

## The Holy Spirit Comes – Acts 2:1-4

Our passage begins with these words, “When the day of Pentecost came...”

This is one of the highlight moments in the history of God’s people. The whole of the Old Testament was moving towards this day, and the prophets foretold the day when, in the last days, God would pour out His Spirit on His people. Pentecost was made possible by Jesus’ death and resurrection, for God was not going to pour out His Spirit on a sin-filled, rebellious people. No, we needed a Saviour who would provide a way for us to have our sins forgiven and a new life given to us through faith in him. That Saviour is Jesus.

But God was not finished with his people when He provided them forgiveness and new life through faith in Jesus. God’s people were to carry the story of Jesus throughout the world. God knew they could not stand up under the pressure of opposition and faithfully witness to others the story of salvation through faith in Jesus. So God makes a promise to his people, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8).

What we read today is that moment when the power was turned on in the life of the disciples. They shot out of that room and spread throughout all the known world with the message of salvation in the name of Jesus. The world was literally turned upside down by these early Christians. The power of God came to them through the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. The rest of the Book of Acts tells what happened when those followers of Jesus were sent out of that room filled with the Holy Spirit. It is one of the most exciting books you will ever read. Lives were changed. Cities were changed. History was changed.

Do it again Lord!

An old man was seen kneeling by the grave of William Booth, Commander-in-chief of the Salvation Army. Through the dedicated, Spirit-filled life of this man thousands were led to faith in Jesus, lives were rescued from the darkness of sin, and hope was brought to some of the darkest corners of the city. Now a lone figure was kneeling in remembrance and gratitude at his graveside. His eyes were closed, his hands were clasped in prayer, and his lips were moving. If you could draw closer to him you would hear what his prayer was, “Do it again, Lord. Do it again.”

That is the prayer of all God’s children as we read the account of Pentecost. As the Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples, we see their lives completely changed. Doubting Thomas becomes a pillar of faith. The sons of Thunder, James and John, become ambassadors of love. Wavering Peter becomes the rock Jesus said he would become.

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit presented his calling card with three signs, each one pointing to an aspect of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer.

The first sign was the sound of a mighty wind. Wind can be amazingly powerful. The winds a tornado whips can produce such force that a piece of straw can be driven into the trunk of a tree! When we lived on Nadely Crescent here in Nanaimo a wind came down the newly formed road and hit our house with such force that it tore off a large patch of shingles from our roof. Our neighbour had a tent to park his car under, and it was secured to the ground with four cement blocks, each block weighing about 60 lbs. The wind picked up that tent, along with the blocks and turned it upside down on our back deck 15 ft above his yard!

Wind can be powerful and as Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3, you cannot tell where it will come from or where it will go. Though the wind's power seems out of control, the power of the Holy Spirit is very much under the control of God.

Wind reminds us of breath, and indeed the very word for breath and wind in scripture is the same. The Holy Spirit is like the breath of God. And when God breathes on someone, they come to life. That is what happened to Adam in the Garden of Eden: God breathed on him and he became a living soul. In the book of Ezekiel, God breathes on an army of dried bones and they come to life again. God breathes spiritual life into us through the Holy Spirit. Once we were dead in our sins, but now we are alive in Christ, so we could become the dwelling of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:1, 22).

The second sign was flames of fire that fell on the heads of each of the disciples. It started as one flame and then split and touched every person in the room. What a beautiful picture of the unifying work of the Spirit. But the flames also speak of purity. Scripture repeatedly speaks of the need for God's people to be holy – to be pure. Scripture does not speak of a sinning religion where we sin in word, thought and deed every day. "Be ye holy, for I am holy," says the Lord. Holiness is about purity that comes through the work of the Holy Spirit.

A man watched with great interest as a jeweler heated a small container of gold over a fire. Every now and then the jeweler would skim some dark spots off the top of the gold. "These are the impurities in the gold," explained the jeweler. The man watching the jeweler asked, "How do you know when the gold is pure enough?" "When I can see my face reflected back from the gold then I know it is pure enough," said the jeweler.

When will our lives be pure and holy? When the world can see a reflection of Jesus in our lives. This is what the Holy Spirit is doing in all believers, conforming us to the image of Christ.

Finally, the coming of the Holy Spirit was evident that day because the disciples were suddenly speaking languages they never studied or knew before. There was a purpose in this sign, of course, and that was to draw the attention of the people in the streets to hear the Gospel message about Jesus. People from many countries had gathered in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. Originally it was a Jewish festival to celebrate the giving of The Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai. It also celebrated the first fruits of the harvest season – the crop was ready.

Traders also knew there would be many “tourists” so they were there to sell their wares. So just outside the walls of the upper room where the disciples had gathered there was a crowd of people who knew nothing about Jesus.

That day the Holy Spirit gave to the disciples the ability to speak new languages so that those foreigners would say, “We hear these men from Galilee speaking in our own languages!” (v. 6)

The Holy Spirit brings power to share the Gospel. That day the disciples needed new languages. Later in the book of Acts the disciples would need the ability to cast out demons, while at other times they needed the healing power of God to minister to those they prayed for. The Holy Spirit came in power so that people could be pointed to Jesus.

The sound of the mighty wind, the tongues of fire and the disciples speaking new languages caught the attention of the people in the city. Now they are asking what is going on. Through their curiosity, God opens a door for Peter to speak, and he shares the message about Jesus. That day 3000 people joined the fellowship of believers – they formed the church. It was not a place nor a building. The church was the fellowship of people who put their faith in Jesus for salvation and who experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

3000 people came to Christ that day after Peter preaches his first sermon! Do it again, Lord! Do it again!

If God is to do it again, God’s people need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Every believer has the Holy Spirit in his or her life, but not all are filled with the Holy Spirit.

If I filled a glass with water and ice, could I say that glass was full of water? No, it has water and ice. If my life is filled with the Holy Spirit and... anything else (greed, selfishness, pride, disobedience, anger, or any other sin) could I say I am filled with the Holy Spirit? No, I do have the Holy Spirit, but there are things that must go before I am filled with His presence.

What would it look like if every believer was truly filled with the Holy Spirit? The only person who lived his whole life filled with the Holy Spirit was Jesus! The power of Jesus came from the Holy Spirit within Him. Though Jesus was fully God, he was also fully human, and in that he was dependent on the Holy Spirit in his ministry even as we are. And even a quick scan of the book of Acts, which recounts the life of the disciples who were filled with the Holy Spirit leaves us with a desire for this experience. We too pray, “Do it again, Lord! Do it again!”

Jesus prepared the disciples for what happened at Pentecost. Go back to Acts chapter 1 and notice that Jesus gave specific instructions on what to do as they waited for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, or baptism with the Holy Spirit, as Jesus called it. What were they to do? They were to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit to come.

And what were the disciples doing while they waited? Acts 1:14 gives us the answer: “They all joined together constantly in prayer...”

If we desire to see Pentecost again today, if we desire to see the Holy Spirit poured out on the life of the church today, then the church must start by getting on its knees in prayer. It is through prayer that our hearts are made ready for the coming of the Spirit.

I can imagine how Peter wrestled with his failures during those prayer sessions until finally he was able to grasp that he was forgiven. I can see Thomas recounting his doubts, asking Jesus' forgiveness in his prayers. Each of the disciples, no doubt, had their secret sins revealed so they could confess them to God and seek his forgiveness through Christ. Pride. Envy. Selfishness. Faithlessness. Cowardess. Unforgiveness. Anger. And the list goes on. Each believer was confronted by his or her sin so that it could be confessed and forgiven. True, there would still be more lessons to learn, and the need for further growth in grace, but God was working in their hearts as they prayed together, waiting for the promise that Jesus gave them.

By the way, do you know who was convicting these disciples of their sins? The Holy Spirit! This is the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Yes, the Holy Spirit was at work in the lives of the believers even before Pentecost, but when they were baptized with the Holy Spirit did they ever receive power!

This morning I speak to all the Christians who are saved from their sins through faith in Jesus: are you filled with the Holy Spirit?

When the Apostle Paul came to Ephesus he discovered Christians who had not received the Holy Spirit. In Acts 19 we read this account:

**1While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the interior and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples 2and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" "No," they answered, "we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." The Apostle Paul laid hands on them and prayed that they would receive the Holy Spirit and they did.**

We need the infilling of the Holy Spirit so that we can be faithful witnesses for Jesus. We need His power within us to be able to live our faith, and share our faith to those who still need to accept Jesus as their personal Saviour.

In Revelation 3:15-16 we read, **"I know your deeds, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm – neither hot nor cold – I will spit you out of my mouth."**

Don't settle for a lukewarm faith. Be filled with the Spirit. Enter into the experience of Pentecost, and know the power that comes from on high that will help you to love as Christ loved, to care as he cared, to give as he gave.

As we think about Pentecost Sunday, and what happened in Jerusalem so long ago, may we whisper that prayer we have repeated often this service: "Do it again, Lord! Do it again! And start with me!"  
(Breath on Me Breath of God)