

Share of the Spirit

With the Holy Spirit: Part 4 “Share of the Spirit”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – February 11, 2024

Transfiguration Sunday

Readings: 2 Kings 2:1-14; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Mark 9:2-9

Reflection: Psalm 50

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 50

The mighty one, God the Lord, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth. Our God comes and does not keep silent; before him is a devouring fire and a mighty tempest all around him. He calls to the heavens above and to the earth, that he may judge his people: “Gather to me my faithful ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!” The heavens declare his righteousness, for God himself is judge. Selah “Hear, O my people, and I will speak, O Israel, I will testify against you. I am God, your God. Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you; your burnt offerings are continually before me. I will not accept a bull from your house or goats from your folds. For every wild animal of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the air, and all that moves in the field is mine. “If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and all that is in it is mine. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High. Call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.” But to the wicked God says, “What right have you to recite my statutes or take my covenant on your lips? For you hate discipline, and you cast my words behind you. You make friends with a thief when you see one, and you keep company with adulterers. You give your mouth free rein for evil, and your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your kin; you slander

your own mother's child. These things you have done, and I have been silent; you thought that I was one just like yourself. But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you. Mark this, then, you who forget God, or I will tear you apart, and there will be no one to deliver. Those who bring thanksgiving as their sacrifice honor me; to those who go the right way, I will show the salvation of God." (Psalm 50 NRSV)*

We read the words of Psalm 50 and we hear of God's desire that we give thanks. That we are told that we should make an offering of our thanksgiving and turn to God to honor him. How do you honor God in your life? How do you give thanks as part of your daily routine? Is there anyone that you can reach out to in the week to come to offer the peace that Christ gives? Who can you lift up in your prayers of thanksgiving this week? How can we listen more closely to the Holy Spirit? How can we begin to prepare ourselves for Lent?

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 2 Kings chapter 2, verse 1 through 14.

Now the Lord was going to take Elijah up to heaven in a windstorm, and Elijah and Elisha were leaving Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, because the Lord has sent me to Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the Lord lives and as you live, I won't leave you." So they went down to Bethel. The group of prophets from Bethel came out to Elisha. These prophets said to Elisha, "Do you know that the Lord is going to take your master away from you today?" Elisha said, "Yes, I know. Don't talk about it!" Elijah said, "Elisha, stay here, because the Lord has sent me to Jericho." But Elisha said, "As the Lord lives and as you live, I won't leave you." So they went to Jericho. The group of prophets from Jericho approached Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that the Lord is going to take your master away from you today?" He said, "Yes, I know. Don't talk about it!" Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, because the Lord has sent me to the Jordan." But Elisha said, "As the Lord lives and as you live, I won't leave you." So both of them went on together. Fifty members from the group of prophets also went along, but they stood at a distance. Both Elijah and Elisha stood beside the Jordan River. Elijah then took his coat, rolled it up, and hit the water. Then the water was divided in two! Both of them crossed over on dry ground. When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "What do you want me to

do for you before I'm taken away from you?" Elisha said, "Let me have twice your spirit." Elijah said, "You've made a difficult request. If you can see me when I'm taken from you, then it will be yours. If you don't see me, it won't happen." They were walking along, talking, when suddenly a fiery chariot and fiery horses appeared and separated the two of them. Then Elijah went to heaven in a windstorm. Elisha was watching, and he cried out, "Oh, my father, my father! Israel's chariots and its riders!" When he could no longer see him, Elisha took hold of his clothes and ripped them in two. Then Elisha picked up the coat that had fallen from Elijah. He went back and stood beside the banks of the Jordan River. He took the coat that had fallen from Elijah and hit the water. He said, "Where is the Lord, Elijah's God?" And when he hit the water, it divided in two! Then Elisha crossed over. (2 Kings 2:1-14 CEB+)

Our next reading is from 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verses 3 through 6.

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are on the road to destruction. The god of this age has blinded the minds of those who don't have faith so they couldn't see the light of the gospel that reveals Christ's glory. Christ is the image of God. We don't preach about ourselves. Instead, we preach about Jesus Christ as Lord, and we describe ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. God said that light should shine out of the darkness. He is the same one who shone in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:3-6 CEB+)

Our final reading is from Mark, chapter 9, verses 2 through 9.

Six days later Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and brought them to the top of a very high mountain where they were alone. He was transformed in front of them, and his clothes were amazingly bright, brighter than if they had been bleached white. Elijah and Moses appeared and were talking with Jesus. Peter reacted to all of this by saying to Jesus, "Rabbi, it's good that we're here. Let's make three shrines—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He said this because he didn't know how to respond, for the three of them were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice spoke from the cloud, "This is my Son, whom I dearly love. Listen to him!" Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them not to tell anyone what they had seen until after the Human One had risen from the dead. (Mark 9:2-9 CEB+)

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

Today's message closes out our series about the Holy Spirit, and it ends with the Transfiguration. Mark's gospel account of the Transfiguration acts as a sort of bookend to the Baptism for this series. When we began, we heard about the Holy Spirit descending like a dove and we get the voice saying, "You are my Son, whom I dearly love; in you I find happiness." Now we have this transformation taking place. Jesus is suddenly clothed in bright white. He is talking with Moses and Elijah, and nobody there knows what to do. And suddenly there is a voice from the cloud saying, "This is my Son, whom I dearly love. Listen to him!" We get almost the same message except this time it isn't aimed at Jesus. This time it is aimed at those who

are witnessing these events. The message they get is the message that they are intended to share.

Now, one of the things that stood out in this was the prophet Elijah. When we see Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah, we see the law and the prophets united in Christ. We have Moses representing the law and Elijah representing the prophets. But Elijah was brought into focus because of the account we have in our readings today. We get this narrative of receiving a double share of the Spirit as we hear of Elijah being taken. This ties in with John the Baptist as well. Because there was this question about if John was Elijah, because Elijah was taken and would return. So, we begin our reading from 2 Kings with Elijah and Elisha, and I do apologize because I know that it can be difficult to follow, so I will be saying both names as clearly as I can. Elijah is set to be taken up in a windstorm by God. Elijah keeps trying to get Elisha to stay behind, and the reply from Elisha is simply "As the Lord lives and as you live, I won't leave you." Then they continue to travel, with Elijah telling Elisha to stay behind until they get to the Jordan river. Elijah rolls up his coat and strikes the water to split it, and Elijah and Elisha cross over on dry ground. When they have both crossed over, Elijah asks Elisha what it is he wants before he is taken. Elisha says he wants twice his spirit. Elijah tells him his request is a difficult one, but if he sees Elijah be taken, it will be given to him. As they're walking a fiery chariot appears and separates them and Elijah is taken in a windstorm. Elisha mourns this. But at the same time, Elisha did see and did get that share of the spirit. He takes up the mantle of Elijah and he himself now splits the water and crosses back over on dry land. We see here there's this idea of him receiving a big double share of the spirit so that he can continue on without Elijah. And I was thinking about this with the way we receive the Holy Spirit. We hear a bit of this in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, that the spirit we have is to let us be the light that shines in the darkness. That we don't preach about ourselves, we preach about Christ. Because we aren't the example, Christ is. And I started thinking about that spirit that Elisha was seeking. That it wasn't that it was something that belonged to Elijah, but the Holy Spirit strengthening Elisha. That he's given a double share of confidence that God will be with him so that Elisha can move forward. That in seeing his teacher and his friend be taken in that whirlwind gave him boldness in the Holy Spirit to continue in his journey.

And we see that same thing with the disciples. That they received the Holy Spirit so they can continue on, so that they can share the message. At the end of our account of the Transfiguration we have Jesus telling the disciples that were with him not to say anything about what they had seen until the human one had risen from the dead. Some of you might wonder why this is. Wouldn't it be appropriate for them to tell everyone now so that everyone could know? Why shouldn't they tell anyone if everyone should know this? But I think the reason is that it wouldn't make complete sense until after the resurrection. That people wouldn't get the full impact of everything until after the full truth was revealed to them. And it comes back to some of the things that we've heard over the last few weeks. I don't think the disciples could fully explain everything or understand it all themselves until they have received the Holy Spirit

themselves. It will be many weeks from now that we will give that accounting of Pentecost. But it is their own baptism by the Spirit that helps to give them the boldness they need to be able to teach and preach about exactly who Christ is. Because the Transfiguration really is this revelation of the law and the prophets being brought to completion in Christ, the Son of God. That we could find redemption and salvation in him. When we think about baptism in the Holy Spirit, it is being given the strength to speak of those things. We talked about the vision of the Holy Spirit, that the Spirit opens our eyes and opens our minds to fully understand. That it is part of what we learn through the Holy Spirit. We see it here with Elisha needing to see and learn of Elijah's fate to be able to go on with the double share of the Spirit. The disciples see Jesus transformed so that they can preach about who Christ is after the resurrection so that they can share the whole truth of Christ by the Spirit. That they will baptize others by the water and the Spirit so that others can share the knowledge that they have learned. And all of them can continue to grow and continue to learn in the Spirit. That they learn from each other, and they learn from their walk in Christ.

And it's by this continued process that each one of us down the line gives a share of the Spirit. That in many ways, at some point, we are all Elisha, receiving the Spirit. At some point we're all Elijah, sharing the spirit. All so that we may preach the good news of Jesus Christ. That we may share God's love. That we may love our neighbor as we love ourselves, and that we may love God with all that we are because that is the essence of what we are always called to do. And it is the essence of what we are called to remember all throughout Lent. Because Lent is a call for us to remember Christ's journey to the cross. It is a time of reflection and sacrifice. You may be thinking of what you will be giving up as part of your observance of Lent. You might be thinking about what you will start doing as part of your own Lenten journey. That we enter this time of remembrance, we should also remember that we have a companion in the Holy Spirit, there to give us our share of strength, our share of love, our share of nurturing, our share of forgiveness, our share of reconciliation, and even in the darkest of days, our share of hope. I pray that we remember all of this as we take this walk in Lent because I think it helps us always to deal with any hardship or difficulty when we remember that we are never alone. We have those who have led us to where we are. We have those that need us to be able to lead. We have all that we are able to share in the Spirit. That we are called to do so much and to give so much. To do all that we can do share all that we can so that we may love all that we can as we walk with Christ in our journey called life.

I wanted to look at the Holy Spirit over these last few weeks because think it's too easy for us to become isolated. We become isolated in our problems. We become isolated in our frustrations. We become isolated and our anxiety and our depression and our fears and our anger. We become isolated in all of the things that life throws at us. But the Holy Spirit always calls us back together. Because we are called to share the Spirit. Because there will always be others who need our share of the Spirit to be there for them. And we will always need others that we may experience their share of the Spirit in our lives. Because each of us brings our

own gifts to the table. Each of us has our own strengths and our own weaknesses. And the spirit is there to teach us about our strengths and our weaknesses, to open our eyes to just what they may be and to call us to remember that we share in them together. And so that is my hope for all of us this day that the Holy Spirit may guide us and lead us. May the Holy Spirit be poured out on all of us that we receive a double share of the Spirit so that we may do even more. That we may be strengthened even more as we enter into this time of reflection that we call Lent. May the Holy Spirit guide you and lead you. May it strengthen you and comfort you. May it remind you of the peace that Christ brings to us all. May it teach you of love and forgiveness. May it remind you of the way that we are all connected together because of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May we be one in the Spirit as we once again prepare to take this journey with Christ to the cross and beyond. May the Holy Spirit guide be with you always. 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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