

**“Holy Spirit Power” - Acts 2.1-21 – Rev. Jeff Childs**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit;** The Apostles’ Creed does not say much about what we believe about the Holy Spirit other than Jesus was conceived by it and that we believe in it. As a part of the Trinity or Triune God, which is beyond our human capacity to fully understand, I believe the Holy Spirit is the hardest to comprehend. In the story of Jesus speaking to Nicodemus in the Gospel of John chapter 3 we discover how hard it was for him, as a religious leader, to understand what Jesus was saying about the spirit. Jesus describes it as the “Wind” which is the same word as “Spirit” in Greek: “Pneuma” and Hebrew: “Ruach”. Jesus notes that we can feel it and we can see the affects of the wind, but we cannot see the wind. Rather than talking about or defining the Spirit we talk about three things that we can see that are attributed to the Holy Spirit: Gifts, Fruits and Visions.

**Spiritual Gifts:** Paul wrote: *There are different spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; and there are different ministries and the same Lord; and there are different activities but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. 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.* (1 Corinthians 12.4-11) Pentecost is the birthday of the church...and we get all the gifts! This is not an all-inclusive list of the gifts, but it gives you an idea of how Paul and the church understood the uniqueness of each individual and the gifts each of us brings to the table. As I work with confirmation students and people preparing to join the church, we look at the vows we make and one of the things we say is that we will uphold the church by our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service, and our witness. When we talk about “gifts” we often talk about money - financial gifts. But in the scripture above we see that we are gifted in many ways by the Spirit? This vow is asking us to use our God-given gifts, our spiritual gifts to uphold the church for the glory of God.

**Fruit of the Spirit:** Paul would further write: *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.* (Galatians 5:22-23a) Unlike spiritual gifts which some may have some and others have others, we are all to have all of the fruit of the spirit. I believe if we use our Spirit-given gifts for the common good and the glory of God, we will bear the fruit of the Spirit. We are in the disciple growing business. How is your spiritual garden growing? Do you see any buds or fruit yet? My experience tells me that some of us have a good crop of a few of the fruit of the Spirit, but there are usually one or two that may run a little low. For some that may be peace, patience or self-control. What is it for you? Let me read it again: *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.* (Galatians 5:22-23a)

**Vision, dreaming, prophesying:** Using the quote from the prophet Joel, Peter speaks to the crowd and to us today. I would like to envision God’s future for us individually and

collectively as the church. Though in the time of Peter and Paul to today we affirm the Holy Spirit being poured out onto people, it was not always so. In the Old Testament the Spirit primarily comes upon leaders and prophets. The judges and kings received the power of the Spirit, but we especially see the prophets as the ones who prophesy or speak God's word. But the prophet Joel envisions a day when the Holy Spirit would come upon everyone. For me the analogy might be educational. In the time of Peter not many people were formally educated, unable to read or write. Education was for those who were wealthy enough to afford the time to learn. You may not realize it, but Sunday school began in England to help the children working in child-labor sweat shops learn how to read. Education was becoming available to all. And as we celebrate graduations today, a time was when many only had a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade or 8<sup>th</sup> grade education to work on the farm, in the mines, or in a factory. Well, Peter and Joel were affirming that God's Holy Spirit would no longer be contained among the few "gifted people" but would empower all people. Use your Spirit-given gifts for the glory of God today. Alleluia and Amen.

### **On Pentecost**

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On Pentecost that day of days,  
Disciples were filled with praise.  
When the Spirit came upon them,  
As apostles they did blossom.

With spiritual ability,  
In foreign tongues they did decree,  
The good news of the Lord Jesus.  
So, what about the rest of us?

Do we just hear an oft' told story,  
Of the Spirit and its glory?  
Or do we claim and share the same,  
And then proclaim Jesus' name.

As we gather, in this hour,  
May we feel the Spirit's power.  
Like prophets let us prophecy,  
And as witnesses, testify.