus has paid for your sin with his death on the cross. The believer embraces Jesus by faith and depends on Him for pardon and peace. At the same time, the believer gratefully acknowledges that, to quote St. Paul, “No one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.”

There will be times when you and I will be tempted to wonder if we’re really “in touch” with God at all. We will weigh ourselves against those who seem really victorious and upbeat and wonder why we can’t be that way. We will hear about people who got their miracle, be it a healing, or the reconciliation of a relationship, or the check that showed up in the mailbox at just the perfect time, and we may feel a little resentful because we never got a miracle like that.

Don’t be misled. If you believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, suffered eternal punishment on the cross for you, and rose from the dead to share resurrected life with you—you are experiencing the greatest miracle of all. The Holy Spirit has drilled down into the depths of your soul, planted faith in Jesus there, and it has grown! If you believe that Jesus is the ONLY reason you are bound for heaven, you have the full, miraculous power of the Holy Spirit at work in your heart right now—because you could not believe that without Him. If you are willing to walk away from sin and desire to be close to Jesus, you have reason to be joyful today, because the same Holy Spirit who inspired the preaching of the apostles on Pentecost is working behind the scenes, inspiring your repentance and faith in Jesus at this moment.