

Devotions for the Week of June 9, 2019

LARGE-PRINT

Pentecost Sunday

North East United Methodist Church

By Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian

Sunday, June 9, 2019

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.

Are you continuing to trust and believe Jesus...continuing to go to Him for answers, for guidance...continuing to read His word and adhere to His teachings? Are you allowing the Holy Spirit to pour out of you and touch others around you? Are you allowing the Holy Spirit to make you a witness, like the early

disciples at Pentecost, to others about Jesus Christ? Pray that God will continue to move in your life to overflowing.

Monday, June 10, 2019

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, if after much prayer we speak out and let people know about Christ, 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 your family members, neighbors, and co-workers with the words you share about Christ? Are you trying to speak softly in order to make people comfortable or are you willing to step out on a limb when God convicts you to speak the truth boldly? Pray that God will continue to use His Holy Spirit to speak boldly through you.

Tuesday, June 11, 2019

Read Acts 2: 42-47.

The Holy Spirit not only created boldness in the disciples and their preaching to the crowds, but 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) the prayers.

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.”

Allow the Holy Spirit to work in you and through you to touch the lives of others, to build community, to build family in the church and to help those with less.

Wednesday, June 12, 2019

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 now God and His Holy Spirit has changed all that. The Holy Spirit has convicted 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, June 13, 2019

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

Friday, June 14, 2019

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. The disciples experienced this same power, going forth in ministry, once they received the Holy Spirit, once they recognized the gift God was giving them.

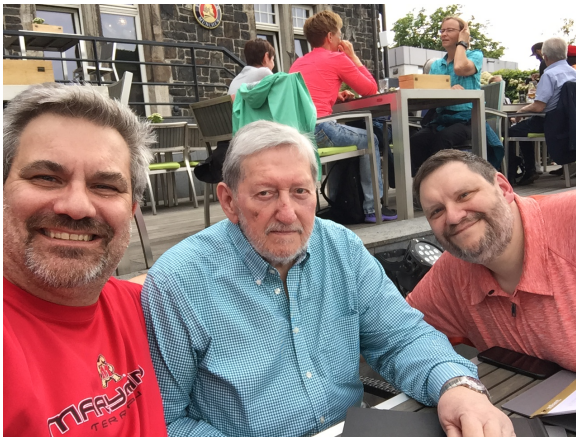
When we accepted Jesus into our lives, the Holy Spirit came to live within us. Throughout our lives, the Holy Spirit will continue to take more control of our actions and our speech if we allow it. The Holy Spirit will give us boldness, courage, faith, and will work through us to fight the enemy and bring life to the lost, to be witnesses for Jesus Christ. 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.

Pray that God will help you open your life and will up more to the Holy Spirit. 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, June 15, 2019

**Read Genesis 1:28; 2:24; 6:18; 12:4-5; 17:12-13;
Exodus 20; Acts 16:11-15, 31-33; Matthew 19;
and Ephesians 6:1-4.**

I thought that over the next month or so, for each Saturday devotion, I would share some of the things I learned and God laid on my heart as I traveled with my brother to Eastern Europe. We traveled to Vienna, Austria; Cluj and Bran, Romania; Budapest, Hungary; and Prague, Czech Republic, but first we stopped in Otterberg, Germany to see my Uncle Larry.



My Uncle Larry and my dad were best friends growing up in Baltimore, in Sparrows Point. It was great seeing my uncle; we talked about my dad and mom and how much we missed them. Not only did I get to see my uncle, but I got to know my cousin, Dani, and her daughter. Most importantly, I got to spend two weeks with my little brother whom I only get to see once a year as he lives in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

I was reminded on this trip as I spent time with my brother and uncle, as I missed my wife and boys, missed my friends and church family...I was reminded of the importance of family.

The concept of family is extremely important in the Bible. The concept of family was introduced in the beginning, "*Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.*" God's plan was for a man and woman to marry, to become "*one flesh,*" to have children and to create a family, the essential building block of society.

When God saved Noah from the flood, God saved his entire family. When God called Abraham to leave his country, God called both him and his family. Two of the ten commandments, the fifth and seventh, preserve the authority of parents and the sanctity of marriage. Jesus speaks about the sanctity of marriage, caring for and teaching one's children, and entire families were baptized together in the days of the early church. Furthermore, God is the model of family...Father, Son, Holy Spirit...three-in-one...a divine dance filled with love, support, encouragement, and unity.

I am blessed to have been able to visit with my Uncle Larry. I am blessed to have been able to spend time with my brother, to reminisce about growing up, mom and dad, to talk to him about Jesus.

Take time this week with family. Who haven't you talked to in awhile? Make that call. Write that letter. When was the last time you went on a date with your spouse? Told your children you love them? Do it today! Who might you reach out to in your church family? Who can you pray for? Help? Love on?

This week, ask God to help you make family a priority!



Pentecost by Titian, c. 1545

***DON'T FORGET TO INVITE SOMEONE TO
CHURCH TOMORROW!***