

Baptized in the Spirit

With the Holy Spirit: Part 1 “Baptized in the Spirit”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – January 14, 2024

Baptism of the Lord

Readings: Genesis 1:1-5; Acts 19:1-7; Mark 1:4-11

Reflection: Psalm 29

Greeting: God’s kingdom is about righteousness and peace, and the joy we find together in the Holy Spirit. Serving Christ in this way pleases both God and people. So, let’s strive for peace and building each other up!

Prayer: God of all the nations, you showed your tremendous love by sending your Son into the world that all might have life through him. Pour out your Holy Spirit upon your church this day, that we may follow his command to preach the good news for all to hear it. Grant us strength to speak the truth of your steadfast love and faithfulness. Help us to lift up the least and the last and to give comfort to the afflicted. Let us bear witness to your mercy and grace so that all may know of your wonderful gift. May we remember the baptism by your Holy Spirit so that we may see, may learn, and may grow with you, and may all find the hope that you have given to the world through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 29

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 God’s strength and glory. We hear of seeking help from the Lord that we may find peace. How do you seek the peace of God in your daily life? How do you share that peace? How can you rely upon the Holy Spirit to help guide you in your daily life? Are you thankful for God’s help in your struggles and your triumphs? What are some

ways that you can share the peace of Christ with someone else this week? Who will you be lifting up in your prayers? How do we accept guidance by the Holy Spirit?

Prayer: Almighty God, you are there before we even speak. You know the deepest thoughts of our minds and the truest desires of our hearts. We seek your wisdom and your grace on this day. We come before you, speaking the worries that trouble us and we speak of the joys that we are thankful for. But we also turn to you with the unspoken concerns and celebrations we hold within. But we know that your mercy and love are always there for your children. Let your Holy Spirit be poured out on your people that we may know you in our dancing and our weeping. May we be reminded of your steadfast love in our laughter and our tears. And may we in turn show our love for you in our love for each other, through 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 readings for today come from the Common English Bible. Our first reading is from Genesis chapter 1, verse 1 through verse 5.

When God began to create the heavens and the earth— the earth was without shape or form, it was dark over the deep sea, and God’s wind swept over the waters— God said, “Let there be light.” And so light appeared. God saw how good the light was. God separated the light from the darkness. God named the light Day and the darkness Night. There was evening and there was morning: the first day. (Genesis 1:1-5 CEB+)

Our next reading is from Acts chapter 19, verses 1 through 7.

While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul took a route through the interior and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. He asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you came to believe?” They replied, “We’ve not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” Then he said, “What baptism did you receive, then?” They answered, “John’s baptism.” Paul explained, “John baptized with a baptism by which people showed they were changing their hearts and lives. It was a baptism that told people about the one who was coming after him. This is the one in whom they were to believe. This one is Jesus.” After they listened to Paul, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in other languages and prophesying. Altogether, there were about twelve people. (Acts 19:1-7 CEB+)

Our final reading is from Mark, chapter 1, verses 4 through 11.

John the Baptist was in the wilderness calling for people to be baptized to show that they were changing their hearts and lives and wanted God to forgive their sins. Everyone in Judea and all the people of Jerusalem went out to the Jordan River and were being baptized by John as they confessed their sins. John wore clothes made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He ate locusts and wild honey. He announced, “One stronger than I am is coming after me. I’m not even worthy to bend over and loosen the strap of his sandals. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” About that time, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and John

baptized him in the Jordan River. While he was coming up out of the water, Jesus saw heaven splitting open and the Spirit, like a dove, coming down on him. And there was a voice from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I dearly love; in you I find happiness." (Mark 1:4-11 CEB+)

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

We are beginning a new series today and for the next few weeks, we are going to be looking at the Holy Spirit and the way that we live with the Spirit. We begin with baptism and a look at being baptized in the Spirit. We have a few different readings, and you may have noticed that I switched which version I'm reading from for this series. I'm using the Common English Bible because of the more conversational language. It makes us think differently about some of the readings we will have in the coming weeks. We began with Genesis this week with the very opening of the Bible. In the creation narrative, we see the wind of God sweeping over the waters. The light is separated from the darkness. This is not just about night and day, because the creation account is meant to tell us something about God. We see the light is good and it brings the world out of darkness and chaos. That we can remember this when we talk about Christ being the light of the world. That the light is good and brings us out of our own darkness and our own chaos. It is something we find in Christ and something we find in baptism, this idea of being brought into something new as a new creation in Christ. Not just that we are washed clean of our sins but given new life. And so, it is appropriate for us to think about creation itself when we think about baptism by the Holy Spirit.

We hear this again with baptism when Paul is in Ephesus. He asks if they have received the Holy Spirit, and they say they didn't even know there was a Holy Spirit. Paul wants to know what baptism they did receive, and they say it was John's baptism. Here we are going to take a step into our Gospel reading and we are going to shift a couple times here. When we look at our gospel reading from Mark, we see that John is out baptizing people. He is calling people to come to the Jordan River. He calls them to come and be baptized to show that their hearts and lives are changed and that they want to be forgiven for their sins. That is the call John is making with his baptism, one of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. John is also saying that somebody is coming after him that is more powerful. Someone he doesn't even have the right to loosen the sandal of. And here's one of the key points for us: John baptizes with water but the one coming after will baptize with the Holy Spirit. And that leads us back into our reading from Acts. Because that is what Paul is explaining to those people in Ephesus. That John's baptism was of repentance. Which isn't to say it's not important. Not at all. John's baptism was very important. However, Paul explains that there's a further step in baptism, accepting the Holy Spirit, the gift of Christ. Going beyond forgiveness into granting new life. Paul puts his hands on them, and they receive the Spirit. As a side note here, when it says they were prophesying it means they were speaking God's truth. And when it says they were speaking other languages, that is a clarification of what we often hear as speaking in tongues. Except the Spirit doesn't cause them to speak confusing words nobody can understand, it gives them the gift of communication. Because the gifts of the Spirit help us to work together. The Spirit

doesn't cause one to speak nonsense but causes one to be able to share the good news with others.

Here we can step back into our gospel reading. Now that we have covered what John's baptism is we can move forward to Jesus. He comes to be baptized by John and as he is coming out of the water, Jesus saw the heavens split and the Spirit descends like a dove. And there is a voice from heaven saying, "You are my Son, whom I dearly love; in you I find happiness." This is one of the reasons I wanted to share this translation. Because I think this language gives us a more intimate understanding. "You are my Son, whom I dearly love; in you I find happiness." There is something there that just warms my heart in a way that other versions don't. Now, you might be wondering why Jesus was baptized by John at all. Because John already said that he wasn't worthy to loosen a sandal, let alone to baptize Jesus. We might wonder why Jesus doesn't baptize John, since Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit. But I see this as a prelude to the kind of leadership that Jesus has. Because when we talk about it, we will sometimes say the words "servant leadership" without fully taking in that with that as an act of submission. And I feel Jesus goes to John to show the importance of baptism and also to show the importance of community. For me, it's a sign of how much Jesus respected what John was doing and how much he understood John's role. When Jesus is baptized, the Holy Spirit descends, and we get that voice from heaven. It is this act of submission that brings about God declaring his happiness and I think that matters. Because I think the example that it's giving us that this is a gift to be shared. That it isn't about power or prestige, or holding anything over anyone else, but about being humble and accepting this wondrous gift.

That's part of what we see in all of our readings today. We see this kind of humility. Paul isn't asking if they have received the Holy Spirit so that he can tell them that they haven't really experienced anything yet. He doesn't want to hold it over them and talk about how unworthy they are. He asks because if they haven't received it, he wants to share it. And that's one of the things about the Holy Spirit I was reflecting on. The Holy Spirit itself is something that we experience as a community because it is never meant to be something that you keep to yourself. It is like trying to hide light. It's like trying to hide love and warmth and happiness. We have no reason to keep it to ourselves, but we do have every reason to share it. When I think about our own baptism in all of this, I think about how it's an ongoing process. Because receiving the Holy Spirit is just the beginning. It's not the final form of baptism to make it complete. It is always continuing. Baptism is an outward sign of us seeking to be forgiven and to live a life in Christ. But when we are baptized in the Holy Spirit, it is something we will continually accept, that we continually live out, and that we continually share. Because it is by the water and the Spirit that we come to a life in Christ, not just being washed clean of our sins but becoming a new creation through Jesus and the Holy Spirit. That we go beyond just being forgiven into fully experiencing God's love and God's grace. That it is like light coming into the darkness and we know it is good.

But as we are continuously experiencing the Holy Spirit, we are continuously called to share in our experience in the Holy Spirit. That we are called to share the light, the love, the warmth, and the happiness that we have with the Holy Spirit. Just as the voice of the Father speaks of love and happiness as the Spirit descends, so we can share love and happiness as we share the Spirit with others. Because the Spirit is always calling us to do more, to be more, and to share more. Over the next few weeks, we will be looking at the different stories that we have of how people have experienced this gift of the Holy Spirit, how they have experienced the guidance the Spirit gives. We will look at not just how we experience it through baptism, but in how we see the world itself, how the Spirit helps us to accept Christ's teachings in our lives, and the share of the Spirit we seek and that we give. In some ways, all of this will help to lead us into Lent. That we are preparing for that time of reflection by remembering the importance of allowing the Holy Spirit to walk with us. That we remember the Holy Spirit as a teacher and companion throughout our lives, but especially in our reflection for Lent. So, I pray that on this day, you remember the joy that comes from receiving and sharing the Holy Spirit as part of baptism. That we remember the Holy Spirit as part of seeking to have our hearts and our lives changed through God's great love. So that in remembering baptism or seeking it for the first time, that we call upon the Holy Spirit to remind us of God's steadfast love and faithfulness. And that we may all experience the happiness that the Holy Spirit brings because of a life lived in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: God, you are with us even when we turn away from you. Guide us back into your loving arms. Judge us not by the perfection of our actions but show us mercy and love. We have strayed like lost sheep from your ways, failing both in what we have done and what we have failed to do. Bring us back into your fold that you may guide us and lead us in all things. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us and forgive us. May we walk in your love and trust your ways. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy upon you. May the Lord forgive all your sins and lift you up in love through Jesus Christ our Lord, and by the Holy Spirit keep you in life eternal. 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 we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Current Series – With the Holy Spirit

Our current series is all about the Holy Spirit. Each week we explore another aspect of the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives. How do we walk in our journey with Christ and with the Holy Spirit?

January 14th – Baptized in the Spirit – Genesis 1:1-5; Acts 19:1-7; Mark 1:4-11

January 28th – Vision by the Spirit – Isaiah 57:14-19; Acts 9:1-20; Luke 10:20-22

February 4th – Teaching from the Spirit – Micah 4:1-4; Hebrews 10:11-18; John 14:18-31

February 11th – Share of the Spirit – 2 Kings 2:1-12; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Mark 9:2-9

(Pastor Cameron is on vacation January 21st, so there is no print out or video for that Sunday)

Prayer List

Rev Angie Lee	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Eric Veach
Ed & Verna Titus	Henry Catey	Jake Kiser	Cindy Cisney
Tricia Adkins	Don Stewart	Ronnie Winstead	Lauren Stewart
Tom Finley	Laura Carlen	Rosie Chancellor	Chuck Hogan
Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks	Emily Blade	Tim Schnauz
Donna Carlen	Ernie Peters	Jess Shoot	Stanley Kiser
Corine Howard	Don Gilmore	Shirley Jester	Marsha Overton
Linda Carlen	Michael Nichols	Paul Cox	Taylor Waldorf
Harriet Tucker	Marlene Kincaid	Cara Dillier	Peggy Farley
Mandy Schumacher	Ann McMorris	Marci Cutts Smith	Jaydelyn Brassard
Pat Hayden Titus	Calvin St. Michael	Devona Dittamore	Nancy McElravy
Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Leo Smith	Sue & Bob Smyser	Larry Thompson
Evelyn Sue Icenogle	Greg Williams		

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