

Pentecost Sunday,  
Saint Dunstan's Episcopal Church, Houston, TX  
5 June 2022

Acts 2:1-11

Today we celebrate the ministry of God's Holy spirit in the life of the Church and in our own personal lives. According to the credal statements of our early Church, the Holy Spirit is "The Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets." This is a powerful statement that tells us some powerful truths. First, it tells us that the Holy Spirit is *Lord*. This term Lord is applied in the Old Testament to speak of God, the Creator, Israel's one God. The words Elohim and Yahweh have this meaning. God as Lord, rules the whole creation, stands above all the powers of nature, and oversees the development of the cosmos (the stars, suns, planets that form our billions of galaxies in our ever expanding universe.) More specifically, God as Lord, was Israel's ruler and true king, a benevolent God who delights in the nation and enters into covenant with it at various points, walking alongside Israel as they move from a family to twelve tribes, and from twelve tribes to a powerful nation. God walks alongside his chosen nation, protecting them, loving them, and directing them in the ways they should go. This directing often comes in the name of instruction, correction, direct intervention on the nations behalf, and even punishment.

We find the word "Lord" also applied to Jesus of Nazareth in the New Testament. He is the Lord, the Son of David that was to come into the world. Jesus, like the Father, leads his disciples, walks with them as they become a movement and then a Church, and enters into a new Covenant with them. The early Church began to see Christ as Lord and true king. He was the fulfilment of all the promises made to our biblical ancestors, he was the one promised by the prophets, and he was the one who was to liberate Israel. Jesus was the Redeemer who rescues and saves humanity from within, taking on flesh to accomplish his mission within humanity, on behalf of humanity.

So, it is significant that the Spirit is called Lord. What this means is that the Spirit shares in the same kingship and dominion that God, the Father and Creator, and Jesus, the Son and Redeemer share. He is of the same substance. He proceeds from both the Father and the Son, and the Spirit has been a part of God's own reality from the beginning of time. The statement tells us that the Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, has a very specific job: He is the wind, power, energy, and breath through which God creates everything. The spirit is God's creating force. The Spirit is the giver of life. God says, "Let there be!" and the result is that his breath then creates that which God wills. The Father creates by his Spirit. What this means is that the whole creation shares God's Holy Spirit. The Spirit in us is what gives us life, the very breath that fills our lungs with life-saving air. The Spirit is God's own life within our very lives.

The statement continues that the Spirit is worshiped in the same way the Father and the Son are worshiped and glorified. This is the one area in which some of our mainline denominations fail. Back in the 1970s and 1980s, the Charismatic Renewal helped the world acknowledge the Holy Spirit's power in our lives and in the life of the Church. They reminded us that the Holy Spirit's gifts are still active in our lives today and did not disappear at the end of the first century. The Spirit is still today filling his church and his world with God's power. The Charismatic movement encouraged the speaking in tongues, the gifts of prophecy and interpretation, and the gifts of prayer and healing. I remember the joy of all-night vigils, stadiums filled with powerful preachers, and people rediscovering the Church all throughout the world. Sadly, over the last 20 or 30 years, the Spirit has descended in prominence and many churches no longer understand or appreciate the role of the Spirit in the life of the Church. Other than a statement or two in liturgy, we don't give God's Holy Spirit the worship and the respect the Spirit deserves.

On that glorious day of Pentecost, the Spirit descended freely on all of those people gathered and they began to worship God in their own tongues. At that point, the Spirit turned a group of cowardly disciples, hiding behind locked doors for fear of the authorities, into the most powerful evangelistic force the world has ever seen. By the end of that century, we would have over a million Christians throughout the known world of the day, and by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that group was now in the billions of people. The Spirit gave them courage, eloquence, power, and zeal. Neither beast nor the empire would have been enough to stop this evangelistic force. They had a joy in their hearts that was indescribable. They became contagious Christians in love with God, the Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit in and within them. And this courage and love led them to crucifixion, beheadings, hangings, and many other tortures. They had a gift for the world and nothing could stand on their way, until they shared that gift to the very ends of the world. They were willing to pay with their very own lives for the honor to share this gift.

The statement tells us that the Spirit speaks through the prophets. Which means that the Spirit makes the task of proclamation possible. In the same way, the Spirit's job in the life of the Church is to walk alongside us, leading us in the way we should go, giving us the strength to withstand discouragement, cowardice, and fear. The Spirit reminds us of the things that Jesus taught us. But the Spirit's primary job in the work of the Christian is to remind us of who and whose we are. The spirit walks alongside us giving us the courage necessary to live within our baptismal covenant every day. It is extremely hard to be a Christian in a secular world. It is extremely hard to be witnesses of the resurrection in a post-Christian world. It is easy to become discouraged. It is easy to lose our way. It is easy to let the voices of the world drown God's voice in our hearts. By the Spirit is that internal voice, whispering in our ear, "Remember, you have been baptized! Remember you are God's own and he loves you. Remember, Jesus died for you because he desires the salvation of the world. Remember, God has given you an identity and a vocation to be witnesses of the resurrection and instruments of peace." This is the work of the Spirit: To help us remember our identity and our mission. We are forgetful people. We need one who comes alongside us. We need the whispering of God's own

Spirit, leading us into further truth. Leading us into a closer relationship with God through his Son. Giving us the courage we need. Giving us the patience we need.

To me, the Spirit is that still quiet voice in my heart who gives me the energy and the strength to wake up in the morning to do the work God has given me to do. The Spirit is the giver of life even today and if we let this spirit loose in our hearts, he will revive all the dry deserts in our lives. The Spirit will reconnect us with joy and hope. The Spirit will lead us back to Jesus. Many of us feel stuck in our faith. The Spirit is the answer to that problem. Many of us have become overly formalized in our liturgy. The Spirit is the answer to that problem. Many of us have become frozen, set in our ways, capricious, and even arrogant, believing that we are the best Christians that ever lived. The Spirit is the answer to those issues as well.

May you rediscover God's Holy Spirit this very day. May you remember that God loves you and wants to create abundant life within you! May God's holy Spirit help you reconnect with the incredible joy of following a Messiah who is God's answer to the problem of Evil. Let the Holy Spirit in and God will change your life in ways you can never imagine. Blessings to you today!