

Media and Graphics Notes

Sermon Starter Video?	Yes.
Sermon Notes?	Yes, there are many scriptures throughout the sermon.
Other Notes	<p>At both worship services we will have people joining the church. We will say the Apostle's Creed responsively with words on the screen after the membership ceremony.</p> <p>At the 8:30 a.m. worship service, Sue Meyers will sing during the offering. The music is set up in Proclaim. Please use the "Receiving God's Tithes and Our Offerings" slide as the offering is being introduced. Then, once Sue is ready to sing, move to the "Special Music by Sue Meyers" slide.</p>

Key Questions

What is this sermon about?

This sermon is about the work of the Holy Spirit.

Why is this sermon important?

It is important because the work of the Holy Spirit is essential to our life together as the church, yet has been downplayed at times.

What is the context of this sermon?

This is the second and final week of the Holy Fire series. This sermon is adapted from the Alpha Talk by the same name.

What are the next action steps?

- Come and experience God's love for you.
- Come and experience this intimate relationship and be able to address God as Abba.
- Come and have this deep experience of feeling God's love.
- Come and have access to the Father, the Spirit helping you to pray and helping you to understand the Bible.
- Come and be made into the likeness of Jesus.
- Come and receive the gifts of the Spirit.
- Come and experience the power of God to bring blessing by telling others about the good news of Jesus.



What is the good news (bottom line)?

The good news is that the invitation to follow Jesus and be filled with the Holy Spirit is for everyone.

Metadata

Topic(s)

1. Changing Lives

Sermon Books of the Bible

1. 1 Corinthians
2. 2 Corinthians
3. Acts
4. Ephesians
5. Galatians
6. John
7. Revelation
8. Romans

Tags

sermon, worship, church, Methodist, UnitedMethodist, UnitedMethodistChurch, FirstUnitedMethodistChurch, Eldorado, Kansas, GreatPlains, AnnualConference, GreatPlainsAnnualConference, HolySpirit, spiritualgifts,

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John 3:3-8, CEB

Jesus answered, "I assure you, unless someone is born anew, it's not possible to see God's kingdom."

Nicodemus asked, "How is it possible for an adult to be born? It's impossible to enter the mother's womb for a second time and be born, isn't it?"

Jesus answered, "I assure you, unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, it's not possible to enter God's kingdom. Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit. Don't be surprised that I said to you, 'You must be born anew.' God's Spirit blows wherever it wishes. You hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. It's the same with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

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

Tongues of fire... the spirit of life... the essence of truth... the voice of God. The Holy Spirit has always been here, and will always remain. Come explore the power and comfort of the Holy Spirit.

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

Introduction

Holy Spirit Like the Wind

You see, the Holy Spirit is a bit like the wind. You can't actually see the wind. You can see the effect of the wind. Sometimes people say, "Well, I can't see the Holy Spirit. I've never seen the Holy Spirit." However, maybe you have seen the impact on someone else. Like the wind, you don't see the wind but you can see the impact. Maybe you have seen the impact in your own life. Maybe something is changing in your own life.

Jesus says that you must be born again. Born of the Holy Spirit. Just like physical birth, a man and a woman come together in an act of love and there is a physical birth, so it is when the Spirit of God and the spirit of a man or a woman come together in an act of love there is a new spiritual birth – a person is born again, they begin a new spiritual life.

Story – Born Christian?

I heard the story of a Sunday School teacher who had been trying to explain to the group of children the difference between physical birth and spiritual birth — she'd been talking on John, chapter 3. And in trying to draw out this distinction she asked the children, 'Are you born a Christian?'

And one little boy replied, 'No, Miss, you're born normal.'

Spiritual Birth

And Jesus is saying as well as physical birth we need a spiritual birth. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit living within them. And until we come to Christ, of course the Spirit created us, the Spirit is convincing us about our sin, our need for Jesus; but there is a different type of relationship that we have with the Holy Spirit when he comes to live within us. It's qualitatively different.

Beginning of Faith and Discipleship

When I was in high school, my faith became real for me. Whether you talk about this experience as I 'gave my life to Christ / became a Christian / my faith first came alive' it doesn't really matter, as there are many, many different expressions for it in the New Testament. When that happened to me, I thought this was it! You know, I'd grown up in the church, can't think of a time when I had not been a Christian, yet now my faith was real in a new way - that was it!

Over time, I realized that that was just the beginning. It's like a baby being born — that's not the end! I mean, it's great when a baby's born, but we don't say, 'Well, that's it, fantastic!' The baby has to grow.

And so it is when we come to Christ, when the Spirit of God comes to live within us —that's the beginning, it is the beginning of a new life.

Transition

And what I want to look today is what happens when the Spirit of God comes to live within a man or a woman. What is the impact of that? What's the effect? What does the Holy Spirit do?

Sons and Daughters of God

Here's the first thing: We become sons and daughters of God.

Let's take a look at Romans 8:14-15:

"All who are led by God's Spirit are God's sons and daughters. You didn't receive a spirit of slavery to lead you back again into fear, but you received a Spirit that shows you are adopted as his children. With this Spirit, we cry, "Abba, Father." The same Spirit agrees with our spirit, that we are God's children."¹

Privilege

Here's the first thing: being a son or a daughter of God is the highest privilege that we can ever have: 'those who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption.'

You are adopted into God's family. Under Roman law, which is probably what was in Paul's mind, adoption was just the highest privilege. You could have no higher status than being adopted into a Roman family.

Adoption Today

And still today. I heard of one little boy who had been adopted, and he was being teased in the playground about the fact that he was adopted. And he turned round to the people who were teasing him, and he said this: 'Look,' he said, 'my parents chose me! Your parents got stuck with you!'

Example: Story of Transformation

I heard the story of a woman who was living on the streets. She was homeless and an alcoholic. Someone invited her on Alpha, and on that course she gave her life to Christ and she experienced the love of Jesus. And she was set free from alcoholism.

She got a job; she started life anew. Someone asked her, 'What difference has Jesus made to your life?' and this is what she said:

.....
'He's changed me from being a beggar to a princess.'
.....

That's what the Holy Spirit has done for all of us.

He's made us sons and daughters of the King – a prince or a princess.

¹ Romand 8:14-15, CEB.

There's no higher status than being a son or a daughter of God.

Intimacy

Secondly, it's the closest possible intimacy. Romans 8:15 says,
"...With this Spirit, we cry, "Abba, Father." The same Spirit agrees with our spirit, that we are God's children."²

Word Study

Abba is an Aramaic word. It is untranslatable which is why it is left in the Aramaic – Abba. It is a word that is never used in the Old Testament for our relationship with God, but Jesus used it of his relationship with God. Jesus called God, Abba.

Here is the amazing thing: Jesus said, 'You, all of you, can call God Abba. You can have this relationship of intimacy. This word is kind of like "Dad" or "Daddy" It is very intimate, not childish, yet this really close intimate relationship.

Don't think of God as an angry judge. He is a loving heavenly father. Abba.

Experience

And then it's the deepest experience. In Romans 8:16:

"The same Spirit agrees with our spirit, that we are God's children."³

I remember the very first time when I experienced this in my life. I realized that I was a child of God, that God loved me! While I didn't know realize it at the time, I would say that I was filled with the Holy Spirit. God's love wasn't just for the whole world, God loves me! Like a parent loves their child, only far, far more than any parent loves their child.

But from time to time a parent will take a child in their arms and give them a hug and say 'I love you'. And they're testifying to them that they're children and loved. And from time to time the Spirit of God takes us in his arms and he gives us a hug. The Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are children of God. The deepest experience.

Transition

So the first effect of the Spirit of God coming to live within a person is that they become a son or a daughter of God. The second thing is that the Spirit then helps us to develop that relationship.

² Romans 8:15, CEB.

³ Romans 8:16, CEB.

Developing the Relationship

The Holy Spirit doesn't just bring us into relationship with God. The Holy Spirit helps us develop our relationship with God. The Holy Spirit helps us to pray and have access to God. Hear these words from Ephesians 2:18

"We both [that is, Jews and Gentiles] have access to the Father through Christ by the one Spirit."⁴

Access to God

The Holy Spirit gives us access to God. 'Access' again is a wonderful word in the New Testament — the fact that we have access to God. There's nothing, if you like, between us and God. There's no barrier between us. And often I think we feel that there is a barrier — a much greater barrier than there really is.

Story – Talking at Night when Growing Up

When I was growing up, my brother and I shared a room. We loved to stay up talking into the middle of the night. Whoever put us down to bed would usually stay in the hallway for a bit to make sure that we went to sleep. Of course, we thought we were much smarter than our parents.

So, we stayed awake until we heard them walk down the hallway. We thought it was safe to talk. Of course we would start to whisper, then start to talk and soon enough one of our parents would come back to tell us that it was time to go to bed and that we needed to be quiet.

The walls of our room were much less of a barrier than we thought.

Prayer and Scripture

In our relationship with God, the ceiling is much thinner than we think. In fact, it's non-existent. You have access to the Father through the Holy Spirit. You can talk to God. So the Holy Spirit helps us in our relationship, he helps us to pray, and then also he helps us to understand the Bible. The Holy Spirit opens our eyes to understand.

Understanding and Belief

Sometimes people think that they have to understand everything before they become a Christian. Unless they understand, they couldn't believe. The truth is actually the other way around. It is only when you come to believe that you start to understand the Bible.

You can hear the Bible read over and over again – weddings, funerals, etc. – and never understand. When the Spirit of God comes to live in you, then you begin to understand.

⁴ Ephesians 2:18, CEB.

Example – Anselm of Canterbury

One of the great theologians and philosophers of the eleventh century, Anselm of Canterbury, said this

"I believe in order that I might understand."

He said:

'I do not seek to understand in order to believe; but I believe in order to understand.'

The Spirit of God brings that understanding and helps us then to develop the relationship with God.

The Family Likeness

Then, the Holy Spirit brings the family likeness – makes us look more like Jesus.

Example – Children, Spouses and Pets

It's obvious, isn't it, that children very often look like their parents. What is amazing is that they often look like both parents, even if the parents look quite different from each other.

Sometimes, even, husbands and wives grow to look like each other, because they spend so much time with one another.

Even dogs and their owners grow to look like each other.

Key Scripture

Hear these words from 2 Corinthians 3:18:

"All of us are looking with unveiled faces at the glory of the Lord as if we were looking in a mirror. We are being transformed into that same image from one degree of glory to the next degree of glory. This comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."⁵

So, the Spirit changes us to become more like Jesus.

What does it mean, "more like Jesus?"

Fruit of the Spirit

This is what it means to become more like Jesus. This is what the Holy Spirit does to bring about the family likeness in us. From Galatians 5:22-23:

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against things like this."⁶

⁵ 2 Corinthians 3:18, CEB.

⁶ Galatians 5:22-23, CEB.

Love

Love is the first and most important fruit of the Spirit. Love is the greatest thing in the world and the spirit wants to make us more loving.

Joy

Joy is different than happiness. Happiness is about what happens to us. Happiness can be quite superficial. Joy is very deep. It is not dependent on what happens.

Peace

Peace is an amazing experience, especially in a world of anxiety, fear and guilt. Imagine experiencing a deep peace, like the ocean current far beneath the surface, even if it is rough on top. This is the peace of God which is beyond all understanding.

Patience

Patience is something that is taking quite a long time to develop in my life.

Kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control

That is the kind of person that the Spirit wants us to become.

This is the likeness of Jesus that the Spirit wants to develop in every single person's life.

Spiritual Gifts for God's Children

Now, let's take a look at 1 Corinthians 12:7–11:

"A demonstration of the Spirit is given to each person for the common good. A word of wisdom is given by the Spirit to one person, a word of knowledge to another according to the same Spirit, faith to still another by the same Spirit, gifts of healing to another in the one Spirit, performance of miracles to another, prophecy to another, the ability to tell spirits apart to another, different kinds of tongues to another, and the interpretation of the tongues to another. All these things are produced by the one and same Spirit who gives what he wants to each person."⁷

All Have Gifts

The Holy Spirit gives everyone a gift. This is not an exhaustive list — in other lists of the Spirit we get gifts of service, encouraging, contributing to the needs of others, leadership, showing mercy, evangelists, pastors — all kinds of gifts.

Every single person has gifts — all kinds of gifts. The idea of a community is that we are meant to use our gifts. It's not that you have the church leaders that do all the stuff and everybody else watches. You are the church. You are the ones with the gifts.

⁷ 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, CEB.

Preacher and Leaders

The church is not meant to be a kind of one-man show. Too often churches have become a sort of one-man show — the preacher does everything or the staff does everything.

Someone's likened the church sometimes to being like a kind of football game in which you have "22,000 people desperately in need of exercise watching 22 people desperately in need of a rest!"

That is how churches seem to operate at times. It is meant to be everyone involved.

Story: Letter to Preacher

One person wrote to their preacher like this: received a letter like this:

'Dear Vicar, there are 566 people in our church. 100 are frail and elderly — that leaves 466 to do all the work. But 80 are young people at school or at college, and that leaves 386 to do all the work. But 150 of these are tired businesspeople — that leaves 236 to do all the work.

150 of these are busy with children, which leaves 86 to do all the work. But 15 live too far away to come here regularly, and that leaves 71 to do all the work. And 69 say they've already done their bit for the church. And that leaves you and me. And I'm exhausted, so good luck to you.'

That's not how it's meant to be. We all have gifts and are meant to use them. When we are all using them, then the church comes alive, is vibrant and is an exciting place to be.

Growing Family

Finally, the family of God is meant to be a growing family. Acts 1:8

"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."⁸

This is how the church grows. The Spirit of God gives us power and we are witnesses. We tell other people about what has happened. Other people see the difference the Holy Spirit makes in us. Maybe that is why some of you are here today — you saw the difference that the Holy Spirit makes in someone's life and you were attracted by it.

Now, I know this terrifies some people — the thought of having to speak about our faith, having to talk about Jesus to other people!

Story: Afraid of Witness

I heard of one young man like that. He was absolutely petrified of the thought of having to speak to his friends or his family about Jesus. And actually it stopped

⁸ Acts 1:8, CEB.

him becoming a Christian. He just thought it was such a terrible idea that he wasn't going to become a Christian.

And he went to see a wise older Christian, and this man said to him, 'Look,' he said, 'in your case God has made an exception. You don't have to tell anybody. It can just be a little private thing between you and God.'

He was so relieved. So he went home and he went up to his bedroom and he knelt down by his bed and he gave his life to Christ. He encountered Jesus and was filled with the Holy Spirit and he was just filled with joy and excitement.

And he rushed downstairs, and there in the kitchen were his family and five of his friends. And he said, "It's amazing — you can become a Christian and you don't have to tell anybody about it!"

That's the point. When you encounter Jesus, it's something that we're longing to do, because it's such wonderful news.

Conclusion

Now, let's look at the very last book of the Bible, in Revelation 22:17:
"The Spirit (That's the Holy Spirit) and the bride (That's the church) say, 'Come!' Let the one who hears say, 'Come!' And let the one who is thirsty come! Let the one who wishes receive life-giving water as a gift."⁹

Good News

The good news is that the invitation to follow Jesus and be filled with the Holy Spirit is for everyone.

Call to Action

This is the invitation. The invitation is to everyone.
It's for every single person.
It is a wide invitation.
The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come"
Come and experience God's love for you.
Come and experience this intimate relationship and be able to address God as Abba.
Come and have this deep experience of feeling God's love.
Come and have access to the Father, the Spirit helping you to pray and helping you to understand the Bible.
Come and be made into the likeness of Jesus.
Come and receive the gifts of the Spirit.
Come and experience the power of God to bring blessing by telling others about the good news of Jesus.
Anybody who comes, you will receive life-giving water as a gift. That's the promise for you.

⁹ Revelation 22:17, CEB.

26th Sunday after Pentecost
Holy Fire - What does the Holy Spirit do?
First United Methodist Church of El Dorado
Text Online at <http://j.mp/1kNpQG2>

November 22, 2015
John 3:3-8
Preaching Target Word Count: 2,410
Audio Online at <http://j.mp/1N8aXVq>

Invitation

If you say, "I really want that." The promise is that if you come, you will receive. You might say, "Well, to be honest, I couldn't say I feel like that. I don't really feel any thirst." What you can do is pray, "Lord, I don't have a thirst, but would you give me a thirst."

And then he'll give you a thirst. And then his promise is: if anyone thirsts and asks, he will give you life-giving water as a gift.

Closing Prayer

Lord, we thank you for these amazing, wonderful transformations that the Holy Spirit wants to bring to each of our lives. And Lord, we ask today for each person here, Lord, if we are thirsty, then you say "Come. Those of you who are thirsty, let them come; let all who wish take the free gift of the water of life."

For those maybe who don't yet feel that thirst, would you give us a thirst and then again come and satisfy it with the free gift of the water of life. In Jesus' name, Amen.