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June 4, 2017

Ashes to Fire
Pentecost Sunday:
The Comforter Has Come
Acts 2:38

1. Two Baptisms

- *Matthew 3:11; Acts 8:12, 14-17, 19:1-6*

* The first baptism is water

* The second baptism is Spirit

2. What is Spirit baptism?

- *Galatians 2:20; John 14:7, 16:3, 15:26, 16:14; Acts 1:8; Jeremiah 29:13*

3. How do I receive Spirit baptism?

- *1 Thessalonians 5:23*

* **Be Thirsty**

- *Matthew 5:6;*

* **Be Humble**

- *James 4:9-10; Psalm 10:17, 25:9, 29:19; Isaiah 57:15*

* **Be Persistent**

- *Luke 11:5-13*

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6/4/17

A2F
**Pentecost Sunday:
The Comforter Has Come**

One of the many things that I love about our church is the way that we celebrate baptism. Baptism is always a deeply personal time in the life of the individual being baptized, but it is also a profound event in the life of the church community. This baptism is more than just forgiveness of sins; it is a celebration into the life of the community of believers in Jesus, locally and universally. It is joining into a sacrament that the believing church has participated in throughout history and around the globe.

But if you've figured out nothing else from our *Ashes to Fire* Scripture readings for today, there is more for the life of every believer in Jesus than just being saved from sin. What we've heard Jesus talking about and praying for us about in our previous readings in the last several weeks in *Ashes to Fire* has brought us to this day. We've been reading together every morning and every evening Scripture passages that have taken us from Ash Wednesday on February 10th to today, the Day of Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. What happened today in Scripture in the life of the Church has inaugurated what is available to every Christian and every Christian Church. I want to use one verse as the springboard for our conversation today. I'm lifting it out of Peter's great sermon on the Day of Pentecost, from Acts 2:

"Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38, nlt)

Our readings have all been leading up to this – that there are...

1. Two *Baptisms*

There are *two* baptisms. The first baptism is what we've enjoyed together already: water baptism, which was the baptism of John the Baptist, or what is also called a *baptism of repentance*. In Matthew 3:11, John the Baptist said this:

"I baptize with water those of you who have changed your hearts and lives. The one who is coming after me is stronger than I am. I'm not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."
(Matthew 3:11, ceb)

The first baptism is *water*:

...this *first* baptism refers to becoming a Christian.

The second baptism is *Spirit*

...when the Holy Spirit fills you with Himself. This distinction is important for you to understand if you honestly and deeply intend to live out your Christian life. The majority of the church in the US today, maybe even many of us in this room, only know about and have only experienced the first baptism. But listen to me: if your Christian life is bland, if it is without joy, if it is missing the kind of power and passion that you know instinctively is missing, and that you read about in Scripture, if you are continually struggling with sin or just not growing in your faith, if you haven't seen anyone else around you coming to know Jesus because of your influence, then more than likely you too have yet to understand this second baptism.

The second baptism is where the really great Christian life is.

In our reading for today, we've seen that the disciples finally experienced what Jesus had been promising them would happen to them, after Jesus had been crucified and then risen from the dead. The result, as we saw so powerfully read to us, was a supernatural ability to share the Good News with people across cultural and language barriers. The disciples had become powerfully effective at helping other people become Christians, and did so in ways that were far beyond their own natural abilities.

Once this happened, we can see later in the Book of Acts that the Good News began to spread beyond Jerusalem to others of different cultures – even to those who were not Jewish.

One of the examples of this is in chapter 8 of Acts. Philip had gone to Samaria and shared the Good News with the people there. We are told in verse 12 that the people of Samaria repented and believed and were baptized in water. We'll pick it up in verse 14, and as I read this, watch for the two baptisms:

“When word reached the apostles in Jerusalem that Samaria had accepted God's word, they commissioned Peter and John to go to Samaria. Peter and John went down to Samaria where they prayed that the new believers would receive the Holy Spirit. (This was because the Holy Spirit had not yet fallen on any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) So Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 8:14-17, ceb)

When the Bible is describing the state of the Samaritan Christians, the original Greek language indicates that they were in a *continual* state of being baptized with water. That means that they were living the repentant life – they were saved, they were Christians. This in itself is an amazing thing, because the Samaritans were hated by the Jews – the Jews considered Samaritans illegitimate children, and not deserving of God's blessings. And yet here they are becoming Christians! I think it's worth pointing this out: this shows that it doesn't matter what anybody else thinks of you;

God loves you as if you were the only person in the entire world to love! Jesus died for you, no matter who you are!

Then in verse 16 it says that the Samaritans had not yet been filled with the Spirit. So John and Peter prayed and laid hands on them, and they became filled with the Spirit. Clearly, they have *both distinct baptisms*. Do you see that?

Another example of this is in chapter 19 of Acts, where we see the example of the people in the town of Ephesus who were Christians.

“Paul ... 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.” (Acts 19:1-6, ceb)

Notice that the passage says that they were *disciples* – this is a word that is used exclusively for the disciples of Christ. In other words, these were Christians – but they had not received the Spirit. Paul then he asks them if they have received the Holy Spirit. They say they haven’t even heard of the Holy Spirit, so Paul explains to them the difference between the baptisms of repentance and the baptism of the Spirit, and then he lays his hands on them to pray, and they receive the Holy Spirit.

Clearly, the idea of becoming a Christian in these examples is associated with repentance, or water baptism, or John’s baptism, and each is distinct from the second baptism. That’s why we baptize with water – it’s so very important because it represents that we have been forgiven and cleansed and saved by Jesus, we’ve asked him to save us, and we are now Christians.

If you have not become a Christian, before you can ever think about being fully alive in the Spirit, you must first have this baptism of repentance. (Be saved, which baptism represents).

But I hope I’ve shown you clearly that *there is another baptism for you if you are a Christian*. Honestly, many of us live as if we’ve never heard of the Holy Spirit. But God wants to fill you too! So...

2. What is *Spirit* baptism?

Put simply, it is the time when the Holy Spirit is allowed to move into your life and you willingly give Him full control. It means your life is not your own; you now live for Him. The Apostle Paul said...

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20, niv)

It is allowing the Spirit to live so fully in us that the Spirit is our life, not ourselves.

When Jesus talked about the power of the Holy Spirit, He also gave important truths as to what we can expect.

- The Spirit is the Spirit of truth (John 14:7).
- The Spirit will guide you into truth (John 16:3).
- The Spirit will point you to Christ (John 15:26).
- The Spirit will glorify Christ. (John 16:14)
- The Spirit will empower you to tell others about Jesus (Acts 1:8).

This is what the Spirit will do in and through your life when he fills you.

Remember last week that we looked at Jesus’ prayer for us. We saw that Jesus prayed that the Father would glorify Jesus so that Jesus would bring glory to the Father. Then Jesus prayed that he would be glorified in us, which is what happens when the Spirit moves into our lives. Remember Jesus prayed that this would happen so that others would see Jesus in us and then put *their* faith in him, too. A Christian’s call is to serve and to glorify Christ and to live and proclaim the truth of God’s Love for everyone. If you look at any example in the Bible, you see an immediate focus on outreach and proclaiming the Word of God. The Spirit equips and empowers Christians to *do God’s will*, which is to love and to tell others the truth about Jesus. The apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit and immediately had the power to preach, and the boldness to stand before their enemies and proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. Each time we see the baptism of the Holy Spirit in the Bible, the immediate response of those who are filled is to go out and live this Christ-like life and tell others about Jesus. Spirit baptism is never centered on us, but is always centered on Jesus Christ and his mission, and that mission is always directed toward bringing people to Christ.

Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would give the disciples (and us) the power to be his witnesses:

“What you’ll get is the Holy Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit comes on you, you will be able to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, all over Judea and Samaria, even to the ends of the world.” (Acts 1:8, tmt)

The whole book of Acts is about the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers, empowering them to go out and tell others about Jesus Christ. That is the kind of life we are talking about.

The point I hope to make from this is that *every Christian* should seek this second baptism – the purpose of Christ’s death and resurrection was to make this available to us. God transforms ordinary men and women into extraordinary people of faith.

The lack of real spiritual power in the church today isn't because God's power is diminished, but because we no longer seek God with all our heart.

Jeremiah 29:13 says, "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:13, niv)

So...

3. How do I receive ***Spirit*** baptism?

There are three key ingredients to receiving the Holy Spirit, or the second baptism.

The first is to...

Be *Thirsty*

You must have a hunger and thirst for God above all else. Jesus said that you should be happy if you hunger and thirst for this, because you will be filled!

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled." (Matthew 5:6, niv)

Every leader in the history of the church with this testimony has one thing in common – they all had that hunger for righteousness. They thirsted after God and could not be satisfied with anything less than God.

They wanted to lose their lives for the sake of being completely used for God's will. And the evidence of the Holy Spirit is seen in their lives. They lived like Christians; they introduced people to Jesus; they helped men and women see the need to repent and pointed to the truth of the risen Savior, Jesus Christ.

Second is to...

Be *Humble*

Humble does not mean to be meek or shy, in the Bible humility means brokenness before God. Without brokenness, we will not find God.

When we humble ourselves and are broken before God, we are given several promises (I've listed some references in your notes: *James 4:9-10; Psalm 10:17, 25:9, 29:19; Isaiah 57:15*). He will lift up those who make themselves low, He will hear their desire; He will prepare their heart; He will cause His ear to hear their prayer; He will guide them in justice and teach them His ways. God also promises that those who humble themselves will not be sorrowful because the Lord will increase their joy and cause them to rejoice.

God's Spirit dwells with the humble and contrite. Unless I humble myself, I am all the power behind my Christian life. But when I humble myself before God, God exalts me so he can show His glory in me and point others to Christ.

Last, you must...

Be *Persistent*

In Luke 11:5-13 Jesus teaches the importance of this if we are going to receive the Holy Spirit:

“Suppose you went to a friend's house at midnight, wanting to borrow three loaves of bread. You say to him, 'A friend of mine has just arrived for a visit, and I have nothing for him to eat.' And suppose he calls out from his bedroom, 'Don't bother me. The door is locked for the night, and my family and I are all in bed. I can't help you.' But I tell you this—though he won't do it for friendship's sake, if you keep knocking long enough, he will get up and give you whatever you need because of your shameless persistence. "And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. "You fathers—if your children ask for bread, do you give them a stone? Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake instead? Or if they ask for an egg, do you give them a scorpion? Of course not! So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.” (Luke 11:5-13, nlt)

This teaching ties together how we ask for the promise of the Holy Spirit. What was the purpose of a neighbor asking for bread? Not to feed himself, but to meet the need of someone else. Don't miss this: we seek to be filled with the Spirit so that we can meet the needs of others, especially in their greatest need, which is to know the love of God. Those who successfully seek for God are always persistent for the sake of others. You will continue to struggle with selfishness if you don't seek the Spirit. If you are serious and truly hunger and thirst for God, you will never be satisfied until you are filled with God's Spirit. You will find God “When you seek for Him with all your heart.” Jesus said the Father is *eager* to give us the Holy Spirit when we ask!

We know for a fact that God wants to give us His Spirit; so what's the hold up? Why don't many of us have the Holy Spirit? All I can say is, ask and keep asking. Don't stop asking. Not for yourself, but for God's glory and the needs of others to know Jesus.

My Story....

(Quietly: instruct to be thirsty, humble, and persistent. You've only started it here. He will finish it.)

May God himself fill you with his Spirit through and through. May your entire being be free from sin and fully powered to live for Jesus until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And God, the One who called you is completely dependable. If he said it, he'll do it!” (1 Thessalonians 5:23, personal paraphrase)