

## **Teaching from the Spirit**

With the Holy Spirit: Part 3 “Teaching from the Spirit”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – February 4, 2024

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany

**Readings:** Micah 4:1-4; Hebrews 10:11-18; John 14:18-31

**Reflection:** Psalm 143

**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 143

*Hear my prayer, O Lord; give ear to my supplications in your faithfulness; answer me in your righteousness. Do not enter into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you. For the enemy has pursued me, crushing my life to the ground, making me sit in darkness like those long dead. Therefore my spirit faints within me; my heart within me is appalled. I remember the days of old; I think about all your deeds; I meditate on the works of your hands. I stretch out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land. Answer me quickly, O Lord; my spirit fails. Do not hide your face from me, or I shall be like those who go down to the Pit. Let me hear of your steadfast love in the morning, for in you I put my trust. Teach me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul. Save me, O Lord, from my enemies; I have fled to you for refuge. Teach me to do your will, for you are my God. Let your good spirit lead me on a level path. For your name’s sake, O Lord, preserve my life. In your righteousness bring me out of trouble. In your steadfast love cut off my enemies, and destroy all my adversaries, for I am your servant.*  
(Psalm 143 NRSV\*)

We read the words of Psalm 143 and hear of salvation from God. That we seek God for instruction on what to do and where to go. That we turn to the Lord for forgiveness. Is there

anyone that you feel you need to seek forgiveness from? Is there anyone you need to offer forgiveness to? Is there anything weighing down your heart that you could hand over to Christ? Who can you lift up in prayer this week? What can you do to reach out to help them? What are your prayers for the community? How can you share the peace of Christ with someone else this week? 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 Micah chapter 4, verse 1 through 4.

*But in the days to come, the mountain of the Lord's house will be the highest of the mountains; it will be lifted above the hills; peoples will stream to it. Many nations will go and say: "Come, let's go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of Jacob's God, so that he may teach us his ways and we may walk in God's paths!" Instruction will come from Zion and the Lord's word from Jerusalem. God will judge between the nations and settle disputes of mighty nations, which are far away. They will beat their swords into iron plows and their spears into pruning tools. Nation will not take up sword against nation; they will no longer learn how to make war. All will sit underneath their own grapevines, under their own fig trees. There will be no one to terrify them; for the mouth of the Lord of heavenly forces has spoken. (Micah 4:1-4 CEB+)*

Our next reading is from Hebrews chapter 10, verses 11 through 18.

*Every priest stands every day serving and offering the same sacrifices over and over, sacrifices that can never take away sins. But when this priest offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, he sat down at the right side of God. Since then, he's waiting until his enemies are made into a footstool for his feet, because he perfected the people who are being made holy with one offering for all time. The Holy Spirit affirms this when saying, This is the covenant that I will make with them. After these days, says the Lord, I will place my laws in their hearts and write them on their minds. And I won't remember their sins and their lawless behavior anymore. When there is forgiveness for these things, there is no longer an offering for sin. (Hebrews 10:11-18 CEB+)*

Our final reading is from John, chapter 14, verses 18 through 31.

*“I won’t leave you as orphans. I will come to you. Soon the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Because I live, you will live too. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them loves me. Whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.” Judas (not Judas Iscariot) asked, “Lord, why are you about to reveal yourself to us and not to the world?” Jesus answered, “Whoever loves me will keep my word. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Whoever doesn’t love me doesn’t keep my words. The word that you hear isn’t mine. It is the word of the Father who sent me. “I have spoken these things to you while I am with you. The Companion, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I told you. “Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you. I give to you not as the world gives. Don’t be troubled or afraid. You have heard me tell you, ‘I’m going away and returning to you.’ If you loved me, you would be happy that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than me. I have told you before it happens so that when it happens you will believe. I won’t say much more to you because this world’s ruler is coming. He has nothing on me. Rather, he comes so that the world will know that I love the Father and do just as the Father has commanded me. Get up. We’re leaving this place.” (John 14:18-31 CEB+)*

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

We continue our exploration of the Holy Spirit this week. Today we think about teaching from the Spirit. This stems from our reading from the Gospel of John. There is a lot being said in this part of John, and this section is all about Jesus comforting the disciples and letting them know that he isn’t abandoning them. The part that drew me to this text is this idea that the Holy Spirit will teach us everything and remind us of what Christ taught. I chose this translation because of the way that it speaks about the Holy Spirit. And I liked it because the word that they use to describe the Holy Spirit is companion. We often hear advocate, which always sounds much more formal, like hiring a lawyer. We might also hear helper, but that sounds more like an assistant. Companion sounds much more like a friend. I was thinking about the Holy Spirit as our companion being sent at the request of the Son. That the Holy Spirit will be with us so that we will be taught everything we need to know. That our companion will be constantly reminding us of everything Jesus taught. And part of that reminder is of the peace that Christ gives. I was drawn to this as I was exploring the Holy Spirit because there's this worry from the disciples that they will be left alone. That Jesus will leave them, and they will have nothing. And Jesus is telling them that they won't be alone. That in many ways he will be with them. That if they are together in the Father, then Jesus will never be far from them. But they are still worried. But to help solidify this idea, Jesus tells them about the companion they have in the Holy Spirit. That the Holy Spirit is there to be our constant companion, to convince us, to guide us, to lead us, to help us, and to teach.

And I think the Holy Spirit teaching us is part of how we interpret Scripture itself, because it gives us a point of reference. One of the things that I feel from the Spirit when I am looking through Scripture is that it reminds me that I am looking for God’s love. And I feel that the Spirit is there to help me to see the love where I may not have seen it before. Because I sit

down in prayer, and I study, and I think, and I meditate on the word. And I let the Spirit guide me. I would love to give you a better explanation than that, believe me. But I don't know that I can, because it's something that I feel. It is like a friend asking me if I've ever thought about things in a new way, and having my eyes opened to something brand new. I believe that the Holy Spirit teaches us by guiding us in the love of God. I think the Holy Spirit also helps us to learn from each other. That the Holy Spirit opens our hearts and our lives to each other's lived experience of God so that we can have a greater understanding. That we will grow in our understanding of our Heavenly Father, and we grow in our understanding in what our life in Christ together is. Because part of what the Holy Spirit does is bind us together. That we have that shared companion, this unique way to think about the presence of God. Because we often think about the Father as somebody we pray to in secret. That we let it be a relationship between a parent and a child, somebody that we look up to. Christ is often a very personal and intimate relationship. That the Son is our close personal friend, someone who we confide our secrets in. Somebody we can be alone with. The Holy Spirit refuses to be anything but a social experience. Because the Holy Spirit calls us into community. The Holy Spirit teaches us so that we experience Christ together. That we experience the love of the Father together. The Spirit calls us to prophesy, and you do not prophesy to yourself. The Spirit calls us to preach the good news, and you cannot preach the good news to yourself. You cannot share your knowledge with yourself to discover, but you can share it with others. In many ways, the Spirit teaches us about the importance of togetherness because of that calling and because of that companionship.

Our other readings were chosen because of how they enhance our understanding of the Holy Spirit. In Hebrews, we hear more about the Holy Spirit as our companion. Hebrews talks about salvation in Christ but then has how the Holy Spirit affirms all that we know of Christ, saying that the law will be placed on our hearts and our sins won't be remembered. Which made me think about what Christ said about the Holy Spirit being our companion, teaching us. That what Christ has taught us has been placed within us and it is the Holy Spirit that draws it out. Christ's love is placed within our hearts and the Spirit draws it out to be how we live. And then there is the reading from the Prophet Micah. I thought about the nations coming together to learn, seeking to walk in God's paths. That instruction will come from God and disputes will be settled. And I thought about this when thinking about the Holy Spirit as our companion. That the Spirit is there to guide us and lead us along those paths, teaching us the ways in which we may love and forgive. That we will discover peace that we hear about from Christ. We hear of beating swords into plows and spears into pruning tools. That they won't be needed because there will be no more war. And we get a well-known verse, that all will sit underneath their own vine and their own fig trees, and there will be no one to terrify them. I read that and I thought that is what the Holy Spirit is trying to teach us, that is where the Spirit is trying to take us. That the Spirit wants us to learn peace and to follow the path of love, reminding us of all that Christ taught so that we can live it.

But I do think sometimes we struggle to listen to the Spirit. Because the Spirit might be telling us to calm down and find peace because we don't need to be worried, but it is hard to not be worried. The spirit may be trying to remind us where our focus truly should be, but it is easy to be distracted. That the spirit is trying to remind us that Christ is always with us to share peace. That Christ is always with us that we may know we're not alone. The Spirit is there as a companion to pat us on the shoulder and tell us that we are not doing this alone. That we can trust in the Spirit. And I take great comfort in that. I think it's easy to lose sight of all the things that Christ taught because we get overwhelmed with life. And sometimes we get so overwhelmed we forget to be kind. We forget to look after the least and the last. We forget to put a hand out to those in need. We forget to speak up for those that have been silenced. We forget to look after those who have been hurt. Because it is easy to forget. But I was reminded of something else from Hebrews. That it is easy for us to try to make ourselves feel guilty when we forget. But what is really there for us is forgiveness. Not so that we beat ourselves up over it, but so that we know that now is always a good time to remember. Forgiveness is there so that instead of staring at our past mistakes and lapses, we look forward knowing there is hope. The Holy Spirit is there to remind us of that forgiveness, so that we can then move forward and get back to what we should be doing. Because I think it is easy for us to get into a guilt trip. But that isn't what we are called to remember. We are called to remember Christ's love.

That is something I wanted to leave us with today. There are many ways we may lose focus. We may get distracted, get depressed, get anxious, we get worried, and with any of those we can lose sight of living out Christ's love. That the Holy Spirit is there not to call us into guilt, not there to beat us into thinking we are terrible people. The Holy Spirit is there to be our constant companion, reminding us of forgiveness and calling us back to the path. Calling us so that we can say to each other that we should return to the Lord so that he may teach us his ways and we may walk in God's paths! Because I don't think God wants us to sit and beat ourselves up as much as God wants us to realize that the love that's there for us is there for all. That what God is calling us to do through the Holy Spirit is to love our neighbor as ourselves and to understand God's love that is there for us. Not that we should feel guilty because we missed church one Sunday. Not feeling guilty if someone hasn't been in quite some time. Not to make others feel guilty but to invite them with love, the same way that our companion the Holy Spirit invites us in love. Because it's about reconciliation and not recrimination. It is not about fault, but it is about forgiveness. Because it's about accepting the teaching that has been placed in our hearts because it's a teaching of love and grace. The Holy Spirit, our companion, is there to remind us of that love and grace so that we may remember the way that Christ offered it to us so that we may extend it to others. So let us always remember that the Holy Spirit is there for us to grow, to learn, and always to share. 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 21<sup>st</sup>, 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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