

The Holy Spirit 2017 Part 6

Last Sunday we talked about God's plan that He would, by His Holy Spirit, dwell among his people. Paul said we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. My question for us today is, what effect does his abiding presence make in us, his church? What kind of church are we to be if the Holy Spirit dwells in us? What is it God wants to do through us, his church, by dwelling in us?

The apostle Paul wrote, **“We have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.” 1 Corinthians 2:12** I've said repeatedly that everything Jesus provided for us by his overcoming life, atoning death and victorious resurrection is brought to us and manifested in us by the work of the Holy Spirit! Our life and the life of the church is dependent upon the Holy Spirit.

There is tendency in human beings, in spite of the presence of God's Holy Spirit in our lives, in spite of the promise of God, in spite of everything we know about God and his plan and purpose, there is a tendency in us to rely upon ourselves and our ability rather than trust in the power and presence and leading of the Holy Spirit. Imagine that – we trust ourselves more than we trust God! Sadly we start to think we know how to have church and be the church without God's input, without God's power or presence. God help us.

Forty years ago I read a book that had a big impact on my thoughts about church. *Brethren Hang Loose* by Robert Girard told the story of a Wesleyan church that underwent a spiritual and cultural transformation as they learned to trust the work of the Holy Spirit. In the book Girard listed seven principles he felt should guide their church. The first of the seven was **“Depend upon the Holy Spirit instead of the flesh.”** “The flesh is represented by all the human, earthly things we expect to produce growth, maturity, spirituality and life in the church – instead of looking to the Holy Spirit for these things.”

Girard pointed out that in the first century church a group of unschooled fisherman and reformed revolutionaries who had been with Jesus managed to turn the world upside down. How? By the work of the Holy Spirit. He wrote, “Only as we see Him and not ourselves as the church's source of Life, leadership and energy to do its task, will our churches ever rise above the miserable limitations of our own human abilities, talents and intelligence to become something clearly identifiable as a work of God...It is clear in the Scriptures that the Spirit will teach, guide into all truth, glorify Christ, convince men, reveal Christ to men, fill men, empower the church, lead its leaders and members, illuminate the Bible to the believing mind, organize the

church program, direct church affairs, solve church problems, discipline and chasten, give untrained [people] the ability to minister, enable men[us] to love each other, unify believers, edify, produce growth, draw people into the Body, meet financial needs, recruit workers, heal minds and bodies, purge and purify, witness, overcome human weakness, increase the effectiveness of prayer, confirm Christ's work in [people's] hearts... The truth is, the Holy Spirit can be trusted to provide the church with all it needs to function as the New Testament reveals it should and can...And when the Spirit does it, it is beautiful." Robert Girard

He gave Scriptural reference for each of those items. I recall thinking "Lord, help me to rely upon the Holy Spirit to pastor this church that way." When we realize we can trust the Holy Spirit, we will be eager to listen to Him, to follow his guidance, to wait for his direction, to lean upon him as our resource, our Counselor and Comforter, the One alongside us to help us. We'll be eager as his church to be filled with His Spirit, empowered and led by His Spirit. But what will that look like? I can't say with certainty about everything, but I can suggest a few things.

Jesus said the Spirit of the Lord had anointed him to do certain things. Gathered with his disciples after the resurrection he said, **"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" John 20:21-22** I believe the anointing of the Holy Spirit is upon us, His church, and He is sending us into the world just as he sent his disciples. For what has he anointed us? What is our mission?

Turn to Isaiah 61. This is the passage Jesus read in Luke 4 as he announced the beginning of his ministry in his home town. He read this to announce to his hometown that he was in fact the Messiah. We've referenced this before in recent weeks. **"The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion – to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor."** Isaiah 61:1-3.

Jesus let them know He was the Messiah, the anointed one. The blessings and benefits of this anointing would change the lives of all who came in contact with him or even heard of him

and placed their faith and hope in him. I believe this is what the Spirit of the Lord intended to do through Jesus the Messiah and I believe this is what the Spirit of the Lord intends to do through us the church. We are the body of Christ in this earth now. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit. As the Father sent Jesus, we are the ones who are now being sent by the Son, empowered by the Holy Spirit, anointed by the Holy Spirit, to carry out this mission. This is what a church full of the Holy Spirit should look like! This is what we should be doing! This is what we have been anointed and empowered for. Look at this description, this assignment again.

Preach good news to the poor. This is referring to the downtrodden, the disadvantaged, those who have been held back from progress by circumstances or by other people. The poor don't usually get much in the way of good news. They are usually overlooked by everyone else. They are without power, resource, influence, but the Holy Spirit sends us with good news. "Jesus sees you. Jesus loves you and his church cares about you. You aren't invisible to Jesus or his church." We've come to proclaim not just good news but THE Good News – the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are called and commissioned to carry that good news to everyone regardless of income, class or status. "Holy Spirit, show us the parts of our world, our community, our neighborhoods that we have overlooked and give us new strategy for preaching the good news to them." If you have been overlooked, pushed aside, there is good news for you. Jesus loves you and cares about you and so does his church. Show us how to love Lord!

Heal the brokenhearted. There are all kinds of ways to get our heart broken in life. None of us will get through without a heartbreak and the Lord knows that, so he has anointed us to bandage, heal, soothe, comfort and restore to wholeness the brokenhearted. He expects us to go to the hurting but it's a messy assignment. Everywhere there is brokenness, but He is a gracious and gentle healer. If this is what we are anointed for, then that means God wants to heal those broken by sin, broken emotionally, mentally, physically, spiritually. That means he has you in his sights! Your healing is on his agenda. He wants to use us to share his healing grace. We just need to be willing to be used however he sees fit to bring that message of healing. "Holy Spirit, use us as healers and menders of broken hearts and lives."

Proclaim freedom to those held captive. This has a reference to the Levitical year of Jubilee in which the slaves were to be freed from their bondage and the debtors were to be released from the obligation of their debt. Imagine the feeling of knowing someone has paid your debt – the debt you knew you would never be able to repay! The Holy Spirit wants us to

announce to those captives “Jesus will set you free! You don’t have to live enslaved to lust, to drugs and alcohol, addicted to gambling, addicted to shame and self loathing. You don’t have to be a slave to cutting and self harming, to sexual behavior or any behavior that devalues you and your worth as a person. You don’t have to live as a captive any longer. I’m tired of seeing people living as captives to their own bad choices, driven by the enemy deeper and deeper into captivity. “Holy Spirit, anoint us and give us courage to proclaim freedom to the captives.”

Proclaim release for those prisoners in darkness. Freedom for the captives refers to those held in bondage by a particular people, release for the prisoners refers to release for those held in a particular place. What I want you to know is that Jesus has come to cancel the debt of sin and guilt and shame. He has come, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to release you from being held captive by the opinion of others, to release you from co-dependency, to release you from that place in time where you were wounded and you’ve never been able to move on. You’ve been trapped like a prisoner in that dark place, bitter, angry, wounded, unable to forgive others or to forgive yourself, never able to move beyond that spot. Some are trapped by wounds of childhood and unable to move beyond that betrayal and pain. The Holy Spirit’s anointing wants to liberate you and release you so you can move on to the life Jesus has prepared for you. He wants to release you so you can proclaim release to others and lead others out of captivity and darkness and into his light. That’s what he has anointed us to do as his church. Get up and get out of that dark dungeon. The lock Satan put on that door has been busted off, broken. All you need to do is push on that door and step out into God’s glorious freedom in Jesus name. The Holy Spirit calls you to freedom and release. Now! This is the kind of church he wants us to be. Calling prisoners to live in His freedom.

Proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor/ the day of vengeance. By reading this passage, Jesus was announcing the inauguration of the year of the Lord’s favor. He came in the fullness of time, entering time to announce God’s redemption plan. Here is the heart of the gospel, the message of God’s favor. **“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” John 3:16-17.** Some read that passage and say, “Yes, God didn’t send Jesus into the world to condemn the world, he sent us to condemn the world. We will take care of judging everyone else but ourselves, pointing our finger and wagging our head at the world.” God has sent us not

to condemn the world but to proclaim salvation. Tell them Jesus has come to forgive their sins and give them eternal life. God isn't against you, he is for you. He wants to change you and give you hope and life and peace. He will show you mercy if you will call on him in faith. The Holy Spirit wants you to know the favor of the Lord, the kindness of the Lord that is being shown to you. He has given you time and even now is giving you opportunity to repent and surrender your life to him. Now is the time! It is the year of the Lord's favor, but there is a day of vengeance and judgment coming. He is giving you time to repent, but judgment will come. "Holy Spirit help us to show and share this good news with everyone while there is still time!"

Comfort all who mourn/ Provide for those who grieve. We say this is a place of healing, hope, laughter and peace. This is a place where one can mourn over their sin, their past, or their loss and find forgiveness, mercy and grace. Jesus said "**Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted.**" **Matthew 5:4** We are comforted as our sins are forgiven and we are assured of eternal life with Christ, but that isn't all.

Jesus described the Holy Spirit as the Comforter for everyone who grieves. Grief suggests loss. Perhaps you're grieving the loss of a loved one, but maybe it's the loss of something else. Maybe it's the loss of a job, a career, maybe it's the death of your hopes and dreams, your plans for the future that have been taken from you, lost to you. The Holy Spirit is here to comfort you, to provide for you in the midst of your grief and loss. It isn't that he comes alongside you for a moment, rather He is with you all along the journey. He will continue to comfort, to provide, to sustain you, to supply what is lacking or missing, renewing what has faded and failed, restoring what has been lost. He will bring you comfort and hope.

As a church he anoints us to come along side those who are mourning and grieving. Walk beside them. Help lift the burden, rejoice in the victories, weep in the losses and keep praying in faith. "Holy Spirit, show us how to provide for the grieving as you bring Comfort."

Exchange beauty for ashes. He exchanges a crown of beauty for ashes. The ashes were smeared on the head to indicate the person was in mourning. The Holy Spirit's anointing removes the ashes and places a crown of beauty on the very place where the ashes had been. God has a way of causing beauty to rise out of the ashes of our life. From your greatest loss and defeat, out of the place of your greatest grief and sorrow, the Holy Spirit wants to raise up victory. The mercy of the Lord will bring forth blessing and favor and increase. There is an exchange coming! We said this a couple of Sunday's ago. I feel it stirring in my Spirit. He is

restoring. He is exchanging beauty for ashes. Give him the ashes. Make the exchange. In the very place...God “exactly replaces the hurt with the remedy” (Motyer).

Exchange oil of joy for mourning. Jesus replaces mourning with fresh life. You feel like only sorrow is appropriate for you, but the Holy Spirit will appropriately restore gladness and joy. The oil of the Holy Spirit will refresh, restore, renew. We said a couple of weeks ago that olive oil was a beauty treatment that restored life and softness to the skin. Don't be afraid to let the Holy Spirit restore the life and joy and hope that circumstances have robbed from you.

Exchange a garment of praise for a spirit of heaviness and despair. I believe God desires this church to be a place where people find healing and hope as the Holy Spirit lifts that heavy blanket of despair and gives them a new garment of rejoicing and praise. It is the exchange of a mourners dress for a wedding dress.

They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord. God wants to give you a new name, a new beginning, a new start. Isaiah 1:30 they were called oaks with fading leaves. Now they are called oaks of righteousness. Instead of being called whatever you used to be, now you will be called oaks of righteousness. A new name. A sign of strength! A planting of the Lord. A new shoot, a new beginning, planted and established by the Lord. I believe the Holy Spirit is birthing a new beginning for someone. I believe he is stirring something in our church. I watched the General Council as new leadership was elected and I was excited about what I believe God is going to do in the Assemblies of God. I believe the Lord is giving us a new sense of calling and purpose, a new anointing to accomplish what he wants for us.

Oaks were large trees, established, suggesting permanence. But supernaturally they were planted where God wanted them to be. I felt in my spirit God saying this church will be that oak of righteousness, mature, planted, grounded, rooted in its history, but also this is a season of new plantings, new beginnings, new leaders being raised up.

Holy Spirit, anoint us to be the church that brings good news to the poor, the outcast, the hurting, the brokenhearted, the captives and prisoners. Send us to comfort, to encourage, to heal, to set free, to announce your good news and your favor as well as to warn of your judgment. God, take the ashes and in the very place, give us beauty and increase in exchange. Give us that new name, a new nature. Plant us where you want us to be! Make us the planting of the Lord with roots reaching deep down into your resources and your mercy and your power and your grace! Anoint us and make us the church you intend us to be!

