**Sunday 31st May 2020**

**Glynde Lutheran Church**

**Sermon on Acts 2:1 – 21**

**Theme: “Everything you always wanted to know about the Holy Spirit”**

**“Go on being thirsty for the Holy Spirit”**

***Introduction:***

There’s was a book written when I was growing up entitled ‘*Everything you always wanted to know about sex’.* In this book, all sorts of questions about sex and sexuality are asked and then answered…. Woody Allen made a famous film of the same name back in the early 1970’s, in which he answered with comedy sketches a lot of the same questions that were asked seriously in the book.

Don’t get too excited, though, I’m not going to talk this morning on *this* topic, though it would be a good one to speak on this sometime from a Christian point of view…. No, I’m mentioning all this because this morning’s theme is something similar: *Everything you always wanted to know about the Holy Spirit.*

Not as exciting maybe, but probably a more important topic to talk about, *especially today , the day on which we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit to Jesus’ first followers on that Pentecost Day.* In fact, maybe I could go further and say: *“Yes, sure, our sexuality is a great gift from God, but the gift of the Holy Spirit to us as we cling to Jesus as our Saviour, is a much more valuable and more important gift to us”.*

This morning, then, let’s talk about the gift of the Holy Spirit to us, and let’s see for ourselves what a wonderful gift to us the Spirit of God is. We’ll do this by asking a series of questions about the Holy Spirit, and hopefully giving you *everything you always wanted to know about the Holy Spirit (cf. Addendum 1 re Dorothy Sayer’s story re “Honourable Bird”).*

***Questions and Answers:***

1. **Who or what is “the Holy Spirit”?**

In a nutshell, the Holy Spirit is “the Spirit of God”, or as the Holy Spirit is sometimes called in the New Testament, “the Spirit of our Father” *(e.g., Matt. 3:16; 10:20).* It is the same Spirit that was in Jesus, and for this reason among others the Holy Spirit is also sometimes called “the Spirit of Christ” or “the Spirit of God’s Son” *(Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6).* But essentially, the Holy Spirit is God’s Spirit.

Is the Holy Spirit God’s force, then, much like *The Force* in the “Star Wars” movies? This is how quite a lot of people see the Holy Spirit. Those who are connected with the various cults like the Jehovah’s witness, the Christadelphians and the Mormons, for example, talk about the Holy Spirit as being the force of God. They talk about the Holy Spirit as being an “it”, “a thing” which comes from God.

But this isn’t how Jesus, and the New Testament writers in echo of Jesus, talk about the Holy Spirit. Jesus, himself, spoke the Holy Spirit as a “him” rather than an “it”, as a person rather than a thing *(John 14:26; 15:26; 16:8,13),* and he spoke of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit being a unity of persons *(Matt. 28:19).* And following Jesus, that’s how the disciples of Jesus and the writers of the New Testament speak of the Holy Spirit *(Acts 5:3-4; 13:2; Eph. 4:30; 2 Cor. 13:13).*

When we speak of “the Holy Spirit” being in us, then, we don’t mean that the force of God is in us. No, rather we are talking about *God Himself living in us!!*

1. **Where is “the Holy Spirit”?**

Which leads us to our next question, “Where is the Holy Spirit? Well, the Holy Spirit *like the wind* blows wherever He wants to go *(John 3:8).* But what we can say we sure is that the Holy Spirit lives in those who cling to Jesus as their Saviour. The Holy Spirit lives in us who trust in Jesus as our Saviour and follow him as our Lord.

God lives in us who are His children through our union with Jesus and what He did for us on the cross. Listen to a few things that Paul for example says:

* **“When the right time finally came, God sent his own Son. He came as the son of a human mother and lived under the Jewish Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might become God’s sons. To show that you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who cries out, ‘Father, my Father”** *(Gal. 4)*
* **“Don’t you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you, and who was given to you by God”** *(1 Cor. 6:19).*
* “**No one can confess that Jesus is Lord, unless he is guided by the Holy Spirit**” *(1 Cor. 12:3).*

1. **When & how does the Holy Spirit come into us?**

The Holy Spirit comes to live in us when we are baptised. Baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit are tightly linked. When a person is baptised, they receive the Holy Spirit. Peter made this clear on Pentecost Day, when he finished off His message about Jesus to the people gathered there by saying:

**Each one of you must turn away from his sins and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven; and you will receive God’s gift, the Holy Spirit** *(Acts 2:38; cf. John 3:5; 1 Cor. 12:13).*

The only followers of Jesus for whom this hasn’t been true were the initial followers of Jesus, his disciples and the first believers, *some one hundred and twenty of them (Acts 1:15).* They received the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Day apart from baptism, *but all those who came after them received the Holy Spirit when they came to faith and were baptised (e.g., Acts 2:41).* When they were washed and immersed with water externally, this was a sign of what God was doing internally in them: washing and immersing them with His Holy Spirit *(Stott, Baptism and Fullness, p.43).*

By the way, of course, you can’t talk about this without thinking about infant baptism. But that’s another subject. Suffice it to say that the Christian Church, right from its beginnings, has baptised the babies and the children of believers, and that God in His Message to ustells us that the Holy Spirit lives in each of His children *(for a summary of the evidence for infant baptism, see Michael Green, Baptism, p. 64-77).*

The Holy Spirit comes to live in us when we are baptised, *and he goes on filling us as we listen to Jesus and as we allow Jesus to feed us (cf. Eph. 5:18).* Jesus says to us, as he said to the crowd who had gathered for the Jewish Festival of Shelters, which John tells us about in our Gospel reading for today:

**“Whoever is thirsty should come to me and drink”*.***

What is the water that Jesus will give, and which will flow out of the hearts of those who believe? It is the Holy Spirit, as John explains:

**“Jesus said this about the Holy Spirit, which those who believed in him were going to receive** *(John 7:37-39).*

If we want to be filled with the Holy Spirit, we need to come to Jesus to quench our thirst *(cf. John 1:33; Stott, Baptism & Fullness, p.52f).* We need to listen to him speak to us, *by reading our Bibles regularly, by having personal and family devotions regularly, by coming to worship regularly, by often listening to Christian hymns and songs, by getting together regularly with Christian friends who will encourage us in our faith, and so on.*

And we need to regularly allow ourselves to be fed by Jesus, *by regularly coming to His Table, so that he can regularly give us His body and blood, His very self.* It is as we come to Jesus and as we listen to him and as we are fed by him that we are filled with the Spirit of God *(cf. Augsburg Confession, V; Addendum 2 re Osward Chambers and Luke 11:13; Addendum 3 re audio tapes, CD’s).*

1. **What effect does the Holy Spirit have on our life?**

Now we are getting to the ‘nitty-gritty’ of why the gift of the Holy Spirit is such a wonderful gift. The Holy Spirit acts in us in two basic ways: Firstly, he leads us to grow in our faith in God as our dear Father, and in Jesus as our Saviour. Without the Holy Spirit in us, there would be no growth in our faith. In fact, we would have no faith period without the Holy Spirit *(1 Cor. 12:3; cf. John 14:25-26; 16:7-15;* ***Eph. 1:17****).*

And secondly, the Holy Spirit enables us to grow as God’s children, to become more and more like Jesus. As Paul sums it up in his letter to the Christians in Galatia *(Gal. 5:22f):*

**The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control.**

Who does this describe? As John Stott points out in his little book on the Spirit, this is a self-portrait of Jesus *(Stott, 76).* God’s aim in giving us His Spirit, in coming to live in us, is that we more and more become like Jesus *(cf. Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 5:1-2; see Appendix 4 re Tony Campolo story).*

That’s why the Holy Spirit is such a wonderful gift: not only does he enable us to grow in our faith in Christ, *but also he enables to be more and more like Jesus.* He sets us free from being slaves to our selfish human nature, slaves to living our lives for ourselves *(Gal. 5:16-26).* He enables us to live for others as Jesus did, and as such he gives us a foretaste of what life in heaven will be like *(Eph. 1:14-15; Stott, Ephesians, p. 49).*

There we will be set free totally and utterly from our selfish human nature. We will be filled totally and utterly with God’s Spirit, and we will love as Jesus loved and as he still loves. But in the meantime, the Holy Spirit in us gives us a foretaste of how wonderful heaven will be.

Paul writes about this, when he says:

**You believed in Christ, and God put his stamp of ownership on you by giving you the Holy Spirit he had promised. The Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance** *(no more than that, the Greek word used here in the original means the down payment, the first installment, the pledge on what is to come****),* the guaranteethat we shall receive what God has promised his people.** *(Eph. 1:13-14).*

***Conclusion:***

What a wonderful gift the Holy Spirit is to us!!

The Father and the Son live together in the communion of the Spirit, and that same Spirit of God lives in us. God lives in us, and He empowers and enables us to live as His children.

Hopefully, that’s most of “everything you always wanted to know about the Holy Spirit”. Let’s go on cherishing this wonderful gift that God has given to us. Let’s go on being thirsty for the Holy Spirit, and let’s go on reflecting and echoing Jesus to others to others, so that they in turn may come to know how great it is to be God’s forgiven and Spirit-filled child.

***Addendum:***

The following illustrations can be used with this message:

1. **Dorothy Sayers tells of a Japanese convert struggling to grasp Christian theology. “Honourable Father, very good”, he said to his missionary teacher. “Honourable Son, very good. But Honourable Bird, I do not understand at all”** *(Nelson’s Stories, Illustrations, p. 437).*
2. **For Oswald Chambers, the well known author of *My Utmost for His Highest,* an important Bible text was** **Luke 11:13** **where Jesus says at the end of his parable about fathers and their children: “Bad as you are, you know how to give good things to your children.** **How much more, then, will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him**”.

**At one time he felt dry and empty in his Christian life, and as a preacher. That was until he started focusing on this text and asking God, His Father, to fill him with the Holy Spirit.**

**“From that point on, Oswald Chambers ministered with unusual power. His words and writings touched people around the world, especially when he taught, as he frequently did, from his favourite verse, Luke 11:13.**

**And when Oswald died at any early age in Egypt during World War I, an old Australian soldier whom he had led to Christ had a Bible carved in stone for his grave. Its pages were turned to Luke 11:13”** *(Ibid., p. 440-441).*

1. **Many people ask, “How do I know the Holy Spirit is living in me?” I know in the same way that I know there is music on a cassette tape *or on a CD*, even though I don’t see the music on the tape *or the CD*. I can know that in either of two ways. I can believe the label that says there is music, or I can play the tape and hear it.** **We can know *that* the Holy Spirit dwells in us by believing God, who tells us in his Word** *(e.g. 1 Cor. 12:3)*, **or by seeing his results in our lives when we follow Jesus** *(Green, Illustrations, p. 191).*
2. In his is book, *Let Me Tell You a Story,* Tony Campolo tells the following story:

* **Almost every year, my wife makes sure that we go off to her favourite vacation spot in the whole world -- Ocean City, New Jersey! One of the things I love to do is rent bicycles and ride on the boardwalk at this ocean resort.**

**One day, I rented a bicycle build for two. I sat on the front seat, and my wife sat on the backseat. After a short while, she told me that she didn’t like this tandem bicycle because she couldn’t steer it, and she really couldn't see where she was going. So we traded seats, and from then on she was in control, and *she* determined where we went. She liked it much better *that way.* I don’t think we ever rented a tandem bike again.**

**In many ways, I think our experience on that tandem bike is a parable about life. Each of us wants to be up front determining where we will go. What God wants is for each of us to take the backseat and allow Him to be in control.** **God promises that if we allow ourselves to be controlled by the Holy Spirit** *up front, so to speak, then* **we will be directed in the paths of righteousness**, *along the right paths,* **and headed in the direction that is best** *(Tony Campolo, Let Me Tell You a Story, p. 58).*