

A Fresh & Abundant Supply
Message for June 9, 2019
North East United Methodist Church
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“So when the day of Pentecost came round, they were all together in one place; and all of a sudden there came from heaven a sound like that of a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And tongues, like tongues of fire, appeared to them, which distributed themselves among them and settled on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit...”

There were three great Jewish festivals to which every male Jew living within twenty miles of Jerusalem was legally bound to come - The Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

The Passover was a commemoration of God freeing the Israelites from slavery in ancient Egypt through Moses. It was also a spring festival connected to the “first-fruits of the barley” being given to God in the Temple.

Pentecost was a time to remember the giving of the law, the Ten Commandments, to Moses on Mt. Sinai. It also had an agricultural significance as two loaves of bread were offered in gratitude to God for the safe gathering of the harvest.

But it is the third festival, the Festival of Tabernacles that I want us to focus on today.

The Festival of Tabernacles occurred in October and during this time people left their homes and set up small booths throughout Jerusalem...on the flat roofs of houses, in the streets, in the city squares, in the gardens. These were not permanent structures but were made of branches and fronds. This was to remind the people that once they had been homeless wanderers in the desert without a roof over their heads. It also had an agricultural significance celebrating the gathering of the harvest, for the barley, wheat, and grapes which were life. Historian Josephus called it “*the holiest and the greatest festival of the Jews*” and all people...rich, servant, stranger, widow, and poor shared in the celebration.

One special ceremony that took place each day during the Festival of Tabernacles was when a priest took a golden pitcher which held about two pints and filled it with water from the Pool of Siloam. It was carried through the Water Gate while people recited Isaiah 12:3, “*With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.*” The water was carried up to the Temple altar and poured out as an offering to God. At this time, Psalms 113-118 were sung. Thanksgiving was given to God for the gift of water. People prayed for rain for the following year’s crop and remembered the water that sprang from the rock in the desert as they traveled through the wilderness.

It was during the Festival of Tabernacles, perhaps during this very moment people praised God for the gift of water, that Jesus spoke...

John 7:37-39 - *On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.*

Jim Cymbala, pastor of the Brooklyn Tabernacle, in his book, Fresh Power, writes,

Humanity faces two great spiritual dilemmas. The first is what to do about our past sins and transgressions, which separate us from God and produce a guilty conscience. This sense of condemnation makes us shrink from any communion with God – the very thing for which we were created. But Jesus came and gave his life so we could be freed from all that. The ugly record can be erased and our names written in the Book of Life through the blood that Jesus shed on the cross of Calvary.

But then comes the second problem we all face: How can we be changed so that we don't go on repeating the same old sins in the future? How will we rise above the moral pollution of compulsive sin that caused us to need Jesus in the first place? Unless Someone can get inside us and overhaul the very fabric of our being, we will continue to live sinful lives that grieve God.

Cymbala goes on to explain that God provide a salvation that goes beyond forgiving our past transgressions. God provided victory over inward sinful desires, provided the possibility of transformation and new life, through the person of the Holy Spirit.

In John 7, we are told that "*Up to that time [the time Jesus spoke at the Festival of Tabernacles] the Spirit has not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.*"

As William Barclay, in his commentary on the Gospel of John, writes,

A great power can exist for years and even centuries without anyone being able to tap it. To take a very relevant example - there has always been atomic power in this world; it is not a human invention. But only in our own time have we tapped and used it. The Holy Spirit has always existed; but people never really enjoyed his full power until after Pentecost. As it has been finely said, 'There could be no Pentecost without Calvary.' It was only when men and women had known Jesus that they really knew the Spirit. Before that, the Spirit had been a power; but now he is a person, for he has become to us nothing other than the presence of the risen Christ always with us.

This is what Jesus promised His disciples. The disciples realize that they are going to lose Jesus, that He will not walk with them forever, their time together will soon come to an end. In John 14:25 we hear Jesus comfort His disciples. Jesus says, ***“All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”***

Jesus tells the disciples that the Holy Spirit will remind them of all Jesus has said and will keep believers right in matters of conduct. When we will be tempted to do something that is contrary to the ways of God, often a saying of Jesus, a verse of scripture, a picture of Christ on the cross, words of someone we love and admire, teaching we received when we were very young will flash in our minds; that is the work of the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus ascended into heaven, His disciples staring into the light as He rose, Jesus spoke, Acts 1:8-9, ***“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’ After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him.”***

The gift Jesus promised came at Pentecost as *“there came from heaven a sound like that of a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting...”*

Remember what Jim Cymbala wrote, *“Unless Someone can get inside us and overhaul the very fabric of our being, we will continue to live sinful lives that grieve God.”* On the day of Pentecost something, someone, got inside of Peter, inside the apostles, and *“overhauled the very fabric of their being.”* Not only were their sins forgiven but they were recreated. They were empowered to preach, to love, to serve, and thousands were saved...the world would never be the same.

What is holding us back from receiving and being empowered by the Holy Spirit?
What is holding us back from experiencing the Holy Spirit at work in our lives?

One thing that is holding us back...Cymbala writes, *“some of us apparently are of the opinion that we are basically doing okay in our spiritual life and church life. We don’t sense any urgent need for a deeper work of the Holy Spirit. The truth is, we are not really thirsty for the water of the Spirit. There is no sense of discontent, of wanting, of need.”*

I want to share a prayer from my journal that I wrote in March 2017...a prayer I lifted up to God after hearing I was to be appointed and would be moving to North East United Methodist Church.

Dear Lord, Heavenly Father,

I read through several of the entries in this journal before beginning to write this morning. I know why I've had trouble praying. I know my prayers will simply be repeats, the words the same as before. Perhaps I am afraid you will tire of hearing the same things from me. Deb certainly gets tired of my complaining.

And what will I pray today...the same words as years ago...I surrender, I want to 'let go'...I'm still struggling with the same things, the same fears, the same worries...

Now I am moving from Janes UMC to North East. I have the same fears, same prayers, don't want to make the same mistakes...I'm tired. Even as I say that I am ashamed. You allowed your Son...your Son to be crucified...I simply have to move, put up with a few critics...yet, here I am again complaining, fearful, still yearning after countless years to truly be able to 'let go' and surrender my life, my present and future to you...my fears, my ministry, my finances, my family, my SELF.

I once more pray that I want to 'let go' and once more I still don't know how.

On top of everything I am dealing with a wealth of emotions...anger and bitterness against those who have sought to hurt me, fear over the months ahead and moving to a new church, excitement over a new start, and sadness in leaving people and a church I do love. How do I let it all go...how to surrender everything to you? Why is it so difficult?

And yet if you were speaking to me, I think you would say it is not difficult; in fact, it is easy. So why can I not do it? Again, I know even that is the wrong question. Why can I not do it? I can't. You can.

Even though I know this, here I am again...praying, asking, yearning to truly 'let go'...to give you ALL of my life, my fears, my ministry...trusting you to handle today's problems and tomorrow's...I must surrender. I am tired. I cannot keep carrying these burdens, these fears, worries, the success or failure of the ministry, the criticism of others. I can't, Lord! How do I let it all go? How do I truly surrender my life to you?

I want to face the future unafraid, confident, with great faith. Please help me, Lord. Please fill me with your Holy Spirit...Take my life and let it be fully consecrated to thee...I know without you I am weak...Please help me, Lord!

Do you sense my discontent, my wanting, my need? Do you hear in my prayer my thirst for the "water of the spirit"?

And I have prayed that same prayer many, many, many times since March 6, 2017 for I am a "leaky vessel."

The famous evangelist D.L. Moody once preached in New York and said, "God has got a good many children who have just barely got life (they have accepted Christ), but have no power for service...A great many think because they have been filled once, they are going to be full for all time after, but O, my friends, we are leaky vessels, and have to be kept right under the fountain all the time in order to keep full...Let us keep near Him."

Jesus said, *“Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.”* Jesus is offering us *“living water”* ...for this life...right now...today...and this *“living water”* is free...Jesus says, Revelation 21:6, *“To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life”* and Revelation 22:17, *“Let anyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who desires drink freely from the water of life.”*

But we must remember that we are *“leaky vessels.”* We must stay close to Jesus. We must fight to give up control. If, like me, we feel we need to pray that same prayer over and over everyday, crying out for the thousandth time, *“Lord, I surrender...I let go... please help me trust you with all things...fill me with your Holy Spirit this day,”* then that is what we must do...

As Billy Graham teaches in his book, The Holy Spirit, *“All believers are baptized with the Holy Spirit. This does not mean, however, that they are filled or controlled by the Spirit...It is never a question of how much you and I have of the Spirit, but how much He has of us.”*

You and I are on the other side of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit is here.

I don't know about you but there is a deep longing in my soul for more of the Lord. Only Jesus can satisfy my thirst. Only the Holy Spirit can make me the husband, father, pastor, and man of God I need to be. Only Jesus can convict the lost people of this world, bringing them to their knees for salvation. Only Jesus can heal the brokenness of this evil world. Only the Holy Spirit can fill the deep longings in your soul, bring you peace, and empower you for service, to make a difference in this church and the world.

On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.”

Come to the altar...Be filled.