

Devotions for the Week of April 29, 2018

LARGE-PRINT

5th Sunday of Easter

North East United Methodist Church

Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

Sunday, April 29, 2018

Read Acts 2.

In Acts 1: 4-5, Jesus told His disciples, *“Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you what he promised. Remember, I have told you this before. John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”*

The promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit is fulfilled at Pentecost. And it is the Holy Spirit that gives Peter and the other disciples the courage, the boldness, the ability to speak to the men and women gathered outside the upper room, including many of the very men that had been responsible in crucifying Jesus. This power, this boldness, this Holy Spirit, is available to everyone who believes; it is the Holy Spirit that gives us the power to do ministry, to touch lives, and to transform communities.

Dennis & Rita Bennett, in their book, The Holy Spirit and You, write,

“This is called in the Scripture, ‘the baptism in the Holy Spirit,’ because it is a baptism, meaning a drenching, an overflowing, a saturating of your soul and body with the Holy

Spirit. When the Bible speaks of Jesus 'baptizing' in the Holy Spirit, we immediately visualize something external, somebody being put into something. However, the word baptize in Greek means to 'completely suffuse' – it is used in classical Greek of a sunken, water-logged ship – so it does not really make any difference whether Jesus immerses us in the Holy Spirit in an external sense of the word; whether He inundates us from outside; or whether Jesus causes the Spirit to rise and overflow from where He is living inside us, to suffuse our souls and bodies. Probably both pictures are true – He 'comes upon us' both from outside and inside, but it is important to remember that the Holy Spirit is living in you, and that therefore it is from within that He can flood your soul and body. Jesus says: 'He that believeth on me...out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water [the Holy Spirit]' (John 7:38), and the Amplified Bible says: 'Out of his innermost being shall flow...' When we receive Jesus as Savior, the Holy Spirit comes in, but as we continue to trust and believe Jesus, the Indwelling Spirit can pour out to inundate, or baptize, our soul and body, and refresh the world around."

As Billy Graham writes, *“All believers are baptized with the Holy Spirit. This does not mean, however, that they are filled or controlled by the Spirit.”*

Have you surrendered to God and allowed His Holy Spirit to fill you? Are you praying each day to be refreshed, for new *“fillings”* of God’s Holy Spirit? Are you continuing to trust and believe Jesus, continuing to go to Him for answers, for guidance? Are you allowing the Holy Spirit to pour out of you and touch others around you? Are you taking time to pray, to read the scriptures each day, to hear from God’s Holy Spirit?

Put your trust in God and pray, asking God to *“cause the Spirit to rise and overflow from where He is living inside [you].”* Pray that God’s *“Indwelling Spirit...pour[s] out to inundate, or baptize, [your] soul and body, and refresh the world around [you].”*

Monday, April 30, 2018

Read Acts 2: 14-42.

This is Peter’s speech to the crowds. The same Peter that only a month before denied Christ three times, who ran from the authorities, who abandoned Jesus at the cross, now stands tall and speaks boldly about Jesus, the Messiah. Peter says, *“With the help of lawless Gentiles, you nailed him to the cross and murdered him...let it be clearly known by everyone in Israel that God has made this Jesus whom you crucified to be both Lord and Messiah!”*

Justo L. Gonzalez, in his book, Three Months With The Spirit, writes, *“Upon reading Peter’s harsh words, we expect those who listen will be incensed. They might even seek to kill him. That is what happens in other cases, both in the Gospels and in Acts. But something unexpected happens here. Those who heard Peter, rather than becoming enraged and attacking him, accepted what he said, repented, and were baptized. This unexpected result was the consequence of the main theme of this entire chapter: the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. Those who heard Peter believe him, not because his words were soft and convincing, but by the power of the Spirit. Peter said what the Spirit guided him to say, even though they might be harsh words. Since it was the Spirit who was acting, those who heard accepted what was being said.”*

The Holy Spirit has the power to break through barriers that people set up and to work through our weaknesses; we simply need to obey what God is telling us to say. Jesus commanded, *“Go and make disciples of all nations...”* If we do this, if we lift up the name of Jesus, God will be faithful and will touch hearts through His Holy Spirit.

Are you allowing the Holy Spirit to work through your weaknesses, through your fears, through the barriers that you believe are present? Are you trusting God to use His Spirit to touch others with your words and the love you share?

Pray that God will continue to use His Holy Spirit to speak to our world through you.

Tuesday, May 1, 2018

Read Acts 2: 42-47.

As the disciples, the early church, yielded itself to God and His Holy Spirit, not only did the Holy Spirit create boldness in the disciples and their preaching to the crowds, but the Holy Spirit swelled up in them in the form of love for one another and for community. The disciples devoted themselves to four things: (1) the apostle's teaching, (2) fellowship, (3) the breaking of bread, and (4) prayer.

Gonzalez writes, *“One of the main attractions of the church in the early years was the love that existed among its members, and the spirit of sharing that flowed from that love. That is why an ancient Christian writer says: “If we share in eternal things, how are we not to share in those that are perishing?” Think about your church. Is there within your own church community a spirit of sharing such that it witnesses to the love of Christ and the love among you? Do you think that if believers loved one another more the world would be more inclined to believe? What do you have that is not really necessary and that you could share with others who are in greater need? Write down your reflections. Pray over it. At the proper time, be ready to share.”*

As John Hobbs preached this past Sunday night, *“It is never a question of how much you and I have of the Spirit, but how much He has of us.”* Graham explains further, *“All believers are baptized with the Holy Spirit. This does not*

mean, however, that they are filled or controlled by the Spirit.”

Have you yielded yourself, given up control, to the Spirit of God so that He might fill, empower, and work in and through you to touch the lives of others, to build community, to strengthen family in the church, and to help those with less?

Wednesday, May 2, 2018

Read Titus 3: 1-8.

Paul writes in his letter to Titus, *“He saved us, not because of the good things we did, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins and gave us new life through the Holy Spirit.”*

Paul understood what it was to have a *“new life.”* A Pharisee and persecutor of Christians, Paul was transformed on the road to Damascus as Jesus appeared to him. Paul became one of the leaders of the Christian movement. He confesses that at one time he was *“foolish and disobedient,”* and *“full of evil and envy.”* He admits that he *“hated others.”* Yet, God and His Holy Spirit changes all that. The Holy Spirit convicts him of where he must show love, kindness, and mercy instead of wickedness, quarreling, and hate.

The Holy Spirit, throughout our journey, convicts us of changes we need to make in our lives to become more *“Christ-like”* in our behaviors and actions. How is the Holy Spirit convicting you to change? What behaviors is God moving, through the Holy Spirit, upon your heart to deal

with? Is there someone the Holy Spirit is convicting you to reconcile with?

Pray that God will help you take the actions necessary to be obedient to the Holy Spirit and to grow closer into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

Thursday, May 3, 2018

Read I Corinthians 12.

Paul writes, "I will write about the special abilities the Holy Spirit gives to each of us... There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but it is the same Holy Spirit who is the source of them all."

Rick Warren, in The Purpose Driven Life, writes, "God shaped you for a purpose, and he expects you to make the most of what you've been given. He doesn't want you to worry about or covet abilities you don't have. Instead he wants you to focus on talents he has given you to use... The best way to discover your gifts and abilities is to experiment with different areas of service... You have dozens of hidden abilities and gifts you don't know you've got because you've never tried them out. So I encourage you to try doing some things you've never done before... Don't try to figure out your gifts before volunteering to serve somewhere. Just start serving. You discover your gifts by getting involved in ministry.... You will never know what you're good at until you try. When it doesn't work out, call it an 'experiment,' not a failure... Fail to use what you've been given and you'll lose it. Use the ability you've got and God will increase it. Paul told Timothy, 'Be sure to

use the abilities God has given you...Put these abilities to work.”

God has given you special gifts. Billy Graham writes, *“The Holy Spirit gives gifts to specific people in the Church ‘for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the Body of Christ’...a weakness in today’s churches is the failure to recognize, cultivate, and use fully the gifts God has given people in the pews.”*

Begin to explore what those gifts are and how they can be used in the body of Christ to build the kingdom of God, to reach people and help them experience God’s love. Simply get involved and see what God does. Remember, as Graham writes, *“We Christians are not powerless. We have the mighty power of God available through God the Holy Spirit.”*

Pray that God will show you where to “*jump in*” and begin using and discovering your gifts.

Friday, May 4, 2018

Read Luke 3: 21-22 and Luke 4: 1-44.

Up until Jesus was baptized and received the Holy Spirit, He had no ministry. It was after receiving the Holy Spirit that He was able to fight the temptations of the enemy, perform miracles, preach to the masses, and teach people about God’s amazing love. Last Sunday evening, John Hobbs preached, *“If Jesus needed the Holy Spirit in His life to do ministry, to do the work God had for Him to accomplish, then doesn’t it make sense that you and I would need the Holy Spirit in our lives?”* Billy Graham

explains, *“Why do we need the fullness of the Holy Spirit? Because only in the power of the Spirit can we live a life that glorifies God.”*

When we accepted Jesus into our lives, the Holy Spirit came to live within us. Throughout our lives, the Holy Spirit will continue to take more control of our actions and our speech if we allow it. The Holy Spirit will give us boldness, courage, faith, and will work through us to fight the enemy and bring life to the lost, to be witnesses for Jesus Christ. Remember, *“It is never a question of how much you and I have of the Spirit, but how much He has of us.”* We must allow the Spirit to work in our lives, opening ourselves up more and more to the power of the Holy Spirit.

We must stop trying to do things on our own and surrender more and more to the Spirit's guidance and power. Glenn Clark, in his book, *The Soul's Sincere Desire*, writes, *“Not my will, but thine, be done.’ ‘Thy will’ – whether the seeker knows it or not – is always the spiritual will, just as ‘my will’ is always the material will. Thus this simple statement, when uttered from the heart and not from the lips only, is a veritable Aladdin's lamp for converting a petition for material things into a petition for spiritual things. In other words, it grants to God the privilege of substituting His will for ours...”*

Pray that God will help you open your life and will more to the Holy Spirit and God's Will for your life. Pray that God will help you be obedient to the Holy Spirit's promptings in your life. Pray that the Holy Spirit will

overflow in your life and lead you in where you should go and what you should do. Open your heart to all God has for you.

Saturday, May 5, 2018

Billy Graham writes, *“The Holy Spirit uses the Bible as the vehicle for speaking to our hearts...The reading of scripture itself enables the Holy Spirit to enlighten us and to do His work in us.”* George Muller said, *“The vigor of our Spiritual Life will be in exact proportion to the place held by the Bible in our life and thoughts.”*

What place does God’s Word, the Bible, hold in your life and thoughts each day, each week? Are you allowing the Holy Spirit to speak to you through God’s Word?

Read through and reflect on some of the following scriptures concerning the Holy Spirit. Ask God for understanding and direction.

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| *John 14:26 | *Romans 8:26 |
| *Galatians 5:22-23 | *Acts 2:38 |
| *I Corinthians 6:19 | *Isaiah 11:2 |
| *John 14:15-17 | *Luke 11:13 |
| *Ephesians 1:13 | *Romans 15:13 |

Don't forget to invite someone to church, to pick them up and bring them, so they may hear the Word of God, be part of a family of faith, and come to know Jesus!