

Devotionals: LifeGroup Study

Date: May 21, 2023

Text: Acts 1:6-14; John 17:1-11

Theme: Reanimated...for Spirit-powered witness

Belong

The Holy Spirit causes movement. The Holy Spirit is often referenced as symbols of movement such as sound, wind, and fire. The Spirit can reanimate what's dead or dying in us. The Spirit can move us to new places and possibilities. The Spirit gives us a new kind of power. That's what we'll consider today in this study.

- *Talk about a time when you moved or were moved from one place to another.*
- *What did that feel like? What were the positives? Negatives?*
- *What kind of "power" does it take to move from one place to another?*

Prayer...

Lord God, we are thoughtful about what it means to be empowered by your Spirit. Be with us as we explore your word and seek to apply it to our own lives. In your name. Amen.

Become

Read Acts 1:6-14. This section follows an introduction and connection with Luke's first book, the Gospel of Luke. Whereas the Gospel of Luke ends with an abridged version of Jesus' ascension, here we get the full account, which includes the missional promise/charge to the disciples. They will be witnesses to the world! It is the centerpiece of the passage—the ascension—although amazing and miraculous, gets very little attention comparatively.

The post-resurrection, pre-ascension Jesus is asked a curious yet reasonable question in v.6. The disciples want to know when Jesus will restore the kingdom. This is reasonable when you're standing in the presence of the one who has defeated sin, death, and the devil (*Martin Luther*). He's obviously got the power. Does Jesus have the desire? They've been disciples and have followed Jesus for three years or so, and plainly see themselves continuing down that same path. But in an interesting twist, Jesus answers their question with a veiled "yes" and gives them an amazing, missional promise and challenge. But will the same, obvious, Jesus-type of power be theirs as well, or will they get to do it on their own? We see the answer in v.8, and the effect the Holy Spirit will have in the lives of the disciples. They will be witnesses to the world! They will participate in the fulfillment of the promise through the power of the Spirit. They will wait until that Spirit is given to them.

- *What kind of "power" is Jesus talking about here?*
- *What does this power feel like and look like?*
- *What difference does this "power" make in everyday living?*

Read John 17:1-11. This is the great priestly prayer of Jesus, to God, for the peripheral benefit of the disciples. They hear the alarm clock of fulfillment ring (the hour has come), and the outward focus for the church (disciples/believers) begins.

What a great confidence is given to the disciples! Jesus states that they have received and believed everything Jesus has received from the Father—implying that they can and will fulfill the missional charge of the future. They were former members of the old covenant, and now find fulfillment of that covenant in Jesus the Christ (v.7), which unites them with the mission of Jesus to the world. They have already begun to reflect the Glory of God (v.10), so the hope for the future seems bright.

The possession and reception of eternal life are tied intrinsically to knowing God as the only true God through Jesus as the Christ. It's a defining and refining statement, one that was and continues to be challenged in this world.

- *How is this text connected to the Acts text?*
- *What missional charge is given to us as disciples of Jesus Christ?*
- *Is this charge different for each person or the same for everyone?*

Beleive

The Holy Spirit is given as a gift—not earned (law) but given freely to believers (grace). The effect of the Spirit is movement into the world. What if the gift of the Holy Spirit translates into the gift of movement into the world? It's a gift from God to witness (in word and action) to your neighbor, your co-worker, and your family.

Prayer...

Father God, you have given us the missional challenge that takes us from a private form of faith to be witnesses to the world. Help us to discern the specific ways in which we can respond to your calling to the world. Move in us to take us beyond our current reality into kingdom work. Give us your power to do what we can only do through you in Jesus' name. Amen!



St. Paul Lutheran Church

"Your Refuge from the Storm"

Devotionals: Daily Walk on the Rock

Date: May 21, 2023

Text: Acts 1:6-14; John 17:1-11

Theme: Reanimated...for Spirit-powered witness

Day 1: Monday—Prayer as Preparation The Holy Spirit empowers us to tell others about Jesus and bring glory to God. We do this with our words and with our lives. Read Acts 1:4-14 and John 17:1-11, and consider our theme, “Reanimated for Spirit-powered witness.” At first glance, each text might appear to have little to do with the other, but consider that in John 17, we have Jesus’ prayer on the night before his crucifixion, and in Acts 1, we find Jesus’ followers in prayer before the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost. Do you see prayer as an essential preparation for service and/or sacrifice? Does God value our prayers (*see Revelation 5:8*)? Pray for a fresh outpouring of the Spirit in your life.

Day 2: Tuesday —In the Beginning Sunday we will celebrate the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost (*Acts 2*); this week our focus is Spirit-powered witness. However, discussion of the Spirit’s activity in us is best understood in the context of who the Spirit is. God is One, but God manifests/expresses God’s self as Father, Son, and Spirit. In Genesis 1:2, the Spirit acts in creation (some translations say “wind”/“breath”). In the Old Testament, we see the Spirit equipping people to serve God and inspiring the prophets to speak God’s message. What do you learn about the Spirit in Luke 1:34-35, 41-42, 67; 3:21-22; 4:1 and John 3:5; 7:37-39; 14:16-17, 25-26; 15:26; 16:12-15? Ask the Spirit for understanding.

Day 3: Wednesday —Something New Read John 14:16-17, observing that Jesus makes a distinction between the presence of the Spirit with them and in them. Notice the use of the word “in” (or the concept of indwelling) as you read John 7:39; 14:20; 15:4-5; Romans 8:9-11; Ephesians 1:13-14; 5:18b; Philippians 2:13; and 1 John 4:13. What difference does it make that the Spirit actually lives in believers? In light of what we have learned, read Acts 1:4-14 and 2:1-4, 36-38. In whose power do we love others and testify about Jesus? Thank God for the life-giving, indwelling presence and power of the Spirit.

Day 4: Thursday —Waiting on God’s Timing Read Galatians 4:4-5, noticing what it says about “time.” Throughout Jesus’ ministry, he was aware of waiting for God’s perfect timing. As you read John 2:4; 7:8, 30; 13:1; 17:1, notice the words “time” or “hour.” Now read John 17:1-11 and Acts 1:4-14, observing the importance of timing. Do we sometimes run ahead of God and then pray, “God bless our plans”? Or do we hesitate and

linger when God is calling us to act? Notice again the importance of prayer as you read Luke 3:21-22; John 17:1ff; Acts 1:14. Talk to Jesus; ask him to help you discern God’s timing.

Day 5: Friday —“Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit”

Read Zechariah 4:6. How often do we try to do God’s work in our own strength and then falter or burn out? Notice Jesus’ instructions and his followers’ response as you read Acts 1:4-8, 12-14 and 2:1-4. Peter, who had denied Jesus and then fearfully hid behind locked doors (*John 18:15-27; 20:19*), now boldly testifies about Jesus. The Spirit empowered him to do so. ALL Christians have the Spirit living within them (*see Day 3*); ALL have spiritual gifts (*Romans 12:4-8*) to be used for the good of others and for God’s glory (*1 Peter 4:10-11*); ALL are called to be witnesses (*John 17:20-23*). Meditate on Zechariah 4:6; thank God for the GIFT of the Spirit.

Day 6: Saturday —The Spirit Equips Us to Testify with Our Words and Lives

We’ve read about the precious and empowering gift of the indwelling Spirit, but we must remember that the Spirit is given for a purpose, and the purpose includes testifying to Jesus’ love and saving grace and blessing others in his name and for his glory. On Day 5, we mentioned Spirit-given gifts, which are used to edify other believers and point people to Jesus. The Spirit also produces fruit in our lives as we abide in Jesus. Read John 15:4-5 and Galatians 5:22-23a. Notice that “fruit” is inclusive/singular; one Christian does not have joy and another patience; all manifestations of the fruit are to be apparent in all believers. Tell Jesus you want to abide in him and bear fruit.

Day 7: Sunday [Pentecost]—We Live and Testify for God’s Glory

At the bottom of each of his compositions, Bach wrote letters SDG (*Soli Deo Gloria*), a reminder that all he did was to the glory of God alone. As you read Psalm 115:1; Matthew 5:16; John 17:1-11; and 2 Corinthians 3:18, consider marking the words “glory” or “glorify.” Now read John 3:16; Acts 1:8; 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:4-6a; and 2 Peter 3:9, 18. Observe God’s heart of love for people. Do you hear God calling you to testify with your words and with your life? Consider how the fruit of the Spirit can give our lives a winsomeness that might awaken in others the desire to listen to the testimony of our words. Re-read Matthew 5:16. Pray you will point others to Jesus and glorify God.