



grow. pray. study.

May 19, 2024 Pentecost

Pentecost: God's promise fulfilled

MONDAY 5.20.24 Acts 2:1-24, 32

Did You Know?

"Shavuot, ("Festival of the Weeks")... was originally an agricultural festival, marking the beginning of the wheat harvest.... During rabbinic times the festival became associated with the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai.... It became customary during Shavuot to study the Torah and to read the Book of Ruth. Celebration of Shavuot occurs on the 50th day, or seven weeks, after the sheaf offering of the harvest celebrated during Passover. The holiday is therefore also called Pentecost from the Greek *pentēkostē* ("50th")." *

On the Pentecost day in Acts 2 (seven weeks after the Passover when Jesus died on the cross) the Holy Spirit descended in a highly visible way. Some Jerusalem skeptics claimed the Spirit-filled Christians had started drinking early. Peter forcefully told them this was God pouring out the Spirit and quoted the promise of Joel 2:28. The Spirit led Peter and others to boldly preach the saving news of Jesus' victory over death just 50 days earlier in that very city.

- In John 15:26, Jesus said the Holy Spirit "will testify about me." That's exactly what the Spirit did at Pentecost. Peter's Spirit-filled sermon said, "Listen to these words! Jesus the Nazarene was a man whose credentials God proved to you through miracles, wonders, and signs." How has the Spirit testified about Jesus to your heart? When you have a chance to share your experience with Jesus, how can you rely on the Spirit to make your sharing as effective as possible?
- In Acts 1:4, 8, Luke wrote that Jesus told his followers "not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for what the Father had promised. He said, '... in only a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit and you will be my witnesses.'" Acts 2 recorded how that promise initially came true. When have you needed to wait for God? What did you learn through the experience? When have you been able to be a witness to what God has done in your life?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, you kept your prophetic promise on Pentecost, as in the end you keep all your promises. I claim your promise today and call on the name of the Lord for my salvation. Amen.

* Article "Shavuot" at <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Shavuot>.

God's *rûah* [Spirit] in creation

TUESDAY 5.21.24 Genesis 1:2, 26-27; Psalm 33:6-9

Did You Know?

In Biblical Hebrew, the word *rûah* meant spirit, wind, and/or breath. “In the OT the spirit (*rûah*) of Yahweh is God’s power in action. Yahweh’s spirit is God himself present and at work, as are his ‘hand’ and his ‘arm’.... A term for both breath blown out and wind blowing (wind is viewed as God’s breath, [Isaiah 40:7](#); [Ezekiel 37:9](#)), *rûah* has vivid and awesome associations when used of God’s energy let loose. It is so used in nearly 100 of its nearly 400 Old Testament appearances. Yahweh’s spirit is said to... shape creation, animate animals and mankind, and direct nature and history ([Genesis 1:2, 2:7](#); [Job 33:4](#); [Psalm 33:6, 104:29–30](#); [Isaiah 34:16](#)).” *

Long before anyone had thought about a word like “Trinity,” the poetic creation liturgy in Genesis 1 said the one God created humans in “our” image, made to be like “us” in character. It described God’s *rûah* (see note above on this Hebrew word) moving over the waters of primordial chaos. Psalm 33 was a later poem that also portrayed God’s spirit as fully involved in the work of creation. Like Jesus (cf. [John 1:1-3](#)), the Holy Spirit was already there, at the very beginning of the Bible’s big story.

- Yesterday we read about the Holy Spirit coming on Pentecost after Jesus’ resurrection (cf. [Acts 2:2-4](#)). But Genesis said God’s Spirit existed long before at the world’s creation. Scholar John Goldingay wrote: “The word for spirit is also the word for breath and for wind, and the Old Testament sometimes implies a link between these.... God’s spirit suggests God’s dynamic power.... Breath is essential to life; where there is no breath, there is no life. And life comes from God.” ** Does it deepen your awareness of life’s mystery to see its source in the mists of eternity?
- In our culture, many say (directly or implicitly) that our existence, as individuals and as a world, is just a gigantic cosmic accident, free of any divine direction or purpose. Genesis taught great meaning for existence, coming from God’s creative breath. How does it change your sense of why you exist to believe that the fulness of God (“us”) brought this world, and the life processes that created you, into being?

Prayer: Holy Spirit, you are the spiritual air I breathe. Help me to grow more aware of the inner strength and vitality you offer me as I make you the “oxygen” of my life with God. Amen.

* J. I. Packer, article “Holy Spirit” in *New Dictionary of Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988, p. 317.

** John Goldingay, *Genesis for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1–16*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010, p. 9.

Jesus identified his work with the Holy Spirit's

WEDNESDAY 5.22.24 John 7:37-39, Matthew 28:18-20

At the yearly Festival of Tabernacles, priests drew water daily at the Pool of Siloam, and poured it out in the Temple, reciting Isaiah 12:3: "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." It was against that backdrop that Jesus dramatically invited all who believe in him to drink "living water." Lest anyone miss the point, John directly pointed out that Jesus' words showed the Spirit's life-giving power, not only for the spiritually barren places in Jesus' day but for all time.

- Israel was observing an annual public ritual, which could become just "going through the motions." But Jesus' call was personal. "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me ..." Are you personally drinking the water of eternal life Jesus offers by keeping your life open to the Spirit's presence? If not, what is blocking you from accepting Jesus' offer?
- Some popular sources suggest that a church council invented the idea of the Trinity in some dark corner of the 4th or 5th century. But in Matthew 28:19, Jesus the victor, risen from the dead, made the Trinity central to his Great Commission: "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." He didn't explain the Trinity (a grasp of it is always elusive *); he simply stated it as reality. Do you find the mystery of the Trinity an obstacle to faith, or can you value it as a way of expressing God's constant guiding presence with you?

Prayer: God in three persons, blessed Trinity, I am grateful for all the ways you reveal yourself. You save and forgive me, quench my inner thirst, and guide me in all my steps. Amen.

* For a more in-depth study, see chapter 3 of Hamilton, Adam, *Creed: What Christians Believe and Why*, starting on page 79. Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition.

The Holy Spirit brings us Jesus' gift of peace

THURSDAY 5.23.24 John 14:16-18, 26-27

Did You Know?

In Biblical Greek, the word *paraklētos* (like the Hebrew *rûah*) had multiple English equivalents. “There is no single English equivalent to the Greek word *paraklētos*”.... a variety of English words are used to translate John’s use of “Paraclete” when referring to the Holy Spirit, which reflects the elasticity of the Greek term.” * English translators most commonly use the words Helper, Advocate, Comforter and Counselor. It is rendered as “Companion” in the *Common English Bible*, with “Advocate” a footnoted alternative.

The disciples had been with Jesus for three years. It must have been impossible to imagine Jesus' ministry going on without him present. But Jesus stressed that he was not abandoning the disciples. He promised them the Holy Spirit as the “paraclete” (see note above), a Companion who would fill the role Jesus had filled, different yet the same. The Spirit’s presence would bring Jesus’ peace to their hearts.

- Jesus said, “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” (verse 27). Have you ever found the kind of “peace” the world offers leaving you feeling empty and purposeless? How can opening your life to the gift of the Holy Spirit give you the greater, deeper peace Jesus promised?
- Jesus did not forget or desert his first disciples or us. He promised to be with us constantly through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not replace Jesus, but rather, in a way beyond our full understanding, is Jesus’ presence with us, now and until the end of time and space as we know it (“forever”—verse 16). What word or phrase in today’s verses about the Holy Spirit speaks most to your heart? When have you most sensed Jesus’ presence with you?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you promised, “I won’t leave you as orphans, I will come to you.” Thank you for always being my Companion and Comforter, even when my circumstances seem the hardest. Amen.

* Jeffrey E. Miller, article “Paraclete” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016.

The Holy Spirit's power in richly varied gifts

FRIDAY 5.24.24 1 Corinthians 12:27-30, Ephesians 4:11-13, Romans 12:6-8

The apostle Paul wrote the three passages you just read over two thousand years ago, yet they are timeless, applying to each follower of Jesus in 2024. As the body of Christ, each member works together to create the whole. If one person with one gift is missing, the entire body suffers. As the body works together unity and power come into being. We do not acquire or use these gifts on our own strength, but only through the Holy Spirit at work within us.

- Are you clear about which of these gifts the Spirit has given you? If not, ask one or more people who know you well what gifts they see in you. You can also [click here](#) to access a short introduction to spiritual gifts discovery that we use at The Church of the Resurrection. Once you have a sense of what your gifts are, how are you using those gifts as a witness to the Good News who helps to build up the body of Christ?
- Tomorrow we'll focus on the fruit of the Spirit—qualities the Spirit grows in every Christian (cf. [Galatians 5:22-23](#)). But your “package” of spiritual gifts won't be exactly like anyone else's—note how Paul used words like “some” and “if” in writing about the gifts. And any spiritual gift must be developed. You likely have an aptitude in your area of giftedness but have room to grow in using it well. After finding them, how are you developing your spiritual gifts?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, the Spirit has gifted me in unique ways so that the Kingdom might come to earth. Help me to recognize the joy and responsibility of my giftedness. Amen.

The beautiful fruit the Holy Spirit bears in us

SATURDAY 5.25.24 Galatians 5:22-23

The prophet Isaiah wrote, “But now, Lord, you are our father. We are the clay, and you are our potter. All of us are the work of your hand” (Isaiah 64:8). In today's reading, the apostle Paul (who in another place spoke of God's children as “clay pots”—cf. [2 Corinthians 4:7](#)) used the image of a fruitful tree to portray the kind of people into which God's Spirit is steadily shaping us as we daily seek to renew our openness to his presence. The Spirit's craftsmanship in our human lives results not merely in inspiring internal experiences—it ultimately shows itself in lives that glow as they act out the beautiful qualities Paul listed for the Galatian Christians.

- Most of us are products of a culture that tells you strongly that “you get to be whatever you want to be.” For some people, that makes the idea of allowing God's Spirit to shape you into the kind of person portrayed in today's reading sound like a bad thing. Do you believe letting the Spirit shape you robs you of your individuality, or makes you fully into the full humanity God intends you to have? Think through the reasons for your answer. Do you express or act out love, joy, peace and the other fruit of the Spirit in ways that were not characteristic of you in the past? Take a personal inventory of how present each of the “fruit of the Spirit” qualities is in your life. Prayerfully ask the Holy Spirit to help you identify one or two of the areas you most need to grow in.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, keep shaping me on your divine potter's wheel, making me into the person you want me to be. Thank you for the Spirit's constant presence to guide and mold me. Amen.

Prayer Requests – cor.org/prayer *Prayers of peace and comfort for:*

To **Mike Sheppard** following the death of **Richard Sheppard** (Father), who died 5/7/2024.

To **Barb Bodenhamer** following the death of **Sharon Johnson** (Mother), who died.