

Sermon Series: *The Person & the Work of the Holy Spirit* Ascension Sunday

The Holy Spirit in the Life of Jesus

John 1:29-34 (ESV) Text Reader: Evan Dingle

29 *The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*

30 *This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.'*

31 *I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel."*

32 *And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him.*

33 *I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'*

34 *And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."*

Why A Sermon Series on the Holy Spirit?

It seems appropriate to pause just for a few minutes and remind ourselves why we are presently doing what we are doing. We need to be sure we know why we are preaching on the Holy Spirit in our Sunday morning services and why we are teaching on spiritual gifts at 9:30 a.m. each Sunday morning in Sunday school. I can think of at least five reasons.

1) To Be Obedient to the Leading of the Lord

The first and deepest reason is because we want **to be obedient to the leading of the Lord**. We elders fasted and prayed about what to teach in Sunday school and we were convinced that the Lord was inviting us to teach, in the Sunday school hour, first on understanding how to hear God's voice first and then on spiritual gifts. A sermon series on understanding the Holy Spirit seemed to us perfectly congruent with where we were convinced the Lord was already clearly leading us.

We have only two more weeks before we will take a break from Sunday school for the summer. It's not too late to join us. On Sunday the 19th we will have our final Sunday school classes. On that day we will offer some tools to help you understand what your particular spiritual gifts might be and how you might put those gifts to work.

2) To Address a Neglected Topic (i.e. Person)

The second reason for a sermon series on the Holy Spirit was **to address a neglected topic**, or rather, I should say, a neglected person. We recognized that the third person of the Trinity has often been ignored in systematic preaching and we did not want that to be the case here.

3) To Draw Closer to the Lord Our God

The third reason is simply **to draw closer to the Lord our God by understanding Him more clearly**. As our knowledge and understanding of God expands, so does our love and affection toward Him.

The Bookshelves of Love

The book shelves in my office have an interesting history. They were a gift to me several years ago by an 85 year old woman. We called her GG. While we lived in PA she was our adopted great-grandmother. Years before she mysteriously received the bookshelves a month after the death of her husband.

She had not ordered them. She was very confused when the truck arrived at her house with these beautiful cherry book shelves which she had not ordered. As she inquired about the order she discovered that they were a special order and the order had been placed six months prior. When they told her the name of the person who placed the order, she discovered that the order had been placed by her then deceased husband.

He had not told her about this order. He had intended this wonderful gift to be a surprise. Indeed it was. GG was once again overwhelmed by her husband's love for her. As her knowledge of her husband expanded, so did her love and affection for him. She still would have benefited from the gift even if she had never known who had sent it. However, knowing that the gift was from her husband moved her heart was with affection toward him.

The Greatest Gift of Love

We all know very well from the Bible that God loves us. This is great news. He loved us so much that He sent Jesus to die on the cross on our behalf. And this knowledge causes us to love Him. However, in studying the Holy Spirit, we learn so much more about God's love for us. His love for us did not end at the cross. His love continued after the cross, after the resurrection, and even after Jesus' ascension.

The greatest gift of God to man is not the payment of a debt, but the gift of eternal life. What good is it to be debt-free if you are spiritually dead? *"It is the Spirit who gives life"* (Jn 6:63). The paying of the sin-debt by Jesus on the cross effected the subsequent giving of the Holy Spirit. The love poured out (through Jesus' blood) on the cross enabled the pouring out of the Spirit from on high (i.e. heaven) at Pentecost. The greatest gift of God to man is not being set free from prison, it is receiving the promised inheritance (Gal 3:14; Lk 24:49; Acts 1:4-5; 2:33, 38-39). What good is it to be free from prison if you are still bankrupt and destitute? **The greatest gift of God to man is the gift of the His own Holy Spirit** (Lk 11:13).

When Jesus left the planet, the disciples felt bankrupt and destitute. However, after leaving Jesus then ascended to the Father and after receiving the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out His Holy Spirit into the hearts of all who trusted and love Jesus. God loves those who love His Son Jesus so much that He wants to never be separated from them. So at Pentecost He began a new thing. For the first time in the history of humanity, He began to put His own Spirit within the soul of all who would trust in and loved Jesus. He now unites the spirit of the believer in Jesus with His own Holy Spirit in such a way that that union can never be broken. Never! When Jesus gives a person the Holy Spirit, He gives the Spirit forever!¹

¹ John 14:16.

What effect does this knowledge have upon your heart? Is the effect not to cause you to desire to draw nearer and nearer to such a loving God? Do you not desire to come closer to such a God?

4) To glorify Jesus

The fourth reason for this sermon series is **to glorify Jesus**. We saw last week that glorifying Jesus is one of the highest purposes of the Holy Spirit (Jn 16:14). So for those who have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them, in those moments when you are bringing glory to Jesus, you can be confident that the Holy Spirit is at that same moment working within you to help you. Bringing glory to God through the name (i.e. person) of Jesus is the purpose of this church and the purpose of every Christian.

Our Mission Statement

“To glorify God by developing a community of committed disciples of Jesus Christ which has an impact for Christ locally and around the world.”

The Purpose of Every Christian

Bringing glory to Jesus is also the purpose of every Christian. How do we do that? Well we have the Holy Spirit within us who will work through us to help us glorify Jesus in our lives. He is the Helper. One of the ways we bring glory to Jesus is by living like He lived. We glorify Jesus when we act like He did. We proclaim His value and worth when we emulate His behavior. We need the help of the Holy Spirit in order to do this. We cannot live like Jesus lived in our own strength. We need the Helper to come and help us bring glory to Jesus.

5) To Transform Our Lives

The fifth reason that we are spending this time on this topic in this sermon series is **to transform our lives**. We want our lives to be changed. We are not simply here to have our knowledge base expanded. We are here in this season, spending time on this topic, so that we might experience God—the one true and living God—in ways that we have never before experienced Him and so to be changed in the very depths of our being.

True and lasting life-change happens only through the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. It is *His* work to change us which we either cooperate with or resist. It is the Holy Spirit who has the power to transform us from lifeless lumps of clay into living souls whose passion it is to live life—no matter what we do, whether we eat or drink or go to work or go to school or watch the Bruins game, whatever we do—to the glory of God.

THE Question

So the question is, “Should we expect our daily lives to be different from having spent time in this sermon series getting to know the Holy Spirit?” This is *the* question.

Oh how I hope the answer is yes. “O Lord, I pray, please do not let us remain unchanged.” If we remain unchanged, then oh what a pitiful waste of time this will have been.

Did the Lord really invite us to this place only to leave us unchanged? Does this world need us to remain the same? Does Winchester, and Boston and New England and the world, need us to remain

the same as we are right now **or** does Winchester, Boston, New England, and the world need Christians who are filled with the Holy Spirit and power who can boldly testify to the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ with deep, unshakable, Christ-centered confidence rather than man-fearing, wobble-kneed timidity?

Did the Lord lead the children of Israel into the desert so that they would remain in slavery to idolatry? No, He delivered them into the desert so that they might be free to worship Him, the one true and living God. He delivered them that they might **know** Him and **experience** Him through true worship.

Israel *experienced* God at Mt. Sinai. They heard His voice. They saw the mountain shake. They saw the cloud and the thick darkness that descended upon the mountain top. They saw the fiery brightness of the awesome glory of God! They felt the electricity of God's pure holiness in the air. They experienced Him and they worshiped Him. To worship Him in Spirit and in truth **is** to know Him! He delivered them so that they would stop wasting their time in pursuit of empty, worthless things, things to do not profit or deliver (1 Sam 12:20-21).

We need the Holy Spirit to bring us into an encounter with the living God like **that**—an encounter that would transform our lives! The question is do we expect it? Do we expect the Lord Jesus to pour out His Holy Spirit in power and transform us—**again**? Though we have been saved by faith in Jesus and have received the gift of the Holy Spirit, should we thereafter expect that He would fill us with His Spirit in order to powerfully enable us to make a difference in this world? Do **we** expect this?

Do we yearn for the transforming presence of the Lord? Do we cry out to Him in our closest, "Oh Father come and change my life. Come and take away my tendency to sin. Do a mighty work of grace in my heart and so the sinful attractions of this fading world loose their appeal to me. Oh come Lord and make me more like Jesus!"

That is the question. Do we expect that we can live like Jesus lived? Do we believe that we truly can live like Jesus lived? Jesus certainly expected His followers to live like He lived. His disciples understood this and passed this expectation on.

1 John 2:6

whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

John knew that the followers of Jesus ought to live their lives just as Jesus did. In saying that we ought to "live like Jesus," I don't mean do we believe that we can be sinless, because all of us have already blown that. No one is sinless except Jesus. However, do you believe that it is possible to live life by faith in such a way that is pleasing to God and glorifying to Jesus? Do we really believe that it is possible to live like Jesus lived? ***Is the power to live a life of radical obedience to God the Father and God the Son available to us?***

Matthew 16:24

"Take up your cross and follow Me."

John 13:15

"For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you."

Jesus expected His disciples to live like He lived, but is this a realistic expectation? What role does the Holy Spirit play in helping us to live like Jesus lived? If Jesus was really fully and completely human, then how could He have lived as He did?

Jesus Our Example: Consider His Humanity

Jesus is our example. Let's consider His life. Jesus was human just like you and me. He was fully human. He was a man of flesh and bones. Yes, Jesus was (and is) the Son of God, yet at this point we need to consider His humanity. Consider the following three statements from The Athanasian Creed (fourth-fifth century);

- 30. For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess: that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man;
- 31. God, of the Substance of the Father; begotten before the worlds: and Man, of the Substance of his Mother, born in the world.
- 32. Perfect God: and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.²

We believe in the fully humanity of Jesus. He had to work for living. He was a carpenter, just like his earthly father, Joseph had been. After Joseph died³, He ran the family⁴ carpentry business up until He was thirty when He began His public ministry. For some major portion of Jesus' life, He lived in a single-parent home. Jesus knew what it was like to experience the death of a parent. He knew what it was like to care for His aging mother. As the eldest son, He bore that responsibility up until His death (John 19:26-27).

Jesus became tired from long trips (Jn 4:6). He became so exhausted from all the teaching and healing that He was able to sleep in a boat while being tossed about during a storm (Mk 4:38). He became thirsty (Jn 4:7). He became hungry, just like us. He experienced physical pain and emotional pain.

His own family thought He was crazy (Mk 3:21). They came to get Him one day and even interrupted Him in the middle of His teaching. His brothers did not believe in him (Jn 7:5). Jesus was not a hometown hero. On the day that Jesus preached His first sermon, His own hometown ran him out of town and tried to throw Him off a cliff (Lk 4:28). They were so enraged at Him that they tried to murder Him.

Jesus experienced almost constant rejection by important and influential people. All the rich and famous people you want to have as Facebook friends, were His avowed and public enemies. He was ostracized by the intellectual elite of His day. When He entered into public debate, He was laughed at and scorned as an idiot.

He was often the subject of racial slurs. Once a group of Jews said this,

² Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology : An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 1994), 1172.

³ The last mention of Joseph in the life of Jesus was at age twelve. After the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, Joseph never appears. When Jesus was on the cross, He transferred the care of His mother to John signifying that Joseph had died and Mary's care had fallen to Jesus as the eldest son.

⁴ Jesus had four other brothers (REF???)

John 8:48

The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?"

Think of the worst racial slur that you could receive today and this is at least equivalent and probably worse. Jesus even experienced public defamation of His mother by Jews who insinuated that He was born out of wedlock.

John 8:41

"We were not born of sexual immorality."

The implied meaning is that Jesus was born of sexual immorality.⁵

How was it possible to endure all of this and not be absolutely unpleasant to be around? How could Jesus have endured all of this and still have had such a personality that people were drawn to Him? Thousands of people followed Him for days at a time and were even willing to go without food just to be near Him and hear Him teach (Mk 8:2-3).

What was it like to spend several months knowing that the most powerful group of men in your nation were actively plotting your death? How could He sleep peacefully at night?

Why was Jesus not dominated by continual depression? How could He not become overwhelmed and paralyzed by fear? How could He concentrate as He was teaching when He knew His enemies were scrutinizing every single word looking for the first opportunity to trap Him with His words?

Why did He not succumb to continual anger and outbursts of rage? Was He not human? Did all of these things not bother Him? Was He not tempted in all these ways?

How was He able to avoid being consumed with worry and fretting? How did he have the emotional and spiritual strength to spend all day, nearly everyday for about three years, teaching and preaching and healing people and listening to everyone's troubles without suffering an emotional breakdown? How could He possibly bear the weight of daily hearing about all the pain the people went through without collapsing?

We are told of only two instances when Jesus wept (Lk 19:41; Jn 11:35). Knowing all that He knew about how Satan ravaged the people of Israel, how could He avoid weeping every day? And those thick-headed disciples of His, they hardly ever understood anything He said. Why was He not overcome with frustration and impatience?

And having previously experienced the glories of heaven in perfect union with His heavenly Father, how on earth could He ever be content with such a meager existence here on this planet? He never owned a house? He never even rented an apartment. He never owned an air conditioned car. He never had a motorcycle or even a Razor scooter! He spent most of His time walking from town to town and village to village in the dusty, sweaty middle eastern sun. He did not own a donkey. And presumably He spent the many, many nights sleeping outside?

⁵ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2004), 265. See also: D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 352.

He did not travel in an RV? He carried no lunch box? He had no credit card? He allowed a man who was a thief and a robber to carry His wallet and knew full well what kind of man he was when He invited him on His team (Jn 6:70; 12:6). Jesus did not worry about money? How could he not worry about it?

Do you?

Do you worry about money? Do you become weary with hearing other people's problems? Do you sometimes find yourself giving in to outbursts of rage and anger? Are you at times overcome with fear of those who have it out for you? Are you sometimes paralyzed by anxiety and timidity when it comes to sharing the good news of the gospel?

Do you find yourself tossing and turning and unable to sleep because of worry, fear, and anxiety? Does the peace of God often seem like something in a story book you heard as a child? Are you often grieved at the hurtful words of mean people?

How can we live lives that glorify God and exalt Jesus when the weight of the world and the cares and concerns of this life seem about to crush us at any moment? Is Jesus, in His divinity, simply impervious to all the pains, frustrations, and irritants that daily knock us out?

Should we dare expect to live a life similar to His? Jesus said,

John 16:33

"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

That's great! I'm truly glad that Jesus overcame the world, but I don't feel like I have overcome the world. Most of the time I feel like the world has overcome me.

1 John 4:4

Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

"Little children, YOU have overcome them (i.e all the false teachers and those who deny Jesus)? I have? Really? How? Answer: by the power of "He who is in you." Who is "he who is in you?" He **who is in the you** is "the Spirit of God" (1 Jn 4:2) and "the Spirit of truth" (1 Jn 4:6, cf. Jn 14:17; 15:26; 16:13). John is referring to the Holy Spirit. He **who is in the world** is the Satan, the evil one (1 Jn 5:19) or "the spirit of antichrist" (1 Jn 4:3) and all who follow Him.

He who is in you is the Holy Spirit and He is greater than Satan. If you are a believer in Jesus and have received the the Holy Spirit then there dwells within your soul someone who is more powerful than Satan. Satan is very powerful and yet the Holy Spirit is infinitely more powerful than Satan because the Holy Spirit is the spiritual presence of God Himself.

Now then, should we expect that our lives will look like Jesus' life? Should we expect that we can live like Jesus lived — since the very Spirit of Jesus is living within us?

John 1:29-34 (ESV)

29 *The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*

30 *This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.’*

31 *I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel.”*

32 *And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him.*

33 *I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’*

34 *And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.”*

There was nothing about Jesus’ life that offered conclusive evidence that He was especially anointed by God until the day of His baptism. John was Jesus’ cousin. John was six months older than Jesus. They spent their lives together. They would have spent a lot of time together growing up. John did not recognize Jesus as Messiah before His baptism.

He says, “*I myself did not know Him,*” which means that He did not recognize Him as Messiah until the day of His baptism. The only reason John recognized Jesus as Messiah is because God (“he who sent me to baptize with water”) told him what to look for. God told him to look for the guy on whom the Spirit descends and remains.

Matthew 3:16-17

16 *And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him;*

17 *and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”*

Before Jesus’ baptism John did not recognize Jesus as Messiah. Jesus did not run around when they were kids healing little kids who got hurt on the playground. John never saw Jesus do a miracle until after the Holy Spirit came upon Him at His baptism. Jesus did not have the power to do miracles until the Holy Spirit came upon Him in the way that He did on the day of His baptism. The first miracle Jesus ever performed was changing the water into wine at the wedding in Cana.

We only see Jesus performing miracles after the Holy Spirit came upon Him at His baptism. Certainly the Holy Spirit had always been at work in the life of Jesus because Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and Mary & Joseph was amazed at Jesus as a 12 year old by His ability to understand God’s word but clearly after the Holy Spirit anointed Jesus and remained upon Him (at His baptism) He began to demonstrate the power of God in ways that He had not previously done.

Immediately after Jesus’ baptism, the Holy Spirit led (Mark 1:12 says ‘drove’) Him out into the wilderness and for “forty days being tempted by Satan” (Mk 1:13; cf. Lk 4:2). After those forty days of temptation, Luke tells us “Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit.”

How was the man Jesus able to obey during those forty days of intense temptation? Was it not by the power of the Holy Spirit? How was Jesus then able to begin His new ministry? Was it not by the power of the Holy Spirit?

How was Jesus able to cast out demons?

Jesus says in **Matthew 12:28**, “... *it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons...*”

How was the man Jesus able to live a sinless life?

Hebrews 9:14

... Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God...

Obviously, the Holy Spirit was at work throughout the entirety of Jesus’ life for He never committed a sin, even the 12 year-old Jesus never sinned, neither did the 16 year-old Jesus or the 21 year-old Jesus or the 25 year-old Jesus, nor the 30 year-old Jesus.

The Holy Spirit who empowered Jesus to obey His Father is the same Holy Spirit now given to everyone who trusts in Jesus. The Spirit who enabled Jesus to endure 40-days of temptation is same Holy Spirit who now dwells in the heart of every believer. The Holy Spirit who enabled Jesus to begin a new ministry is the same Holy Spirit who now dwells within us. The Holy Spirit who enabled Jesus to cast out demons is the same Holy Spirit who now dwells within the hearts of all His true disciples. The Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead is the same Holy Spirit who now dwells within you (Rom 8:11).

The aim of this sermon is to convince you that the Holy Spirit who enabled the man Jesus to do all that He did and to live the way He lived is same Holy Spirit dwelling within you. ***That Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus.*** If, then, you have the Spirit of Jesus dwelling within you, then it is possible to live as Jesus lived. With the Holy Spirit dwelling within, it is possible to live a God-glorifying, Christ-exalting, world-overcoming life!

John 14:12

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.”

- Peter preach his first sermon and 3,000 people were saved - never happened to Jesus
- Paul planted churches in dozens of countries - Jesus didn’t
- “Whoever” the gospel can have today a greater reach than in Jesus’ day

The Holy Spirit worked in Jesus lived to empower Him to be the sinless Savior. He will not work like that in your life. However, the Holy Spirit will enable you to live your life just as Jesus would if He were in your shoes.

Hopefully, this will cause you to analyze your life and ask at least two questions. First, Do you have the Holy Spirit dwelling within you? If not, then ask Jesus to give you His Spirit.

Second, if you do have the Holy Spirit dwelling within you, then how does His presence in your life affect how you live? Are you daily seeking His advice? Are you training yourself to listen to Him? Do you see His power evident in your life?

If not, then what needs to change?