

**“The Holy Spirit”**  
**by Rev. Frances Savill**  
**May 19, 2024**  
**Pentecost Sunday**

**Ezekiel 37:1-14**

**John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15**

Pentecost is one of those days that Canadian Presbyterians don't always quite get. It seems that the Spirit, when it falls on the people of the early church, doesn't do everything decently and in order.

The disciples, according to Acts, after the Holy Spirit descended on them, were accused of being drunk on cheap wine. The city was filled with commotion, everyone was speaking a different language.

We are awed and impressed that about 3 thousand were added to the number of believers that day, but many of us are still a little uncertain about the whole way it happened.

Down through the centuries the Christian Church has been blessed by different moments of revival when the Holy Spirit has come with dramatic power. The church has been transformed in these moments, and great things have happened to communities of God's people.

A Scottish Presbyterian professor at the University of Aberdeen during the seventeenth century by the name of Henry Scougal, wrote a devotional classic called “The Life of God in the soul of Man”.

This book had a profound influence on the rise of Methodism. George Whitfield, one of the founders of Methodism, tells in his diary that it was reading Scougal's book which led to his conversion.

Whitfield discovered that worship is not something which we, religious people, do to please God, but that in worship, Christ himself comes to live in our hearts by the Holy Spirit and draws us into the very life of God.

A Scottish Reformed Presbyterian theologian in Aberdeen had some influence in The Great Revival, and the rise of Methodism. (James B. Torrance "Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace")  
Maybe Presbyterians do have something to do with the Holy Spirit.

And in truth, all of us have much to do with the Holy Spirit. John's gospel makes it clear that the Holy Spirit is not different from Jesus nor from God the Father. The Holy Spirit continues Jesus' work in and through the disciples.

The book of Acts shows the disciples carrying on with Jesus' ministry, but not before they were empowered with the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is what enables fearful, normal followers of Jesus, to become excited, passionate, bold witnesses, who can't stop sharing the love of Jesus and telling everyone all they have seen and heard and about the good news of the gospel.

The Holy Spirit draws us up into the life of God the Father and God the Son. The Holy Spirit draws us up into Jesus, and we participate in his ministry in the world, the ministry given to him by God the Father.

God's Spirit still breathes life into his people. God's breath comes and we are created, God's Spirit comes and we are re-created, enabled to serve. God is the same yesterday, today and forever. As God has been for the church, so God continues to be for us.

For nearly 100 years God has been working through the people of this congregation. For almost 100 years God has been enabling the witness, drawing his people into worship, forming disciples, and teaching us what it is to be a light in the darkness, and how to share the good news of the gospel.

Consider Acts 4: Peter and John were jailed after healing a man. They were jailed because the healing was done in Jesus' name and because of their

bold preaching. After they were released from prison the believers were together and prayed for one another.

If you were just released from prison what would your prayer be? Wouldn't be something to the effect of "Lord, don't ever let anything like that happen to me again"?

It's interesting that they didn't pray for an end of the opposition. They didn't pray that they wouldn't be jailed again. They prayed for courage, boldness, and that God would continue to do what got them into trouble in the first place, miraculous healings in Jesus' name.

Acts tells us that it was the Holy Spirit that gave them courage and boldness, and their prayer was that God would continue to bless them in that way.

The Holy Spirit helped them to walk in Jesus' steps, even when it meant the way of the cross, and they did it with passion and joy, because they were drawn up into the life of God together in Christ.

As well as giving believers boldness, the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Truth, and the Comforter. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us when we don't know what or how to pray. The Holy Spirit comes and speaks a quiet word of Truth, or enwraps in the love of God, and sings words of love over us.

In days gone by God dwelt with his people being among them in the wilderness, travelling with them in the Tabernacle. Later, God's presence dwelt with His people in a special way in the Temple that Solomon built.

But Pentecost shows us the power and presence of God dwells in us in our flesh and blood. Which means that we have all we need to learn to live a godly life.

The Holy Spirit sometimes takes us to unexpected situations.

This week past, I found myself in an unexpected conversion. I couldn't help but encourage a troubled person to seek God with all his heart - I found myself bold in speaking words I had no intention of saying, in a context where I wouldn't usually have spoken.

The Holy Spirit helps us to know God face to face. The Holy Spirit brings us to Jesus, and to God the Father, and grows in an intimate personal relationship with the Creator of all things.

The Holy Spirit will rarely push or overpower us but waits for the invitation. So we say: come Holy Spirit, help us to know the Father and learn Your love for Him, or we say come Holy Spirit, reveal Jesus' truth to us, or we pray simply Holy Spirit help us, comfort us, save us, or even Holy Spirit help us to be bold witnesses again.

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to know God more or ask for the wisdom you need. The Holy Spirit is God's good gift to us, and to the church.

These are exciting days to be the church. We face all kinds of challenges. But the Holy Spirit is with us, the Feast of Pentecost means God is mightily at work in us.

Let us fix our eyes of Jesus, the King and head of the Church, the one who loves us and gave himself for us, who gives us the Holy Spirit, that will lead us in truth, who draws us into His life and mission.

Thanks be to God.

**Prayer:** Come Holy Spirit, draw us up into the life of God the Father and God the Son, that we might be bold witnesses, passionate for the gospel, following in Jesus' steps, serving His mission. Amen.