

The Spirit

Gifts of Christmas: Part 3 “The Spirit”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – January 10th, 2021

Baptism of the Lord

Readings: Mark 1:4-11

Reflection: Psalm 29

Greeting: Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory of God’s name, worship the Lord in holy array. The voice of the Lord is upon the water. The God of glory thunders, the Lord upon many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful. The voice of God is full of majesty. Let us praise the name of the Lord!

Prayer: Living God, when the Spirit descended on Jesus at his baptism in Jordan’s water, you revealed him as your own beloved Son. You anointed him with the Holy Spirit. Grant that all who are baptized into his name may keep the covenant they have made, and boldly confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior now and for ever. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 29

A Psalm of David. Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name; worship the Lord in holy splendor. The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord, over mighty waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars; the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon. He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox. The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the Lord causes the oaks to whirl, and strips the forest bare; and in his temple all say, “Glory!” The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord sits enthroned as king forever. May the Lord give strength to his people! May the Lord bless his people with peace!

(Psalm 29 NRSV)*

We read the words of Psalm 29 and hear of the voice of the Lord. We hear how God’s voice is over all things. We hear how powerful it is. We hear how it resides over all things. We are called to recognize that glory and strength. How do you recognize God’s glory? How has God’s strength impacted your life? How do you speak of God’s holy splendor? How do you share all that God is with others?

Prayer: Oh Lord, help us to celebrate the birth of our Savior. Let us remember all the good that has come and all that is yet to come. Help us to remember promises made and promises kept. Help us to trust in your steadfast love. Let us acknowledge your role in our lives as we acknowledge the truth you reveal to us. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture reading for today comes from the New Revised Standard Version Bible. Our reading is from Mark chapter 1, verses 4 through 11.

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."
(Mark 1:4-11 NRSV*)

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

As we finish out our series "Gifts of Christmas" we come to the beginning of Christ's earthly ministry with his baptism. And with that we talk about the gift of the Holy Spirit. I'll be honest, I had some different ways I was thinking about this, but events of the week made me really focusing on something that the Spirit gives us and that we can give in the Spirit. There are many ways to talk about the Holy Spirit. We talk about a spirit of power. We talk about a spirit of grace. We talk about a spirit that gives guidance. The other thing that we have is the Spirit of truth. I don't think we can ignore that. This week, I saw something I never would have expected to see. And it was people storming the United States Capitol building, a hallmark of American freedoms, including freedom of religion. And it was stormed by people convinced that a lie was the truth. What we saw this week was the power of a lie. The power of dishonesty. The power of deception. Satan is called the father of lies for a reason. You can see the power that they hold over people. Because sometimes a convenient lie feels better than a difficult truth.

I feel that I need to say that I don't see this in a partisan manner. I don't say this with deference to one candidate over another. I say it because of the fact that the truth helps us to maintain the freedoms that we share. The truth helps us to maintain our ability to worship freely. The truth is what leads us to Christ. The truth is what helps us to keep our faith in

difficult times. So, an assault on the truth is an assault on the Holy Spirit, it's an assault on Christ, it's an assault on God, no matter who it's coming from.

In our reading for today we see the Holy Spirit as a gift being received. We see the Holy Spirit, send like a dove. And we have the voice saying, "You are my son, the beloved with you I am well pleased." Before that we have John talking about how he baptizes with water, the one coming after him will baptize with the Holy Spirit. He is the real deal, I'm just here to point you to him. But in an interesting way, John's truthfulness, his adherence to this idea, helps to make him part of that process and part of the event. John is the one that baptizes Christ and helps sets all of this in motion.

One thing that we can note is that the Spirit is not a gift is meant to be hoarded, or just hidden away. The spirit is a gift that is given to be given. It is a truth that is given that we may have truth and may speak truth. It is a gift that is given so that we may have peace and we may give peace. It is a gift that is given so that we may have hope and we may give hope. But it also means that it's a gift given so that we can defend hope and peace and truth. Because the problem is that if we won't stand up for the truth, we can't stand up for the Spirit. Because we're saying that we would rather have a lie.

This is not the message I planned on giving. But I have to say something. Because I can't ignore something this big. None of us can. If I were to ignore it, I would be saying that it doesn't matter. But it does. An attack on our freedom is an attack on our freedom. We maintain our freedoms through a system that allows us to have a voice, that allows us to have a say, that allows us to have debate, that allows us to speak up about anything. It is not a system without consequences though. Some of those consequences come from elections. Sometimes the people we support win, and sometimes they lose. And we are bound by a system that honors our choices and protects our freedoms. Now, we have a responsibility as followers of Christ to always seek the truth. Because the truth makes us stronger in Christ. The truth binds us to God. The truth is a gift of the Holy Spirit. I never want to deny that gift by thinking that it's better to lie to people than to tell them the truth. Because sometimes people are so desperate to believe a lie that they will take it, without question. And it can do a lot of damage. In our nation's capital, people became violent over a lie about the election. Because of a lie, lives were lost this week. That's a hard thing to take in.

But I'm reminded of the purpose of baptism. We have John baptizing with water for repentance for the forgiveness of sins. He is baptizing with water as a symbolic gesture that you are turning your life around. That you are willing to repent, to turn away from what you did and what you believed in and turn to God and to truth. When we are baptized with the Holy Spirit, it gives us that extra help we need in discerning the truth. The Spirit helps us deal with the truth, and understand it, because it's not always going to be easy and it's not always going to be what we want. It is, however, something we can work with. It is something that is real. When we accept that Spirit truly and fully, we accept that help in overcoming difficulty. We

accept that help and getting hope when we're not sure where to find hope. Finding comfort in the face of adversity. But it also gives us the ability to give that gift that when we share all of those attributes of the spirit with others. We are sharing the spirit with them.

And so, as we think about this final message, as we end our Christmas series, I am reminded that Christ's birth into this world was frightening because it was a truth others didn't want to believe. But just because others didn't want to hear it didn't make it any less true. Just because people in power were desperate to keep power and would do anything to get rid of this newborn child doesn't take away the truth of his birth. And that has we see this child grown up being baptized in the River Jordan. The Holy Spirit descending like a dove. We can recall all the things that would have been hard to overcome. We know that Christ was strengthened by having the truth always with him. And we find that in the gift of the Holy Spirit. Let it be a gift that we receive so that the truth may strengthen us. Let it be a gift that we give that we may strengthen others. May we strengthen and guide with the truth that God gives us, the truth that we find in Jesus Christ our Savior. That with it we may always find hope. That, with Christ, we may always find love. And that, together, we may always find a way forward in peace, love and truth. Amen.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: Almighty and all-loving God, through your Son Jesus Christ you have reconciled the world to yourself. Help us now to be reconciled with one another, that again we might dwell in the warmth of your love. Inspire us with your Holy Spirit to put aside the cloak of pride and put on Christ, that we might forgive and be forgiven; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayer List

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Angie Veach	Diane Washburn	Eric Veach	Cathy Devall
Brock McMorris	Ed & Verna Titus	Hayden Kanizer	Henry Catey
Jake Kiser	Laura Eubank Allison	Cindy Cisney	Patti Corder & Crew
Nancy Hoke	Don Wells	Tricia Adkins	Ronnie & Elaine Carlen
Don Stewart	Anne Winkler Heinrichs		Michael & Makenzie Reynolds
Ronnie Winstead	John Millsap	Annie McMorris	Dwight Parsons
Trinity Powers	Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks	Nora Werner & Family
Wayne Carrell	Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Family of Lois Woolever	Mary White
Nick Nichols	Leo Smith	Bonnie Hite	Greg Williams
Eloise Buffenmeyer	Martha Roberts	Charlie & Charlotte Baxter	Paul Schulte
Kim Hennes	Residents of the Greenup Nursing Center		

Rev Camron D St. Michael

<https://stmichael.pw>

cdstmichael@outlook.com

(316)530-3182 (call or text)

PO Box 54, Charleston IL, 61920

* Scripture quotations are from New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

+ Scripture quotations are from the Common English Bible, Copyright © 2011 by Common English Bible.

Our Current Series – Gifts of Christmas

Our series for the Christmas season is all about the gifts we give and receive.

December 27th – *Blessings* – How can we bless others with our words?

January 3rd – *Acknowledgement* – What does it say when we acknowledge others?

January 10th – *The Spirit* – The Holy Spirit is a gift we both give and receive.