

“Filled with the Holy Spirit”

Pentecost Sunday

John 20:19-22, 1 Cor. 12:1-13, Acts 2:1-21

June 12, 2011

This morning we are beginning our summer series trying to discern God’s leading in the future for us here at Oak Grove. Next Sunday we will begin some open discussion time during the Sunday school hour - beginning promptly at 9:30 a.m. We have decided to follow along with the readings for the year from the Revised Common Lectionary trusting that God will speak to us through His Word. And this morning is Pentecost Sunday on the Christian calendar. The Acts 2 passage the same this year as it was last. And you may be asking well why should we celebrate Pentecost Sunday every year and with the same reading? And I would answer, don’t we celebrate Christmas and Easter every year, often with the same readings. For us today, in this time period, Pentecost is just as important as Christmas and Easter. Whereas Christmas celebrates God coming to earth in the form of His Son, Jesus Christ, Pentecost celebrates God coming to earth in the form of the Holy Spirit.

Illustration: I have two clocks in my bedroom. One sits on the night stand next to the bed and with a small display is rather hard to read. The other sits across from the bed on the dresser and that is the one I usually look at. Just to give you an idea how often I use the one next to my bed. Well, I looked the other day and I noticed that I had not yet changed the time from when the time change took place in March/April. It is an hour slow. Now that it has been a couple of months the question is do I change it or do I just wait until October when the time changes once again. The truth be told, that is often how most of us live our lives, usually in the past or focusing on the future. Not all bad, but the problem is when we do that, we lose out on the present. We also do it with our relationship with God, focusing either on the past or the future. But what about the present, the right here and the right now? For God is present with us today as well. Present with us today through what Francis Chan refers to in a wonderful new book, The Forgotten God. The Holy Spirit - God the Father and Jesus the Son living within us. In the Gospel of John we find some of Jesus’ last words to his disciples before being led to the cross. Many of the words most likely shared on the evening of the Last Supper. Last Sunday Andy Stoner looked at John 15 - “if you abide in me I will abide in you.” Back in John 14 Jesus says such things as:

“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.”

John 14:12 (NIV)

“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever - the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”

John 14:15-17 (NIV)

“All this, I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have said to you.”

John 14:25-26 (NIV)

And then after his death, resurrection, and just before his ascension into heaven He gives his disciples these words, found in Matthew 28, otherwise known as the Great Commission, that which Alex is going to look at in more detail next Sunday:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)

How was Jesus with them? He certainly wasn't with them in person after his ascension into heaven.

Jesus promised the Holy Spirit at the last meal and reminded them as He left the earth that His followers would “receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them; and that they would be his witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Illustration: The Christian Life is Like a Car (Charles Swindoll)

There are two essential ingredients to enjoy any car that you buy:

1. The Key - The key lets you into the car. It'll open the doors, the trunk, or the glove box. Most importantly it's what turns the engine on. You can admire the car all you want from the outside, or even sit quietly inside it, but you're not going anywhere without the key. The key to the Christian life is Jesus.

One enters the Christian life through only one way: the key - Jesus Christ.

Jesus said: *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”* (John 14:6). The disciple John wrote in 1 John 5:12, *He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.*

You either have the key that gets you into the car or you don't. You either have life in Christ or you don't. There is no in-between ground to stand on. There is no ambiguity here, through there are many in our culture today, even many who readily identify themselves as Christians who want to say there are many ways. Jesus said there is only one way and He is the key that gets us in.

2. Fuel - The second essential ingredient you need for your car is fuel. As much as you might be tempted to today, now that gas is consistently around \$4.00 per gallon, to try and put something else in that tank and hope your car will run, the engine is designed to run on fuel. What the fuel is to the car, the Spirit of God is to the authentic Christian life.

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him. . .
Colossians 2:6 (NIV)

“As you received Christ (that’s the key that gets us in and starts the car), so live in Him or walk in Him (that’s the fuel, the Spirit of God engaging our lives, causing us to grow in Christ likeness).”

Of course just to receive the key the Holy Spirit needs to be working on your life.

. . . *no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.* 1 Cor. 12:3b
Just to be able to accept Jesus as Savior and Lord of one’s life, he or she needs to have some level of the Holy Spirit dwelling within them. Jesus had the Holy Spirit dwelling within him at his birth, even long before. He received it in a much greater power when it descended upon him at his baptism. Peter’s words to the early church, not too long following our verses this morning in Acts 2:

“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.”
Acts 2:38 (NIV)

A little further along in 1 Corinthians 6:19 it says, *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?*

We don’t really have to ask for the Holy Spirit to come in, at least initially. It’s kind of like when you buy that new car and the dealer throws in one free tank of gas. If you have already accepted Jesus as Lord, the fuel, the Holy Spirit is already there. He (or she) is inside of you. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit will be in you (John 14).

Whether you ever fill the tank again or how much you are filled with the Holy Spirit, that is another question?

A.W. Tozer is one of my favorite Christian writer’s from the past. The author of such books as The Pursuit of God and God’s Pursuit of Man. He just has such a wonderful way of putting things. I came across this challenge in reference to the Holy Spirit being within us:

“We know that He is the eternal God made flesh and dwelt among us. We know that time and space, love and life, hope and peace, riches and bliss and all that the human soul could need or crave is found in the person of Jesus Christ. Our mistake is that because it is there, we think we have it, when the fact is, we may not have it at all. It may be in Christ, but not in us.”

A.W. Tozer, A Disruptive Faith

How do we know if we really have it? If we are growing in Christ likeness. Are the fruit of the Holy Spirit becoming manifest - the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control? We might not be the best ones to answer that question about ourselves. We might need to ask someone who is close to us. Someone who really cares about us and cares about our spiritual growth. The sad truth is many Christians never grow in their level of spiritual maturity - from infancy to adulthood.

And somehow, being filled with the Holy Spirit is connected with the ability to forgive sins and live in peace with others. Jesus tells us that in our gospel of John passage this morning. Another way we know when we're operating in the power of the Holy Spirit is when we're not operating for our own glory. If anything is being carried out by the Holy Spirit, it's being carried out for God's glory. The second half of 1 Corinthians 6:19 says:

You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor (glorify) God with your body.

In living out the Christian life, we have one all-important objective: to glorify God with our body. Our individual bodies and as Christ's body, the church.

We, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.
2 Corinthians 3:18 (NIV)

In Ephesians chapter 5 Paul writes:

Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery (excessive indulgence in sensual pleasures). Instead be filled with the Spirit.
Ephesians 5:17-18

Four important points regarding the command "Be filled with the Spirit:"

1. First and foremost, it is a command. It is not a suggestion or a nice idea or a casual option and as a command it implies that we have a role to play in it.

- We cannot be filled with the Holy Spirit while we have unconfessed sin in our lives.
- We are not filled with the Holy Spirit if we cannot forgive others their sins.
- We are not filled with the Holy Spirit while at the same time trying to live our lives out of our flesh.
- We are not filled with the Holy Spirit when we are resisting God's will and trying to live out of our own power. Which creates quite a problem for us Americanized Mennonites.

2. The second important point regarding the command, "Be filled with the Spirit," is that, although it is hard to tell from the English translations, but in the Greek the command is in the plural. For those from the south it would be, "y' all." "All of you be filled with the Holy Spirit." There is not just a select group of Christians who qualify to be filled with the Holy Spirit. It is for all of us. If you are a believer, you were given at least some level or amount of fuel in your tank. What you do with it, whether or not you ever allow God to fill the tank, or if you even ever discover what the fuel is to be used for, that is up to you.

1 Corinthians 12:7 tells us that every single believer, every follower of Christ, is given a manifestation of the Holy Spirit for the common good. The Holy Spirit has given you a supernatural ability to serve the church in some way. It might be preaching, teaching,

encouraging. It may be healing. Maybe even speaking in tongues (as long as God provides those with the gift of interpreting them). It may be serving, administration, music. But God has given each of us at least one spiritual gift. Which lead to two big questions: 1) Do you know what your spiritual gift is; and 2) are you using it for the good of the church?

So, with yourselves, since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church. 1 Corinthians 14:12 (NIV)

3. A third point regarding the command, “Be filled with the Holy Spirit,” is that it is given in a passive voice. Yes, we play a part in it, but mostly it is something that happens to us. One Bible translation reads, “Let the Spirit fill your life.” More often than not the only thing we can do is open ourselves up to allowing the Holy Spirit to indwell us. Through such things as prayer, reading the Scriptures, solitude, acts of service. Once again, that is something that is difficult for us in our culture today to do. We’re doers, givers, not receivers.

4. Fourthly, “Be filled with the Holy Spirit” is in the present tense. Literally it means, “keep on being filled.” It’s not just something that happens at one time, like at our baptism, or at another conversion experience, or every so often. The Holy Spirit is something that we need to learn to rely on every day, all the time.

“There’s no singular moment when you experience the fullness of the Spirit and from then on you are on an all-time high that never wanes. This is by God’s design. He wants us to be aware of our moment-by-moment dependence on Him.”

Charles Swindoll, Embraced by the Spirit

Moment-by- Moment dependence upon the Holy Spirit. Not just as individuals, but collectively as the body of Christ, His church. May we rely on the Holy Spirit as we begin this summer visioning/discernment process. May we take the time to listen carefully, to each other, to His Spirit, recognizing that His Spirit doesn’t just speak through one of us. And may we do it with His Spirit of love and unity.

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give us a spirit of unity among ourselves as we follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth we may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 15:5-6 (NIV)