

## The Gift of the Spirit

Luke 11:11-13

Ephesians 5:18

Message by Dr R Bruce Montgomery ~Grace Church~ 6/18/17

Last Sunday we celebrated Father's Day, and looked from Scripture at the father heart of God. As a loving father, he delights in giving good gifts to his children. We looked at his greatest gift to mankind last week - the gift of salvation. **John 3:16** *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

Too many people stop there. But that's not the only gift he desires to give his children! He wants to shower us with gifts, with blessings, with evidence of his love for us.

To be honest, I think that too often we settle for praying for relatively trivial things. "Little gifts" from God's storehouse. Not that we shouldn't take everything to the Lord in prayer.

However – the best and greatest thing you can pray for is the Holy Spirit! He is the all-encompassing gift.

**Luke 11:11-13** *Which of you fathers, if your son asks him for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?*

*If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?*

These verses also reveal something about the heart of God the Father. In contrast to some human father figures, he's not sadistic – not going to give a scorpion or snake (both symbols of evil)! (Even the idea is a bit macabre, like an Edgar Allen Poe or Stephen King character).

Neither is he selfish, stingy, begudging.

*"How much MORE will your Father (nb this is addressed to Christians) give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him."*

When we receive him, we become his children. **John 1:12** *Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.<sup>1</sup>*

**The question for each of us: Have you ever prayed and asked Father God for gift of the Holy Spirit?**

**Is it even necessary?** Don't we all receive HS when we're born again? Good question. Short answer is "yes," we receive the Holy Spirit when we are saved – his indwelling presence is the internal evidence of our salvation.

But is that the sum total of it?

Share some of our **personal testimony**. Take you back to 1974 or 1975 in Morgan Hill, California.

A woman named Diane Johnson, who was attending the church I was pastoring, asked Connie, "*have you received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit?*" Her response basically, "*I don't need that.*"

Lord spoke to her heart, "*what's so great about your life that you don't need my Holy Spirit?*"

Simultaneously one of the elders in the church dropped off a series of short paperback books with the suggestion I read them, starting with the first. First glance, I could tell they were "charismatic." Had they been from anyone else, I might have tossed them. But they came from Jack – one of the godliest men I knew. A double Ph.D. in Education and Psychology from the University of Chicago, one of the ones who drafted the first ACT tests. I knew personally of over 100 people he had led to the Lord when they went to him for counseling.

**My education** – BBC, Evangel College, Talbot - three of best in the country. Taught me how to "define" God. Had God pretty well figured out. In analogy of a church building, had constructed a foundation, walls, roof, steeple, and about to put the cross on top.

Had my Greek Bible open and checked out all the references in these little books to verify accuracy. As I read these books I discovered things about God I had missed, and became aware that I had "put God in a box."

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<sup>1</sup> **I John 3:1** *How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!*

One Saturday night in my study, called Connie and told her I was having an encounter with God and didn't know what time I would be home. (Later she told me she thought "*oh great, here's another example of him doing something before me – she was searching herself, and soon would have a similar encounter with the Holy Spirit at Diane's house*").

Now the experience, the evidences will be different for each person. But when I asked to be baptized with the Holy Spirit I felt this wonderful presence, and began singing *The Doxology*. I began singing it in English with a heavy Scottish brogue, and then found myself singing it four more times in four different languages, which I had never learned. And then, for the first time, I found myself praying in the Spirit in an unknown tongue for an extended period of time.

Please understand – speaking, praying, or singing in tongues is only one of many gifts and evidences of the Holy Spirit. **I Corinthians 12** lists a number of spiritual gifts, given by the Spirit *for the common good*. Ends in verse 11 with the phrase "**and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.**" Makes it clear in **verse 30** that all do not speak in tongues.

In my case, I think God in his wisdom knew I needed to have my theological conclusions and misassumptions corrected (I had been taught that the spiritual gifts of tongues and healing, etc. had ceased when the Apostles had died – that they were only confirming evidences for the founding of the church).

Enough about my experiences, what does the Bible have to say about the Holy Spirit? Actually, quite a lot. The Holy Spirit is present throughout the entire Bible. From the first chapter, **Genesis 1:1,2** at creation "**and the Spirit of God was hovering/moving over the face of the earth**" all the way to the last chapter. **Revelation 22:17** "**The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.**"

Between these beginning and ending glimpses of the Holy Spirit and his work, we have a vast amount of Biblical data regarding his ministry. He is mentioned over 90 times in the 39 books of the

Old Testament, and is referred to in the New Testament over 260 times.<sup>2</sup>

Out of those many passages I have chosen two for us to look at this morning.

We read in **John 7:37-39** *On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice,*

*"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.*

<sup>38</sup>*Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.*

**1. Condition and directions for receiving the living water:** Three words summarize Jesus' gospel invitation:

(1) **Thirst. Vs. 37** "*If anyone is thirsty . . .*"

Must recognize your spiritual thirst.

Nothing is more important for physical life than having water to drink – can go much longer without food than you can without water.

We tend to take it for granted, unless we have to do without it. No doubt most of you could give me an example of a time you were extremely thirsty. A few years ago one of my Hispanic brothers from Central America told the story of entering the US, barely making it, and losing his friend coming with him because they had no water.

Is there anyone here who is thirsty? Maybe physical thirst, or a thirst of the mind, or heart-thirst.

No matter if it's one or the other, or all three, the place to start is with Jesus! Vs. 37 "*If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me.*"

(2) **Second key word is "come."** **Come where? "Come to me."** Very clear.

Not "*if you're thirsty you must start on a spiritual quest, looking at all the alternatives, dabbling in various philosophies and religions in order to find what best suits your personality.*"

Not even "*if you're thirsty, you must come to church.*"

Neither is it "*if you're thirsty, you must jump through these hoops, perform these tasks, memorize these Scriptures, know these doctrines.*"

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<sup>2</sup> He is given at least 18 titles in the Old Testament and is referred to by 39 different names and titles in the New Testament.

No. *“If you’re thirsty,”* said Jesus, *“come to me.”* Nothing else, no one else, will ultimately satisfy. He is the only one who can satisfactorily and permanently quench your thirst.

Doesn’t stop there. **Vs. 37 goes on to say, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.”**

**(3) Drink.** Not enough to just approach Jesus. It’s possible to come to Jesus and remain thirsty. Must take the critical third step and drink.

Just like you would from a water fountain. It involves appropriation.

God is looking for thirsty people! People who will say:

"I want it ALL!"

-all the power,

-all the privileges,

-all the responsibilities,

-all the promises that go with being a Spirit-filled Christian!

I frankly don't understand the hesitancy of some to receive water baptism and Spirit baptism. In the New Testament it is an abnormality, mutant even an impossibility for a Christian not to be water baptized and Spirit baptized.

**Too many would be disciples of Jesus are “minimalists.”**

People want to barely squeeze into the Kingdom, "how little do I have to conform" to the Word? How worldly can I remain?

What's the least I can get by on -

**For too long we in the western church have settled for an “abnormal” Christianity.** We have been lulled into thinking that our insipid witness is normal! We are settling for far too little!

- We should be experiencing the same reality of God’s presence,
- The same outpouring of his power, and
- having the same impact on our society, as the early Christians.

Too much of what is labeled “Christianity” today reminds me of TV ad early 80’s – 3 old ladies peering into a bun in a fast food restaurant, asking *WHERE’S THE BEEF?*

Can have lots of buns – onion, plain, sesame, roll. Can have lots of extras: pickles, mustard, ketchup, lettuce, special sauce. But not a good hamburger without the beef!

Likewise church buildings come in all sorts of containers: brick, wood, stucco, wood siding, steel, glass. The people who make up the church come in all sorts of shapes, sizes, colors and ages.

Can have lots of condiments: fine programs, exciting entertainment, gimmicks to fit every taste!

But unless the power of the Holy Spirit is resident and manifest, what you see is a poor substitute for the living church of Jesus Christ and you’ll walk away hungry in your soul! And you won’t make much of a difference in your world.

**2. The quality of the water he offers and results of drinking it.**

DHS regularly wins world-wide contests on best tasting water (have received the most awards in a 20 year period of any city in the world!)

As good as it is, it doesn’t match the quality of what Jesus offers. He offers *“living water.”* Living water does several things. It:

- **Refreshes**
- **Satisfies** E.g. **Jesus at well – John 4:13** *whoever drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst.*
- **Purifies** Every day we accumulate filth, from within and without, and need to have it washed away. We need to be cleansed. By the end of a few days traveling or camping out start feeling really “cruddy.” Nothing so good as to wash away the accumulated grittiness – and its smell! The Holy Spirit is a stream, gushing forth to carry off the impurities before they accumulate.
- **Produces life.** Can’t grow a crop without it. Can try to produce a crop for God, but barren soil yields no fruit. Needs the life-giving flow of the Spirit!  
E.g. Morgan Hill, being filled with the Spirit, number of young people who found the Lord that week!

**3. Quantity & distribution:** <sup>38</sup>*Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.* Jesus doesn’t promise a trickle, or drip, or an occasional bubble, but a mighty rushing river!

"Flow" used of rivers, snow run off. In mountains of Colorado snow melts, runoff joins spring water to flow in creeks, then streams, then rivers, and then into lakes and reservoirs.

**4. Extent of the offer. *Whoever believes.*** A promise made to all believers -not just special few.

**5. Identification of the water. John 7:39 *By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.*** The apostle John explains: *Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.*

During the desert wanderings that the Feast of Tabernacles portrayed, there was an important incident, recorded in **Exodus 17**. The Israelites were camped at Rephidim, where there was no water for the people to drink.

The people were thirsty, and came to Moses and demanded that he give them water to drink. Moses cried out to the Lord, "**Exodus 17:4 *What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me.***" The Lord told him to walk ahead of the people, staff in hand, taking some of the elders of Israel with him. He told him, **Exodus 17:6 *I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.***" He did as God commanded, and water gushed from the rock. This was a picture of Jesus, the Rock of our Salvation!

In John 7 Jesus had not yet been smitten on the cross and resurrected and ascended to heaven. Therefore the Spirit had not yet come to indwell believers.

During Old Testament times the Holy Spirit was only given to a relatively small number of select individuals. But the Old Testament prophesied of the "*last days*," when the Holy Spirit would be poured out on all flesh. We are living in that day, when the Spirit's ministry is being poured out on all continents, all nations, all races.

Second key passage I want us to look at this morning is **Ephesians 5:18 *Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.***

The context is being wise and doing the Lord's will. It is never the Lord's will to get drunk. Rather, God's will is that we be under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Paul especially needed to point that out to the Ephesians, who lived in the heart of Greek culture and wine country. The wine-god

Bacchus dominated and enslaved many people then – both outside and inside the church – just as it does today.

Becoming drunk typically brings a temporary change in personality.

- Some people get belligerent, others weepy.
- Some get silly, boisterous and loud.
- Many experience a temporary ego elevation. The drinker tries to persuade himself and others that he's having a "really good time," but in reality, as Paul points out drunkenness is embarrassing and degrading. It leads to debauchery.

Drunkenness sucks a person right into the flow of the evil days, and makes life a series of wasted opportunities.

Why does Paul mention being filled with the Spirit right after his command to not be drunk with wine? There are some parallels.

Being drunk with wine and filled with the Spirit are analogous in that the issue in both is control. A person under the influence of wine experiences altered behavior. Likewise, the filling of the Holy Spirit results in changes in our behavior – some of which we will be looking at in the next few weeks.

I like the way Stuart Briscoe phrases it: "*When a person is drunk they are captivated and motivated and activated by alcohol. When a person is filled with the Spirit, they are captivated, and motivated and activated by the indwelling Holy Spirit.*"<sup>3</sup>

Some observations grammatically:

1. "***Be filled***" is in the **passive voice**. That means **someone else, not you, is doing the filling!** It's the work of God, not you!
2. It is also in the **imperative mood** – it's not a suggestion, **it's a command!** Just like "***don't get drunk with wine.***" What do you do with God's commands? If you're wise, and want to enjoy a healthy spiritual life, you do them!
3. The third thing we notice is that "***be filled with the Spirit***" is in the **present tense**. The real sense of the Greek is "***be continually filled with the Spirit.***" "***Keep on being filled.***"

The fullness of the Spirit isn't a one-time climatic event, but a **continuous experience**. While receiving Christ happens once, and having Spirit come live in you happens at that time,

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<sup>3</sup> Stuart Briscoe, "*The Lifestyle of a Believer*," "Preaching Today" tape 169.

filling/baptism is an ongoing, repeatable event that can and should happen again and again.

Cf. Bill Bright's terminology: "spiritual breathing."

4. It is in the **plural** form. That means it's **for everyone**. The fullness of the Spirit is the norm for all Christians.

In **Act 19:1-7** we read that when Paul first came to Ephesus he encountered 12 disciples – twelve Christ-followers. They were learners, good people, doing their best.

But they seemed to be missing a key ingredient. No sign of real spiritual life, and so he asks a diagnostic question: **Acts 19:2** "*Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?*" (so NIV – could also be translated *since* or *after you believed*).

It's a question each of us needs to answer: *have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?*

Not – have you followed the Lord in **believer's baptism** since you believed.

Not – are you a **joined a church** since you believed?

Not – do you keep all the **commandments** – do you tithe, keep the Sabbath, have you kept yourself from murder, covetousness, sexual sin?

Not – are you **doing your best** to be a **devoted disciple**?

**But have you received the Holy Spirit?** Let me ask another question:

**Would you like to receive/be filled with the Holy Spirit?**

**Only two things needed:**

- **Desire** (What's so great about your life that you don't need more of the Spirit?)
- **Ask**. Have you ever asked?

**Do your part, Father will do his – back to our starting text: Luke 11:13** *How much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.*

Have you ever asked? I don't assume. (So Bill Bright in Pastors' Conference 1974 – 500 pastors. I peeked when asked "how many of you have never asked to be filled with the Holy Spirit?" Over ½ raised their hands!)

Remind you of sequence: birth precedes baptism. To see Kingdom of God, must be born again. . . it is not by personal works or moral behavior, not religious ritual (not even baptism), not by

seeking some spectacular supernatural manifestation, not by some deep emotional experience. It begins and ends somewhere else. By asking Jesus into your heart and giving him full control. Repent/believe (be baptized). When you do the Spirit comes into your life.

**The Greek word for "spirit" is the same as "wind."** Can't catch the wind! Can't package and put in a box, can't put a collar on it, can't put it in a large mouth bottle and cork it (although did once buy a can of San Francisco fog from a tourist shop). When stop the wind just have air – may be life sustaining air, but still just air!

Our theological systems have too often attempted to contain the Holy Spirit – to describe and define and confine. Treat HS as an idea to be debated, not a person to be received! When do, have closed him in – like air, sustains life, but that is all.

Can't wrap him in a package, can't contain him – but can be filled by him.

You can't capture the wind, but the wind can capture you!

Can empower you!

- Can fill your sails (sailboats)
- Can turn the blades of windmills and wind generators producing energy.

Being filled with the Spirit doesn't mean you have more of God, but that he has more of you. It happens as you continually choose to live under his influence.

**PRAYER:** *Dear Father Thank you that you have forgiven my sins through Jesus' death on the cross for me. I confess that I need You. I acknowledge that I have been trying to run my own life, and as a keeping sinning against you.*

*I now relinquish control to you of my life to you, and I ask in faith that you pour out your spirit in his fullness upon me! Baptize me, fill me with your Holy Spirit.*

*Thank you that you keep all your promises, and by faith I now receive the gift of your Holy Spirit in all his power. In Jesus' Name, Amen.*<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> **Adapted from** *Have You Made the Wonderful Discovery of the Spirit-filled Life* by Bill Bright