

Devotions for the Week of May 20, 2018

LARGE-PRINT

North East United Methodist Church

By Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

Sunday, May 20, 2018

Read Acts 1: 1-11 & Acts 2.

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He promised His disciples that they would receive power from on high. He told them to go to Jerusalem and wait until the Holy Spirit came upon them. Just as Jesus had promised, at Pentecost, the disciples were gathered together for the annual festival and suddenly there was a sound like a “*mighty wind*” and “*tongues of fire*” rested on each of them. Suddenly, the Holy Spirit was made available to all who believed in Jesus.

What do we know about the Holy Spirit? Here are just a few things the Bible tells us:

- We cannot be Christians without His Spirit – Romans 8:9
- We cannot be joined to Christ without the Spirit –
I Corinthians 6:11
- We cannot be adopted as God’s children without the Spirit –
Romans 8: 14-17; Galatians 4:6-7
- The Holy Spirit makes us more like Christ – Galatians 3:3;
Philippians 1:6
- The Holy Spirit unites Christian communities –
Ephesians 2: 19-22
- The Holy Spirit works through us/gives us spiritual gifts –
I Corinthians 12: 1-11

- The Holy Spirit gives us strength for extraordinary tasks –
Judges 3:10
- The Holy Spirit helps us understand the Bible – Luke 24:45
- The Holy Spirit guides us away from wrong places –
Acts 16: 7-9
- The Holy Spirit gives us power – Romans 8:2
- The Holy Spirit helps us to know God’s thoughts –
I Corinthians 2: 15-16
- The Holy Spirit helps us worship – John 4: 20-24
- The Holy Spirit helps us pray – Romans 8: 26-27
- The Holy Spirit produces fruit in us – Galatians 5: 22-23
- The Holy Spirit helps us discern false teaching –
I John 2: 26-27

The Holy Spirit is a tremendous gift. Jesus could only be one place at a time in His physical form, but after His ascension, through the Holy Spirit, is able to reach out to the entire world and touch them with His love, guidance, and strength. As of Pentecost, every believer is able to “*plug into*” God’s Holy Spirit. God said, in Ezekiel 11:19, “*And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh...*”

We all need a spiritual rebirth. The New Birth is not an improvement on our old nature; it is the imparting of an entirely new nature. By the creative act of the Holy Spirit at salvation, the believer becomes a new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). When we trust Christ as our personal Savior, the Holy Spirit enters our lives and causes us to be born again with spiritual life. Jesus said, in John 14:20, “*In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.*”

If you have accepted Christ, you have received the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit lives within you. You have been given a new nature. There are still old habits to break and at times because of those habits and our involvement in the world, we do not hear the Holy Spirit within us...we do not hear God's "*still small voice*" guiding us...but nonetheless it is there...ready to give us strength, power, produce fruit, help us discern, help us pray, and to work through us and the spiritual gifts we have been given.

Pentecost was not only the beginning of the church, but the beginning of each of us having the power within us to serve Christ, to be reborn, to impact the world. Take time tonight to ask God to help you realize the gift you have been given in the Holy Spirit. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in your relationship with Christ and empower you to reach out in service to others.

Monday, May 21, 2018

Read Acts 2.

The disciples did as Jesus asked and went to Jerusalem and waited. They waited. They waited. Ten days after His ascension...50 days after the Passover meal, the last supper Jesus ate with His disciples...there was a sound like a "*mighty wind*" and "*tongues of fire*" fell upon the heads of the believers.

What do we notice about this description of Pentecost?

First, they waited. How often and how good are we at waiting? If you are like me, you want it NOW...not

tomorrow, not next week...but NOW. We are an impatient people. Many of us want the power of God in our lives... we want to experience the Holy Spirit...we want to feel a deep connection with God...we want to “*plug into Jesus;*” yet, we don’t want to wait. We want it fast just like our food, our shopping, our money. Yet, the Bible is clear that the disciples waited. And while they waited they believed, they prayed, they anticipated, they trusted that Jesus would come through. God rewarded their patience, their faithfulness. Wait on Jesus. Pray. Listen.

Secondly, why did the Holy Spirit appear in the shape of “*tongues.*” “*Tongues*” represent speech and it was after the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples and Peter that the Word was spoken to an international audience in Jerusalem at the time of the annual festival. “*Tongues*” called to speak the “*Good News*” of Jesus Christ to all people; this is exactly what Peter did on the day of Pentecost and 3000 were “*saved.*” Are you speaking for Christ? Sharing the message of the Gospel?

Lastly, why did the Holy Spirit appear in the form of fire. Fire has a purifying presence; it burns away the undesirable elements of our lives. There is so much within us...bad habits, unbelief, addictions, anger, bitterness, selfishness that needs to be “*burned away*” that we might be free to serve others, to build the kingdom, to impact the world for Christ. Not only does “*fire*” burn away what is undesirable, but it is symbolic of the fire that needs to be ignited in the hearts and lives of believers. As Christians we must be “*on fire,*” not

lukewarm in our faith. We must share whose we are with the world...share it with joy and excitement for it is joyful and exciting. We have an awesome God that gave up His very own Son for us...WOW! Are you allowing God to burn away those things within you that are holding you back from being the man or woman God has created you to be? Do you have a heart “*on fire*” for Him...”*on fire*” to impact and change the world for Christ?

Take time tonight to think about these questions and to talk to God.

Tuesday, May 22, 2018

Read Acts 2 AGAIN.

Again, the disciples gathered in Jerusalem and waited for the power from on high that Christ had promised would come. The Holy Spirit descended upon the group and Peter, the same Peter who denied Christ three times just a month before, stood up in front of a crowd of people, many who had the power to arrest him, and preached that they had “*crucified*” the Son of God. What brought about this change in Peter; it was the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit gives to all of us power to do the work of God...to speak up...to impact the world; yet, so many of us continue to walk through this life “*UNPLUGGED.*” We walk through this life as if we have a “*Power Outage.*”

I often share the story of a little old lady in Ireland who was the first to get electricity in her home. She was very frugal and people were surprised she would take on

such an expense as electricity. One day the meter reader came to the door and asked her if her electricity was working alright. He said that the meter showed very little usage. She replied, *"It works fine. Every night I turn on my lights...light my candles...and turn the lights off."*

Max Lucado writes that this is the problem many of us have...We are connected to the power but we don't use it...We have electricity in our homes...the Holy Spirit has come to live within us when we accepted Christ...yet, we are not *"plugged in."*

Another story illustrates this point well. A lady went to a jeweler to have her watch fixed. He disappeared to the back and soon returned with it running perfectly. Surprised, she asked how he could fix it so soon. He told her it only needed a new battery. *"Battery? Battery? Nobody said anything about a battery. I've been winding it every morning!"*

Unfortunately, a lot of Christians do not realize the inner power of the Holy Spirit to handle things they think they must take into their own hands.

What in your life are you trying to handle on your own? Ask God to send His Spirit to help you, to give you guidance and strength in the situation. Take time to talk to Him about it tonight.

Wednesday, May 23, 2018

Read Luke 11:9-13.

Do you desire God's Spirit? Have you asked for the power from heaven that only God can give? Have you

received God's energy to go with you through the daily tasks and ministries He is calling you to? Here is what you do. Ask.

What will the Holy Spirit do for us? God is offering us, through His Spirit, some awesome gifts.

First, the Holy Spirit strengthens us to do God's Work in the world.

Look at Peter after Pentecost...after Peter and the disciples went to Jerusalem like Jesus had asked him to...and waited...praying together...In Jerusalem, as Jesus promised, Peter and the disciples received "*power from on high*;" they received the Holy Spirit and were empowered to go out and touch the world with the message Jesus had given them...Peter got up in front of the very people he had run away from just weeks earlier when Christ was arrested and crucified and spoke boldly, telling them that Jesus, whom they crucified, was the Messiah.

The Holy Spirit strengthens us to do God's Work, to speak out, to serve in the world. Lucado, in *Come Thirsty*, writes, "*What the hand is to the glove, the Spirit is to the Christian. 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him' (Rev. 3:20). God gets into us. At times, imperceptibly. Other times, disruptively. God gets his fingers into our lives, inch by inch reclaiming the territory that is rightfully his. Your tongue. He claims it for his message. Your feet. He requisitions them for his purpose. Your mind? He made it and intends to use it for his glory.*

Your eyes, face, and hands? Through them he will weep, smile and touch.”

We are all called to do God’s work. Everyone is called to minister to one another and to the world. Many do not...not because they don’t want to necessarily, but because they are afraid, unskilled, feel they have more to learn before they can talk about God to others.

We must accept power from on high...it is not by our power but God’s strength...His Holy Spirit...that will allow us to reach out, to share our stories of God, to walk unafraid, to serve God’s church and His community... Today is the day...We must allow God’s Spirit to fill us and work through us to touch a thirsty world.

Thursday, May 24, 2018

Read Acts 16:6-8.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit guides and protects us.

In Acts 16: 6-8...Paul and Silas, apostles, were traveling through the area of Phrygia and Galatia because they Holy Spirit had told them not to go into the province of Asia at this time.

The Holy Spirit...God’s energy...guides us...The Spirit will not only guide us to the right places, but will also guide us away from the wrong places. The Spirit speaks to us and nudges us, telling us areas and places we should not go...as well as what we should be doing... we only need to listen.

Not only does the Holy Spirit guides us, but protects us...The apostle Paul described a battle going on...He

writes, in Ephesians 6:12, *“For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against the wicked spirits in the heavenly realms.”*

As Lucado states, *“God never promises an absence of distress. But he does promise the assuring presence of his Holy Spirit...When you accepted Christ, God sealed you with the Spirit. ‘Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.’ When hell’s interlopers come seeking to snatch you from God, the seal turns them away. He bought you, owns you, and protects you. God paid too high a price to leave you unguarded. As Paul writes later, ‘Remember, he is the one who has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.’”*

Friday, May 25, 2018

**Read 2 Corinthians 5:17, Acts 10; 2 Kings 22;
Acts 7.**

Lastly, the Holy Spirit changes us into the likeness of Christ.

The Holy Spirit convicts us of areas in our lives that we need to change, areas we need to work on, areas we need to bring out into the open so we may become more like His Son, Jesus Christ. As Lucado writes, in his book, Just Like Jesus, *“Jesus loves you just the way you are but He refuses to leave you that way...He wants you to be just like Jesus.”*

Paul tells us in **2 Corinthians 5:17**, *“What this means is that those who become Christians become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun!”*

He will begin to show you “secret sins” you need to deal with...the Spirit’s energy will begin to coarsen through you and show you areas you need to deal with, hurts you need to forgive, people you need to reach out to, behaviors you need to stop, things you like to do that you need to let go of...Not only that, the Holy Spirit will begin to give you a love and compassion like Jesus...you will begin to see people as God sees them...His children... you will begin to hurt for them...experience true joy for them...like Jesus your focus will shift from self to others.

Cornelius prayed. Josiah & Stephen read the Word of God. All three of these men were “*plugged in.*” It is so important to get “*plugged in*” to Bible study and prayer, allowing the Holy Spirit to work in your life. I thought the following story explains this well.

The story is told of an old man who lived on a farm in the mountains of eastern Kentucky with his young grandson. Each morning, Grandpa was up early sitting at the kitchen table reading from his old worn-out Bible. His grandson who wanted to be just like him tried to imitate him in any way he could.

One day the grandson asked, *“Papa, I try to read the Bible just like you but I don't understand it, and what I do understand I forget as soon as I close the book. What good does reading the Bible do?”*

The Grandfather quietly turned from putting coal in the stove and said, "*Take this coal basket down to the river and bring back a basket of water.*"

The boy did as he was told, even though all the water leaked out before he could get back to the house. The grandfather laughed and said, "*You will have to move a little faster next time,*" and sent him back to the river with the basket to try again. This time the boy ran faster, but again the basket was empty before he returned home. Out of breath, he told his grandfather that it was impossible to carry water in a basket, and he went to get a bucket instead. The old man said, "*I don't want a bucket of water; I want a basket of water. You can do this. You're just not trying hard enough,*" and he went out the door to watch the boy try again.

At this point, the boy knew it was impossible, but he wanted to show his grandfather that even if he ran as fast as he could, the water would leak out before he got far at all. The boy scooped the water and ran hard, but when he reached his grandfather the basket was again empty. Out of breath, he said, "*See PopPop...It's useless.*"

"*So you think it is useless?*" The old man said, "*Look at the basket.*" The boy looked at the basket and for the first time he realized that the basket looked different. Instead of a dirty old coal basket, it was clean.

"*Son, that's what happens when you read the Bible. You might not understand or remember everything, but when you read it, it will change you from the inside out.*"

That is the work of God in our lives. To change us from the inside out and to slowly transform us into the image of His son. Take time to read each day.

Are you allowing God's Word and Prayer to change you like it did Cornelius, Josiah and a nation, and Stephen? Are you allowing Bible reading and prayer to slowly transform you into the image of Jesus Christ?

Saturday, May 26, 2018

Read I Corinthians 12.

The Holy Spirit gives each of us gifts to be used to build others up. How are you using your gifts? How are you "*plugged in*" to ministry at North East United Methodist Church? How are you involved...growing... using your gifts to help others...growing closer to God through Bible study and small groups...reaching out to others in the church through mission, our Charge ministries and worship?

Pray about how God might use you in your church and in the community. Take that step of faith and trust in the Holy Spirit to give you the strength and everything you need to make an impact, to do the job.

The Prayer of the Thirsty by Max Lucado

Lord, I come thirsty. I come to drink, to receive. I receive your work on the cross and in your resurrection. My sins are pardoned and my death is defeated. I receive your energy. Empowered by your Holy Spirit, I can do all things through Christ, who gives me strength.

**Don't forget to Invite Someone
To Church Tomorrow!!!**