

Sermon: May 23, 2021

“Spirit Talk”

The followers of Jesus were on lockdown. They were afraid of the crowds. They might've been afraid that there were people who wanted to hunt them down and kill them because they had been followers of Jesus. I imagine them locking the doors and closing the windows.

They were also afraid about what was coming next. Jesus told them to wait and that's what they were doing, but they were afraid.

Remember, they had already received the Holy Spirit. In the gospel of John 20:22, when Jesus appeared to the disciples after his resurrection, he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

They already had the spirit within them, but it was inactive.

They had probably felt the Holy Spirit before when they followed Jesus. Maybe when they saw someone healed and restored to full health, or when they heard his stories about families who reconciled against all odds, or when he fed multitudes with five loaves of bread and two fish and surely when they saw Lazarus come out of the tomb, or when they went to the mountaintop and they saw Jesus transfigured before them glowing along with Moses and Elijah. Certainly, witnessing such signs and wonders filled them with a rush of energy, or heat or excitement. We are not told.

We know, after Jesus left, they did not feel the excitement of that Spirit. They felt fear. They didn't know as they waited, and maybe if they had, they might have been even more afraid. They needed fire.

When comedian Richard Pryor set himself on fire free basing Cocaine, he talked about it in his next comedy show.

He came out on stage in a red suit with a gold belt and gold shoes- the colors of the Spirit. As he told the story of setting himself on fire, and running down the street, he said this, “People get out of your way when you're on fire!”

Nevertheless, that's what Jesus' followers in lockdown needed. They needed the spark of the Holy Spirit lit within them to ignite their faith. They had a testimony. They had the stories of Jesus, the miracles of Jesus, the signs and wonders they themselves had witnessed there inside of them

and when the Holy Spirit descended like divided tongues fire resting on each of them, their testimony burst forth and they began to speak in other languages, and not only that they received courage. Jesus' message of peace through love in the face the cruel Roman's plan of peace through violence a message that got him killed had terrified them. When the spark of the Holy Spirit was Ignited on Pentecost, they were no longer afraid.

The Scripture says they spoke in the language of each person gathered around their house that day. Oh, and those gathered people tried to explain this by mocking them, by sneering at them by saying they were drunk.

When Peter stood and testified to God's wondrous deeds, they began to listen. When he reminded them of the words of their own prophet Joel, they listened. When he reminded them of Jesus' arrest and crucifixion, and resurrection They listened. When he told of King David's prophesy that one of his descendants would be the Messiah, they listened and were convicted.

Peter invited them to be baptized and it is recorded in the book of Acts chapter 2 verse 41" Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day." That is a lot of baptizing!

Their Baptism was not just a fond memory to recall - No certificate to frame, no snapshots or video to take out and remember. Their baptism meant becoming a part of the church. It meant devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

"They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. "Later this Jesus movement this message of resurrection power would spread to other parts of the world. It would also mean that the apostles would be arrested and of them killed for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

A similar event occurred in this country. In the early 1900s there was the beginning of what would become the Pentecostal movement. An African American preacher William Seymour was part of that early group and in 1906, he moved to Los Angeles, California. There he met with a group of other African Americans who believed speaking in tongues was true evidence of having received baptism of the Holy Spirit. They began to pray

for a Worldwide revival of the Holy Spirit like the Day of Pentecost in Acts. By mid-May 1906, they needed to find a bigger place to meet because so many people flocked to hear their message. They found a building at 312 **Azusa Street** and the revival that would last for three years began. It was characterized by spiritual experiences accompanied with testimonies of physical healing miracles, worship services and speaking in tongues. and 1500 people arrived daily despite no advertising no fliers listed just word of mouth at first.

People from a diversity of backgrounds came together to worship men, women, children, Black, White, Asian, Native American, Hispanic, immigrants, rich, poor, illiterate, and educated. This revival like the first Pentecost cut through all boundaries and barriers. People of all ages came to Azusa Street with both skepticism and a desire to participate. The intermingling of races and the group's encouragement of women in leadership was remarkable.

Remember, 1906 was the height of the "Jim Crow" era of racial segregation, and fourteen years prior to women receiving the right to vote. The Azusa Street revival continued for three years and Pentecostalism spread to many parts of the US as well as 40 countries worldwide.

We too have been on lockdown and we have been afraid. We have lost loved ones, but now there are vaccines and many of us have been vaccinated and have hope that we are safer.

We know we could use a baptism by the Holy Spirit in this day and age? Everywhere we turn, there are great divisions between people. Can we expect such miraculous presence of God spirit among us now?

I say yes!

We have already experienced it. We just have to pay attention. Are you skeptical?

Let me ask you a few questions.

Have you ever been healed? No?

Have you ever had a cold and now you don't have it anymore? That is a healing. It is the miraculous work of Spirit and you have a testimony.

Have you ever suffered a loss so devastating that you thought it would destroy you? I know I have.

Then over time you discovered that while you would never get over your loss, you could go on and help other people who have suffered a similar loss. That is the healing of the Holy Spirit.

Have you ever spoken in tongues? No?

Have you ever been so furious with someone that you decided you were going to give them a piece of your mind or you were never going to speak to them again in your lifetime. But then you came face-to-face with them and all those hateful words all those painful words just wouldn't come out and you said instead, "my brother," "my friend," "that is speaking in tongues. That is Spirit talk.

Are there people you know who think exactly the opposite from your opinions? The ones around whom you carefully avoid certain topics? Then you get to know them better and you find you have some things in common? That is Spirit talk, the baptism of the Holy Spirit that ignites our faith and breaks down barriers and differences. And calls us to testify to God's powerful deeds as we move forward to the future, we will need a revival, a renewal of our faith, so we can carry the good news of the gospel to others. That is how we will grow and have a future.

I have brought some plants that I thought looked like the flames of Pentecost. Take one after service and give it to someone who may need to know God loves them and you do too. Invite them to church. Just a suggestion. Remember the number one reason a person decides to join a church, is because someone invited them. Today the Christian church celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit with the power to transform of group of frightened disciples into men and women who could do all the things that Jesus had done with faith and courage. This is our legacy. This is our calling.

Breathe on us Breath of God,
fill us with life anew,
that we may love the way you love,
and do what you would do.

Breathe on us, Breath of God,
until our hearts are pure,
until our will is one with yours,
to do and to endure.

Breathe on us, Breath of God,
so shall we never die,
but live with you the perfect life
for all eternity. Amen