

“Holy Spirit”

John 14:16 – 18; Luke 24:36 – 48

John 20:19 – 22

Some years ago - actually it was one of my first days at the Bible College of New Zealand – a few others and I decided to check out Piha Beach in West Auckland one afternoon.

I have a love of surf beaches and I’d never swum there before, so I started to make our way out into the breakers, and it was about when the water was waist deep that I heard a booming, loud, voice... (it wasn’t God though☺).

A booming voice came from the loud speaker system of the surf lifesaver clubrooms.

“You! Turn back NOW! You’re on the edge of a rip!”

So turned around, and discovered I wasn’t going anyway!

Thankfully, I was able to catch a wave to shore and to safety.

The thing is, there was no one patrolling the beach.

No life guards in lifeboats at the ready to come out to us.

Just a booming voice telling us what to do.

As I reflected over the years, for many people that is a picture of God.

You know, I think for some people, when they picture they have a God who has this loud, booming voice telling us what to do!

And not only is he a god who demands and insists on our compliance, he also does so from distance without lifting a finger to help.

That is not the God of the Bible.

In our reading this morning we have clearer of who God really is shown to us in the person of... the Holy Spirit.

I don’t know about you, but when it comes to the Holy Spirit we might be tempted to think that the Spirit was only at work in the New Testament, that his presence was something new that because of Jesus.

The presence of the Holy Spirit isn't new.

The Old Testament is full of the activity of the Spirit.

I mean, Genesis tells us that the Spirit hovering over the newly created world and began to shape and form it.

In terms of God's Word, the words of the prophets, the Holy Spirit inspired them.

When it comes to people the Spirit rested on judges, kings and prophets.

And what happened when on fell on them?

They carried out acts of power and deliverance.

They were enabled to go beyond their normal human limitations.

However, there were areas of limitation about the giving of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament.

One, the giving of the Spirit was only temporary; the Spirit would empower people and then withdraw.

Two, and it only fell or rested *on* people, not *in* them.

For example, in the case of Gideon the Spirit of the Lord 'clothed him' or literally 'wrapped itself around him'.¹

Third, it was only for a few; not everyone received the Spirit.

Yet there is a difference with the coming of Jesus.

Jesus speaks of the promise of the Father found in John's gospel and not just John's gospel but throughout the Old Testament.

You see, the Old Testament looked forward to the Messianic age.

This was a time when God's king would come in person and deliver God's people from their enemies and peace would reign.

It would be a time when the Holy Spirit would not be just for a few but would be for all God's people.

So Peter on the day of Pentecost preached, "This promise is for *you* and your children..." (Acts 2:39).

¹ Judges 6:34.

And in Jesus – in his life, death and resurrection – the Messianic Age has begun.

Jesus says to the disciples that the Spirit who has been with them during his ministry will now be *in* them.

What that means is this:

To receive Jesus as your King and forgiver of your sins, means that another life comes to live in your life.

So let me ask you this morning:

“What misconceptions about the Holy Spirit have you encountered?”

Tell the person next to you.

One of the misconceptions is about the *nature* of the Holy Spirit.

You hear people say, “Oh, the Holy Spirit is your conscience.”

The Spirit is not your conscience although he can sharpen and enliven your conscience.

Then other people think of the Holy Spirit as a force or an influence.

And yes the Holy Spirit can come to you with force and great influence but He is not simply that.

The Holy Spirit is a Person.

We have God the Father, who is a person.

We have God the Son, Jesus, who is a person.

And we have God the Holy Spirit, who is a person.

Jesus talked about the Holy Spirit as “he” and “him”.

So we read in Scripture, for example, that the Spirit expresses His volition in agreement with the Father and the Son. In other words, the Holy Spirit has a will.²

There is this thinking dimension to the Holy Spirit.³

In Ephesians we’re told that the Holy Spirit can be grieved, saddened, and so there is this feeling dimension to the Holy Spirit.⁴

² Acts 15:28

³ 1 Peter 1:21

⁴ Ephesians 4:30

And in Scripture there are numerous times Holy Spirit speaks and expresses Himself.⁵

The Holy Spirit is a Person.

And as a Person, God the Holy Spirit is as real and present and attentive a person can be.

And he is present and attentive to you and your life circumstances.

Another is that there are some people who self-define as Christians who have this idea that the Holy Spirit and the things of the Spirit are optional.

You know, take it or leave it.

Or they've been taught that the Holy Spirit simply sits in the background.

Anything more than that is heretical, strange and weird.

When you read Scripture, the Holy Spirit is not optional.

And he does not simply sit in the background.

This other life – the Holy Spirit – *does* something in you and through you.

It's activity and action.

Something ignites and lights up inside of a person.

So my question is this:

“What does the Holy Spirit do?”

- He gives us new life (John 3:6 – 7)
- He convicts us (John 16:8)
- The Spirit is God's empowerment and enabling.
He brings power to give witness to Jesus.
Jesus who sends the disciples in John also says, “Receive the Holy Spirit”
- He brings understanding to God's Word.
- He gives gifts and grows fruit.
 - Gifts of the Spirit are new enablings that are not the same as your natural abilities.
 - The Holy Spirit grows 'fruit' – virtues, character traits – of love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.
- The Holy Spirit makes us whole and holy (1 Corinthians 6:11)
- He makes God's love real in our hearts.

⁵ Acts 13:2; 1 Timothy 4:1; Hebrews 3:7.

Listen Cromwell Presbyterian, *the Holy Spirit makes the Christian life possible.*

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12, “No one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.”⁶

Without the Holy Spirit it is impossible to be and live as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit is the One who takes what Jesus has done and makes it real in our hearts and lives.

He does a work in us that we cannot do ourselves.

You read for example, about the story of a guy by the name of John Wesley.

When Wesley left university he was ordained as an Anglican priest and then returned there to be a lecturer.

While there he joined a group that was devoted to living a holy life.

The group met daily from six until nine for prayer, psalms, and reading of the Greek New Testament. They prayed every waking hour for several minutes and fasted on Wednesdays and Fridays until three o'clock. They also took up the practice of visiting prisoners in jail.

Soon after he joined a missionary venture to the America's.

His missionary work, by his own admission, was disaster.

I mean, he planted a church and then that church that he planted gave him the boot.

And he hardly saw anyone come to faith in Jesus Christ.

It was short lived and bore little fruit.

So Wesley returned England depressed and beaten.

Wesley was ordained. He preached, taught, wrote, prayed, fasted, visited, translated, composed hymns, and even gave himself to missionary work — and yet he felt a deep frustration in his life.

There was a missing dimension from John Wesley's life and that missing dimension was the person of the Holy Spirit.

⁶ 1 Corinthians 12:3

But when the Holy Spirit took hold of Wesley's life, he saw in England an explosion of people coming to faith.

Wesley would later write that the Spirit who inspired Scripture continues to inspire and supernaturally assist people.

You and I, we need the Holy Spirit.

Most of all the Holy Spirit is Someone to be experienced, and He is Someone to be enjoyed.

And of this is experiential.

So here's the thing; the Holy Spirit, who is a Person who in us and so attentive us, is so adaptable.

What I mean is, He meets each of us as individuals.

He is closer than any other person can be.

So for *you* this morning, what is your response to the Holy Spirit?

For some here this morning, the word is ***holy***.

For you at this time the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of holiness.

1 Corinthians says that individually we are temples of the Spirit, where the Spirit dwells.⁷ The temple is a holy place.

For you it's a sanctifying work.

It does contain that idea of ethical purity - we must be a holy church.

However, when you talk about holiness what happens is some people get the guilts.

They think, "There is no way I attain this moral purity that God desires."

However, Jesus describes the Holy Spirit as being like living water.

And this living water can flow into the deepest places and wash them clean.

And this Spirit who is living water can heal, and make you well and whole again.

For others it is ***help***.

⁷ 1 Corinthians 6:19 - 20.

And it may look like this: it could be that in nine out of ten areas you're going well but in one area it's really hard work.

Or it could be in eight out of ten areas you're going well but in two areas it's not so great.

Before his death and resurrection, Jesus said "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, the Spirit..."⁸

The Holy Spirit is a helper.

That word 'help' in the Greek means an advocate who takes up one's case or an ally fighting on one's side; someone who strengthens and encourages.

For some of us, there is that one area at the moment where you desperately need help.

It's beyond the scope of your abilities and beyond the human resources.

So the Spirit can come to you as an enabler

He is a power greater than yourself.

He has not come to overpower but to empower.

By way of response this morning, I invite you to come to the table.

It might be for you the word is 'holy'; as you take the bread and cup let God by His Spirit make you clean.

It might be 'help'; as you take the bread and cup ask God by His Holy Spirit to be your strong helper this morning.

⁸ John 14:16.