

**Lexington Presbyterian Church
Lexington, Virginia**

May 23, 2021

The Holy Spirit Comes

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Have you ever had one of those...aha... experiences when all of a sudden—something you had not previously understood—some great truth—suddenly, miraculously makes sense?

The disciples, who walked with Jesus on a daily basis, went a long time before they had this aha experience. This morning we have gathered here to worship God through hymns, Psalms, liturgy, listening to beautiful music and we gather around the Word of God.

But we have also come to celebrate the Miracle of Understanding—which is the birth of the Christian Church. Peter, John, James and the rest of the disciples had spent quite a bit of time following Jesus around Galilee. They were there when He preached the Sermon on the Mount. He told them over and over again what was going to happen to Him, and why it had to happen that way. Jesus had fulfilled Scripture—the prophecies from the Old Testament—the disciples had lived with Him, eaten with Him, followed Him—but they still did not understand Him.

At the Last Supper when Jesus predicted His death, and comforted the disciples, Peter asked him, “Lord, where are you going?” Thomas said to him, “Lord we do not know where you are going...” On the night before Christ’s death He and His disciples went to Gethsemane. Before Jesus went to pray He said to them, “Stay here and keep watch.” When He returned from prayer Jesus found them sleeping. Jesus did this three times, and each time He came back finding them asleep. They still had no idea what was about to occur.

When the crowd came to arrest Him, the disciples were caught off guard. After a brief struggle where the servant of the high priest lost his ear....“Everyone deserted him and fled.” After Christ’s crucifixion, the disciples hid behind locked doors for fear of the Jews. On the morning of Christ’s resurrection, Mary Magdalene told Peter and John that someone had stolen Christ’s body. On the road to Emmaus, Jesus walked along with two of them. Their faces were downcast. They described Jesus as a mere “prophet” who had been crucified. After all that had happened...

After spending three years living in the presence of God’s One and Only Son—the disciples still did not get it!

Jesus had promised them that God would send the Holy Spirit to them. When that happened He would teach them all things and would remind them “of everything” Jesus had said to them. It would finally make sense. They would receive the “aha” moment.

The birth of the Christian Church came in the midst of the throngs of pilgrims from many different nations that were making their way to the temple to celebrate the Jewish festival of Pentecost.

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.

They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled.”

It is no coincidence that God selected this time to pour out God’s Spirit. It was God’s desire to reverse the divisive effects of race and nation. Pentecost reverses what happened at the Tower of Babel—where humanity became fragmented by the confusion of different languages. At Pentecost, the believers did not speak the same language—but were given the ability to speak the gospel in foreign languages so that everyone could understand. Why?

Because the Christian Church is based on inclusion—not exclusion.

“For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

No matter what our language, no matter what our race or our status in the food chain of humanity—it is God’s desire that everyone be included in the Church of Jesus Christ. It doesn’t matter to God where we have come from. The only thing that matters to God is where we are going. “Red, Yellow, Black and White, we are precious in His sight.”

When the crowds heard this, they came together in bewilderment, *“because each one heard them speaking in his own language.”* What seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest” on the disciples was a visible sign of the Holy Spirit of God.

The seal of the PCUSA is a cross, a descending dove and flames on either side of the cross! The dove and the flames represent the Holy Spirit. We are a Church that believes in the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ and the amazing and powerful baptism of the Holy Spirit. As Jesus promised, “John baptized with water.....you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” On Pentecost the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit.

It was both a corporate and a personal baptism. Each believer had been commanded by Christ to wait for the baptism of the Spirit.

The command to be filled with the Spirit is still to this very day God’s command to every believer, both individually and corporately--as the body of Christ—the Church!

“Be filled with the Spirit,” Paul declares in Ephesians.

Are we filled with the Spirit?

Once we are filled with the Spirit...what happens?

For one thing—we have that “aha” experience when the Spiritual things of God all of a sudden begin to make sense. We also enter the kingdom of God—which is the rule of God in our lives, right here and right now while we are still on earth. We gain the miracle of understanding and begin the exciting Christian adventure as part of God’s Holy Church. We are also given the gifts of the Spirit, which we understand to be “given for the common good.”

Acts 2: 1-21

For as the Church of Jesus Christ—we are all part of the body of Christ. We all have important roles which we are to carry out within the body for the common good of the whole.

When the Holy Spirit came upon the believers at Pentecost—they immediately began to have the mind of Christ—they began to walk as Christ walked—and they were given the miracle of understanding.

Peter, the one who had denied Christ three times—for fear that he would suffer the same fate—stood up in front of the crowd, “raised his voice”, and preached the first sermon in the new church age. Peter—the Spirit filled man spoke at the top of his voice with authority and forcefulness!

What a difference the Spirit made in his life! He preached about the prophecy of David, the eyewitness testimonies of the disciples, the exaltation and the ascension of Jesus into heaven. He talked to them about heaven, but he also talked to them the reality of hell. Peter proclaimed to them that God had raised Jesus from the dead, *“freeing Him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on Him.”*

Peter then declared, *“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*

This powerful Spirit-filled message is as true and applicable today as it was 2,000+ years ago!!!

We are the Church of Jesus Christ! We are His body—His representatives here on earth. We have the symbol of the cross and the flame! We are all called to be Spirit filled professing Christians, using our gifts to help and save the world!

Are we facilitating the Spirit of the Church or are we blocking the Spirit of the Church?

It’s easy for us to get caught up in the business of the church and our own issues. However, when the local Church is allowing the power of the Holy Spirit to take control, lives are changed, communities are resuscitated and there is no more powerful force in the world!

Paul writes to the church in Galatia, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” In other words, the fruit of the Spirit is moral character.

Many ask, "If I open myself to the power of the Holy Spirit, if I let him point out my sins, teach me, and call me to useful involvement in the church, what will happen to me? What will my life be like?" All I can say is, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, and so forth."

Notice it does not say, "The blossom of the Spirit is love." It says, "The fruit." That is the final product of a tree. So the fruit or final product of the indwelling Spirit is not power or truth or spiritual gifts or correction from sin. The final product is character, moral maturity described as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Acts 2: 1-21

A few years ago a major American magazine polled its readership, asking, "What do you most want out of life?" The three major answers were: I want love, I want to be happy, and I want peace. Love, happiness, peace—these are the first three fruits of the Spirit! So it is abundantly clear that what we most want out of life is what the good Lord is most eager to give us!

The late John Lennon is quoted as saying this, "When I was 5 years old, my mother always told me that **happiness** was the key to life. When I went to school, they asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I wrote down '**happy**'. They told me I didn't understand the assignment, and I told them they didn't understand life."

Before Christ ascended into heaven He promised the disciples: *"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

This happened on the first Pentecost and 3000 people became part of the Church of Jesus Christ that day. We too are called to be a church—filled with fire—filled with enthusiasm—filled with love—filled with the miracle of understanding.

"And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

The message is from sermons that I preached over the years that I have been in the pastorate. I have compiled them from the notes I made before they were preached. I do not know where I found some of the material contained here. I may have borrowed it, as a whole or in part, from others. I simply do not remember. If this is the case, I apologize right now, and that our combined efforts will glorify God.