

Media and Graphics Notes

Sermon Starter Video?	Yes
Sermon Notes?	There are multiple scripture passages throughout the sermon.
Other Notes	

Key Questions

What is this sermon about?

This sermon is about the Holy Spirit. We review the work of the Holy Spirit throughout the Bible and connect this history with the opportunity to live in the Spirit today.



Why is this sermon important?

This sermon is important because, at times, the Holy Spirit has been ignored in the life of the church. An important step to living a life filled with the Spirit of God is to know more about the Holy Spirit.

What is the context of this sermon?

This is the first sermon of a two week series on the Holy Spirit. It fills the gap between our annual stewardship series and the season of Advent. This sermon is adapted from Alpha Talk 8 - Who is the Holy Spirit by Nicky Gumbel.

What are the next action steps?

Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

What is the good news (bottom line)?

The good news is that the gift of the Holy Spirit is no longer just for particular people, times or tasks; it's for everyone.

Metadata

Topic(s)

1. Changing Lives

Sermon Books of the Bible

1. Acts
2. Genesis

25th Sunday after Pentecost
Holy Fire - Who is the Holy Spirit?
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Genesis 1:1-2, NIV
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3. Ezekiel
4. Jeremiah
5. John
6. Judges
7. Luke

Tags

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Genesis 1:1-2, NIV

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

Response to Scripture

One: The Word of God for the People of God.

All: Thanks be to God!

Introduction

Sermon Starter Video

Play sermon starter video.

Series Review

Who is the Holy Spirit?

For a long time, I think, in the church the Holy Spirit was really rather ignored — there was a big concentration on God the Father and on God the Son. And sometimes, I think, also he's been misunderstood. To help us learn more about the Holy Spirit, what we're going to do today is have a look at the history of the Holy Spirit through the Bible with an outline from Nicky Gumbel, creator of the Alpha Course.

Sermon Notes and Scripture Study

I invite you to open your bulletin to a place where you can take notes during the message today. Today, I hope that you will hear:

- Something new or find new questions
- Perspective on your life or something in your life that gives additional meaning to the message today.
- Guidance about how to live as a disciple of Jesus.

I invite you to write down some of the things that you hear in the sermon today and take your bulletin home as a tool to grow in your faith outside of worship. You can reflect on what you heard today, pray for people of our congregation and read scripture to prepare for worship next week.

Opening

Prayer

Will you pray with me? O God, use these words to speak good news so that as individuals and as a congregation we will fear nothing but sin, desire nothing but you and live as part of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Holy Ghost

Maybe something to do with the fact that in some versions of the Bible the name that the Holy Spirit is given is the Holy Ghost, and 'Ghost' sounds kind of a little bit creepy, a bit eerie — almost sort of something almost like supernatural evil.

Supernaturally good

And of course God is supernatural good, the Holy Spirit is supernatural good, and we need the supernatural. But I think because of the slightly different translation, people were a little bit — a little bit sort of wary.

One woman said to her preacher, 'Preacher, we don't want anything supernatural happening in this church!'

Transition

So, today and next week, we are going to take a closer look at the Holy Spirit to see what we can learn from the scriptures and apply to our lives today.

Holy Spirit Involved in Creation

The Holy Spirit has been around literally since the creation of the world. And that's where I want to start looking this morning — at the Creation account.

Holy Spirit Brings New Things

The Holy Spirit was involved in creation and we begin with Genesis 1, verse 1 and 2:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."¹

Like a bird hovering over her nest, waiting.

And the Spirit of God was about to bring something new into being.

Trinity in Creation

The whole Trinity were involved in creation.

God the Father, the Creator, created the world through Jesus by his Spirit.

And here the Spirit of God is hovering, waiting to bring something new.

New Life through the Spirit

The Holy Spirit creates all things, yet has a special relationship with those who are Christians, those who have given their lives to Christ. The Holy Spirit comes to live within them, to breathe within them the breath of life.

¹ Genesis 1:1-2, NIV.

See New Life in People

Sometimes you can almost see it on people's faces. You can see almost — sometimes there's almost like a deadness in people's eyes, and then the Spirit of God comes to live within them and you can see it's like life comes into the person's face, their expression, almost a physical expression.

See New Life in Churches

The same with churches. Some churches seem to be very dry and dusty, and then the Spirit comes, and there's new life.

Holy Spirit came upon particular people at particular times for particular tasks

Gideon - Leadership

So the Spirit of God comes on particular people. For example, Gideon for leadership — Judges 6:14-15:

"Then the Lord turned to him and said, "You have strength, so go and rescue Israel from the power of Midian. Am I not personally sending you?"

But again Gideon said to him, "With all due respect, my Lord, how can I rescue Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I'm the youngest in my household."²

The nation had been overrun by the Midianites, the country was in desperate need, and God sends Gideon to be a leader. And Gideon says, 'Oh, Lord, you've picked the wrong person! I can never do this. 'How could I save Israel? My clan's the weakest, and I'm the least in my family.'

He felt inadequate, ill-equipped.

And God says to him, 'No, I want you to go. I want you to go and set the people free.' Now, how can he do that?

We find the answer in Judges 6:34:

"Then the Lord's spirit came over Gideon, and he sounded the horn and summoned the Abiezrites to follow him."³

'Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon' — and that is what turned him into a great leader. And again, this is the amazing thing about the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit comes upon a man or a woman, we can be transformed.

Other Old Testament Leaders

There are others in the Old Testament who we read of being filled with the Holy Spirit:

- In Exodus, the Holy Spirit fills Bezalel for artistic work.

² Judges 6:14-15, CEB.

³ Judges 6:34, CEB.

- In Judges, Samson is filled with power and strength. He is able to break free from the chains that bind him. What we find often in the Old Testament being true physically, is true in the New Testament spiritually. So, we find that we are able to break free from those things that bind us.
- The Holy Spirit comes on Isaiah for prophecy and he speaks the words that are recorded as the basis for Jesus' very first sermon

Transition

And as we go on through the Old Testament there is a rising sense of anticipation: that God is going to do something even more amazing.

This is referred to as 'the promise of the Father'.

In one sense you could sum up the Old Testament in one word: 'promise'.

Holy Spirit Promised by the Father

So what exactly is this promise?

Let's look at Jeremiah 31:33-34:

"No, this is the covenant that I will make with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my instructions within them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

They will no longer need to teach each other to say, "Know the Lord!" because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord; for I will forgive their wrongdoing and never again remember their sins."⁴

Law on Tablets of Stone

Under the old covenant, the Old Testament, the people of God were given the law. And the law was written on tablets of stone. And they looked at these laws and they said, 'Wow, they're great laws — don't kill, don't steal, don't commit adultery, don't covet, don't want things that belong to somebody else.' They said, 'These are great laws. If we lived like this, we'd have a great society.'

And then they tried to live like that, and they found they couldn't. And so the law, instead of becoming a blessing, it was just this great burden on them — they were trying desperately to keep it, but they were failing constantly.

Law on Hearts

And God says: 'I'm going to do something new. This is my promise. Instead of the law being outside — something that you are trying to keep but fail,' he said, 'I'm going to put it inside, so that you really want to do it, it comes from your hearts.'

Example: Attitude Toward your Job

It's a bit like different attitudes to jobs. Some people have jobs that they hate. I think in my life I've had jobs that I hate and jobs that I love.

⁴ Jeremiah 31:33-34, CEB.

And you have a different attitude depending on which it is.

School Specialty Supply

One of the jobs I had in college was working at a school supplies warehouse. My parents were living in Salina and I was home from Pittsburg State University. I worked second shift, so would come in during the afternoon and leave in the middle of the night.

I worked in the shipping department. Our job was to take boxes off the line – a roller conveyor belt – and take them to the correct pallet that was being shipped out to a school somewhere in Kansas. When the order was done, you would count them to make sure that none were missing and take them to a wrapping machine. Then, they went on a truck to be shipped out the next day.

It was great, except there was really no incentive.

Every night, when we left, the line was clear.

Every day, when we arrived, the line was full.

It seemed pointless.

I didn't think that the first shift was doing anything.

It paid pretty good money, but I really didn't like it much.

Love What I Do

Now I'm very blessed — I have a job that I love! Of course there is a bit of a contract or job description in the Book of Discipline and I have probably kept all the rules, but it's not because I want to keep the contract — it's because I love what I do.

Keep the Rules because You Love It

And God says, 'It's going to be like that. You're not going to keep the rules because you have to keep the rules; it's because you love it, because this comes from your heart. I'm going to put my law on the inside.'

How can the Promise be Fulfilled?

How does he do this?

How can the promise of the Father be fulfilled?

In Ezekiel 36:26-27, God says this:

"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove your stony heart from your body and replace it with a living one, and I will give you my spirit so that you may walk according to my regulations and carefully observe my case laws."⁵

That's how he does it — by the Holy Spirit coming to live within us.

Waiting for the Promise

Yet this promise remained unfulfilled. The people were waiting.

And they waited and they waited. They waited for hundreds of years!

⁵ Ezekiel 36:26-27, CEB.

Holy Spirit at the Birth of Jesus

And then, with the birth of Jesus, it's like a trumpet sounds. And everybody connected with the birth of Jesus is filled with the Holy Spirit.

- John the Baptist
- Mary
- Elizabeth
- Zechariah

Each one filled with the Holy Spirit.

John the Baptist Links the Holy Spirit with Jesus

It's still particular people at particular times. But then John the Baptist is the first person to make this link between the promise and Jesus. Luke 3:16:

"John replied to them all, "I baptize you with water, but the one who is more powerful than me is coming. I'm not worthy to loosen the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."⁶

Greek - Baptize

In the secular Greek, the word 'baptize' meant 'to overwhelm, to immerse, to plunge, to drench'. It was the word that was used of if a ship sunk — it was baptized, it was overwhelmed, water everywhere, inside. And that's what the Spirit wants to do — he wants to drench us, overwhelm us, fill us.

Heart like a Dry Sponge

Sometimes, I think — this is certainly true of my heart — I become like a dry sponge. You know one of those real sponges, which when it's very dry, even when you put it in the water it doesn't absorb any water, because it's so hard and crusty on the outside. Sometimes my heart becomes like that.

But then as you put that sponge into water, the edges begin to soften. And once the edges have softened, then that sponge can absorb so much water. And when you take it out of the water, it is literally pouring out water. And that's how we're meant to be — full of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Predicts the Holy Spirit's Presence

And then Jesus predicts the coming of the Spirit — John 7:37-39:

"On the last and most important day of the festival, Jesus stood up and shouted, "All who are thirsty should come to me! All who believe in me should drink! As the scriptures said concerning me, Rivers of living water will flow out from within him."

⁶ Luke 3:16, CEB.

Jesus said this concerning the Spirit. Those who believed in him would soon receive the Spirit, but they hadn't experienced the Spirit yet since Jesus hadn't yet been glorified."⁷

Spiritual Thirst

There's a thirst, isn't there, in every human heart — not just a physical thirst. Of course we have a physical thirst that can be satisfied by drinking water; but we have a spiritual thirst also, which can't be satisfied by physical drinks — or even material things.

It's a spiritual thirst.

And Jesus says: 'If anyone is thirsty, come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flowing from within.'

Living Water

Literally, it's out of their innermost being will flow rivers of living water.

He says, 'Not only will I satisfy your spiritual thirst, but then you will become a source of blessing, a source of life.'

Water, of course, in that context there — this is a society living on the edge of the desert. They knew that they were reliant on water for plant life, animal life, every kind of life! And water symbolizes life.

And Jesus is saying the Holy Spirit brings life. And it means when we're filled with the Spirit, then the life of the Spirit flows through us to other people, and other people are able to come and to drink.

Jesus Glorified on the Cross

Jesus is put to crucified, died and raised again.

Coming of the Holy Spirit

Disciples Wait

And then Jesus ascended, and still the promise had not been fulfilled.

And they waited.

Hear these words from Acts 1:4-5, 8:

"While they were eating together, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for what the Father had promised. He said, "This is what you heard from me: "John baptized with water, but in only a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."⁸

⁷ John 7:37-39, CEB.

⁸ Acts 1:4-5, CEB.

"Rather, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."⁹

Conclusion

Finally, we read in Acts 2:

"When Pentecost Day arrived, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound from heaven like the howling of a fierce wind filled the entire house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be individual flames of fire alighting on each one of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them to speak.

There were pious Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. When they heard this sound, a crowd gathered. They were mystified because everyone heard them speaking in their native languages."¹⁰

"They were all surprised and bewildered. Some asked each other, "What does this mean?" Others jeered at them, saying, "They're full of new wine!"

Peter stood with the other eleven apostles. He raised his voice and declared, "Judeans and everyone living in Jerusalem! Know this! Listen carefully to my words! These people aren't drunk, as you suspect; after all, it's only nine o'clock in the morning! Rather, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young will see visions. Your elders will dream dreams. Even upon my servants, men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy."¹¹

"When the crowd heard this, they were deeply troubled. They said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"

Peter replied, "Change your hearts and lives. Each of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

This promise is for you, your children, and for all who are far away—as many as the Lord our God invites."¹²

⁹ Acts 1:8, CEB.

¹⁰ Acts 2:1-6, CEB.

¹¹ Acts 2:12-18, CEB.

¹² Acts 2:37-39, CEB.

Good News

The good news is that the gift of the Holy Spirit is no longer just for particular people, times or tasks; it's for everyone. It's for you... and you... and you... and you...

Call to Action

God invites us to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit today.

Invitation

We invite the Spirit to come, in prayer. So, as we pray today, I invite you to repeat the words silently or under your breath.

Closing Prayer

Will you pray with me?

O God, I'm sorry for my sins.

Thank you for your love and forgiveness.

Please fill me with your Holy Spirit.

Come, Holy Spirit!

Fill our hearts to overflowing.

Make rivers of living water flow out from inside.

In your name, Amen.