

The Church Fired Up

We continue our look at the church this morning. We have talked about the church grown up, prayed up, linked up, and this morning we are going to talk about the church fired up! You've probably heard there is a football game tonight. We talk about players and fans being "fired up" for the game. By that we mean they are excited, enthusiastic, passionate, adrenalin pumping. They are ready to play the game. We are talking about an emotional response. But when it comes to the church being fired up, I'm talking about more than adrenalin or emotional excitement. Emotion and excitement will only carry or motivate us so far. The rush of adrenalin won't last for long. We need a stronger, better, deeper kind of fire, a fire that will transform us and continue to burn in us if we are going to be the church God is calling us to be. We need the fire of God's presence in our hearts and lives.

Fire is one of the symbols used in the bible for the Holy Spirit. To be a fired up church we need the fire of the Holy Spirit to purge and cleanse us, to empower and energize us, to transform us. To understand what a fired up church looks like, let's go back to the beginning.

Jesus said, **"I will build my church and the gates of hell will not overcome it."**

Matthew 16:18. The church is made up of the followers of Christ, called out from the world, redeemed and set apart by His saving grace, transformed by the work of the Holy Spirit inside us, and as we talked about last Sunday we are linked together as the body of Christ, growing up into Christ who is the head of the church.

Jesus said he would build his church and empower and equip his church to accomplish his purposes on earth. Just before he ascended into heaven he told his followers, **"Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."** Acts 1:4-5

At the beginning of Jesus' ministry John the Baptist, speaking of Jesus said, **"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."** Matthew 3:11. This gift of Holy Spirit baptism was spiritual empowerment for the church.

The Holy Spirit and fire. Jesus spoke of this fire of the Holy Spirit as power. **"I am going to send you what my Father has promised, but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."** Luke 24:49. The Holy Spirit brings power into the life of the believer. Jesus said, **"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and**

you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8

Jesus intended the church to be a fired-up church, ready to take the message of the gospel to the ends of the earth. John’s prediction concerning Jesus baptizing with the Holy Spirit and fire happens on the Day of Pentecost, in Acts 2. Luke tells us, **“Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.” Acts 2:2-4**

The church on the day of Pentecost becomes a Spirit filled church, a church fired up by the indwelling, empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. But I want you to get the picture of the church and the change that occurred as a result. Immediately after the crucifixion of Jesus we see the disciples hiding behind locked doors. **“On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you!’” John 20:19**

Here is the church hiding behind locked doors in fear. There’s only a handful since Judas was dead and Thomas wasn’t with them that evening. We don’t know if some of the women that followed Jesus were present or not. We know by the Day of Pentecost there were about 120 of them meeting together in constant prayer, waiting for this gift of the Holy Spirit which Jesus promised. They were still hiding, still frightened of both the Roman authorities and the Jewish leaders that had conspired to put Jesus to death. I wouldn’t call them a fired up group, would you? Intimidated, anxious, frightened, yes, but not fired up. But then everything changed.

The equipping, empowering, transforming presence of the Holy Spirit changed this timid, anxious group of believers hiding in an upper room into a bold, brave, resurrection-testifying, miracle-working, Jesus proclaiming, world changing church! Nothing would ever be the same. In one moment they went from frightened to fired up, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus promised power to his church. It wasn’t power to conquer political kingdoms, it was power to live like Christ and for Christ in the midst of a dark world. It was power to preach the gospel when to do so meant death. It was power to stand against the forces and schemes of hell, to speak in the name of Jesus when they were ordered to be silent. It was power to announce the breaking in of heaven’s kingdom upon the kingdoms of this world with signs and

wonders. It was power to speak truth to Emperors and kings and rulers of this world. It was power to do and power to be. Jesus said this power would be a consequence of the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the church and we would be his witnesses. It was power not just to do something but power to be something. A witness for Christ! This was a fired up church. Oh, how we need the fire of God's presence and power to burn in the church again. We need the Holy Spirit to fire us up because the church of Jesus Christ is the only hope for a world lost and dying in sin. We need to ask God to set us ablaze with His holy presence so we can be a bright light to a world living in darkness. The world doesn't know it, but they need a fired up church. What was this New Testament church fired up about?

They were fired up about Jesus and about telling others about Him. That's what Jesus said they would be given power and anointing to do. On the Day of Pentecost, fired up and empowered by the Holy Spirit, Peter stood up and began to do exactly that: preach Jesus to them! Look at Peter's sermon in Acts 2:22-41.

That's our calling, our mission as well. We are called and empowered to tell the world about Jesus. "Go and make disciples" was Jesus' instruction to his church and that still applies today for CAG. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit so the church could be fired up, empowered to tell the world that Jesus still saves, delivers, heals and changes lives and circumstances. That's what Pentecostal empowerment is all about. It's not just about speaking in tongues, it is power to be his witness. Everything has to be about proclaiming Jesus! We have to get fired up so we can tell the world about Jesus.

Notice on the day of Pentecost Luke tells us, "**Now there were staying in Jerusalem God fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.**" Acts 2:5 Jesus said they would receive power to be witnesses starting in Jerusalem and then carry that message to the ends of the earth. From the beginning people from all of these nations, the world in microcosm, heard the gospel.

Notice too that Peter quotes from the prophet Joel, "**In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days and they will prophesy.**" Acts 2:17-18

It looks to me like a fired up church would be diverse, multi-generational, multi-cultural, men and women, young and old, leading, ministering, prophesying, proclaiming. A fired up church, filled with his Spirit, means a church with a fresh, Spirit empowered vision. Young men

seeing visions, beholding by the Holy Spirit God's plan, God's desire to take the gospel further, to go beyond where anyone has taken it before. New places, new methods, new outreach. A vision to reach and stretch toward a God ordained destiny. Old men dreaming dreams – not dreaming of the past, but dreaming of what can be, dreaming of what will be.

I want to be a part of a fired-up church like that. A church on a mission, with a vision, still dreaming a dream. I love that we have young men and women being called into ministry. I love that we have young and old alike serving in the ministries of this church. I love that we've got young people in this church that have invested in the future by giving to the Rise and Build campaign and we've got 90 year old seniors giving as well. Visionaries and dreamers, fired up, building together because that's who we are as his church! Do we have any visionaries here today? You see the future of our church is going to be found in our youth and children!

I don't know what all God has in store for us. I'm not sure if I'm young or old, if I'm supposed to be having visions or dreams. Let's say I'm between the two. I've had some visions. I've seen an army of angels inside the sanctuary lining the walls, at the ready, waiting to go into battle with us as the church moved out into the world in ministry. I've seen a vision of shackles and chains being broken from people as the word of God was preached in this church. And I've dreamed some dreams. I still have a dream of this church becoming more and accomplishing more in the next few years, reaching more people with the gospel, calling more people to a walk of holiness and victory. We aren't done. Maybe we are just getting started.

We need to reach more and do more. God fire us up so we can be everything you need this church to be. We need to see more people come to Jesus. More nations represented, more ethnic diversity. There are barriers we still need to break. There are breakthroughs yet to come that God has ordained for this church. I don't mean to sound like Dr. King – I may not get there with you, but I've got a dream that long after I'm gone from the scene, people will still be finding Jesus at 2135 West 51st. I've got a dream that this church will still be standing strong, still sending people to proclaim the gospel to the ends of the earth, still reaching out to the hurting in our community and our city, still caring about the least and the last, still speaking for those who don't have a voice, still showing mercy to the broken and lost. I've got a dream of a fired up church long after the fire in me has gone out. Let's get fired up to win our world!!

The church in the book of Acts was fired up to pray those bold prayers we've been talking about. In Acts 3 Peter and John were going to the temple at the time of the afternoon

prayer when they encountered a man crippled from birth begging at the temple gate. The man asked Peter and John for money but Peter told the man, “Look at us!” Then Peter said, **“Silver and gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping and praising God.” Acts 3:6-8**

What did Peter have to give? He had a fired up faith that believed in the name of Jesus all things are possible to them that believe. Peter believed prayer didn’t just belong inside a church, but anywhere the church goes. A fired up church needs to be relying on Jesus as the Savior, the healer, the miracle worker. Nothing has changed. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. Peter prayed a bold prayer – In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, walk! The world needs a church fired up about who God is and what he can do. The God of the bible is the God of 2018. God help us to trust, to pray, to believe- to be bold in our faith!

The church in Acts was fired up to take a stand for Jesus, regardless of the cost. In response to this miracle of healing in Acts 3, Peter and John were arrested and thrown in jail. The next day they were brought before the Sanhedrin, the ruling body of the Jews, the same group that just a few months before had handed Jesus over to Pilate demanding his crucifixion.

Remember, we mentioned this was the group the disciples had been hiding from at the beginning. When they demand to know by what power or by what name this crippled man had been healed, Peter said, **“Know this, you and all the people of Israel: it is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone. Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” Acts 4:10-12**

A fired up church is willing to take a stand, regardless of threats or possible consequence. The Sanhedrin ordered them not to preach in the name of Jesus. Peter said, “Judge for yourselves, but we can’t help speaking about what we have seen and heard.

They went back to the church and told them what the authorities had said, how they had warned them of punishment to come if they kept speaking in the name of Jesus. Then they prayed this prayer, **“Now Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous**

signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant, Jesus.’ After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.” Acts 4:29-31

Threats. Intimidation. But a fired up church speaks the truth, regardless. A fired up church speaks the word of God boldly. A fired up church is on a mission, to take the good news to everyone, everywhere, and we aren’t going to let anything stop us. Who knows what’s ahead for the church in America. There is no doubt in my mind a time is coming when pastors and churches will be charged with hate crimes or hate speech for preaching the gospel or preaching against sin. Believers will have to decide where they will stand and our prayer must be like that of the fired up church of Acts, “Lord enable us to speak the word of God with boldness.” I’m not worried about winning a political fight, I’m concerned about remaining true to Jesus and his word! God help us.

God is calling us to be his church. There is an offer of fire and anointing. There is an offer of power and greater purpose. There is a season we are entering. There is an outpouring coming. If we will get hungry, if we will cry out to him, if we will trust and obey, if we will reach out to him, if we will put Jesus and his calling and his kingdom and his mission and the lost ahead of ourselves and our comfort, we will see signs and wonders again.

To the generation coming behind us, I don’t know what the culture will look like, but there is no limit to what God can do in you and through you as you accept the reins of leadership in this church. If you will stay true to God and his word and stay fired up, miracles will happen!

God needs a fired up church. Paul wrote to Timothy, **“For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.” 2**

Timothy 1:6

Fired up by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. Fired up by faith in the Lord Jesus. Paul told Timothy to stir up the gift of God. I challenge you to fan into flame the gift God has given you. Ask the Lord to empower you with a fresh boldness, a fresh fire in your heart and soul. Let’s get fired up for Jesus, fired up about living for him, fired up about winning the lost, fired up to pray those bold prayers, to believe for miracles. It’s no time for the church to be timid. God needs a fired up church!