

# “*holy* SPIRIT WEEK”

First UMC Pasadena

Rev. Allison Mark

August 16, 2009

*Theme: holy Spirit Week: how are we filled with the HOLY SPIRIT*

*Theological Lesson: “Praise the Lord!” Singing songs and hymns, we give thanks for the Spirit working through and within us; for walking with us as our God of wisdom and guidance.*

*Challenge: Where do we see the Holy Spirit in our lives?*

## **Psalm 111**

### **Ephesians 5:15-20**

Are you feeling filled with the Spirit today? Let us again welcome our musical praise band this morning, The Night Blooming Jazzmen.

Aside from the pastors, office staff, and worship committee that put together our weekly liturgy and order of worship, you may not realize how much coordination goes into worship planning. In selecting the hymns for this week with the Night Blooming Jazzmen and working with Ed Buhlman, the Reverends Mann and Bothast, and our Music Minister, Steve Gothold, we hope we picked out some of your old favorite hymns. But as I thought more about the service though, I guess I could have been more accommodating and selected songs by congregant-vocations, such as:

Dentist’s Hymn.....Crown Him with Many Crowns  
Weatherman’s Hymn.....There Shall Be Showers of Blessings  
Contractor’s Hymn.....The Church Is One Foundation  
The Tailor’s Hymn.....Holy, Holy, Holy  
This one is not necessarily an occupation, but for The Golfer’s, their Hymn is  
.....There’s a Green Hill Far Away  
And if we have any Politicians out there, your Hymn  
.....Standing on the Promises  
Optometrist’s Hymn.....Open My Eyes That I Might See  
(and for those with this part-time occupation) The Gossiper’s Hymn  
.....Pass It On  
The Electrician’s Hymn.....Send The Light  
The Shopper’s Hymn.....Sweet By and By  
The Realtor’s Hymn (I know we have some realtor’s out there! Here’s yours!)  
.....I’ve Got a Mansion  
The Doctor’s Hymn.....The Great Physician

And so as we prepare for this morning's message, we wonder what it means to *be filled with the Spirit*. To be filled *as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts*. Let us give thanks to God. Let us think on these things. Let us pray:

*May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of our hearts, may they be acceptable in thy sight, O God, our Rock, and our Redeemer. Amen.*

As Rev. Mann read, Ephesians 5:15-20 for us this morning, this morning's focus is on being filled with the Spirit. The previous three week's of our lectionary readings from the Gospel Book of John have taken us to Jesus' message of, "I am the Bread of Life, whoever believes in me shall have everlasting life." In exploring our walk with Christ, the Book of Ephesians, written by the Apostle Paul, takes us in our journey to live as *wise* people. Paul's straightforward directive tells us to: live as people filled with the Spirit, *singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs* (Eph 5:18-20) as praises and thanksgivings to the God whose *works are great and who has provided for us* (Psalm 111). Thus we enter our journey to seek the understanding of the meaning of the Trinity...of the Creator, of the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

This week, as 40 Youth and Counselors head up to Camp Sky Meadows for Youth Camp, we will become Spirit Seekers searching for a better understanding of what the Holy Spirit is and how it enters into our lives. As we go from Spirit Seekers to Spirit Catchers we will witness the presence of the Spirit through God's love, compassion, mercy, and justice. So for all of you youth joining us for Camp this week, consider this a little preview of our week's lessons.

I think for most of us, the vaguest concept of the Trinity is that of the Holy Spirit. With Sunday School, Bible Studies, and sermons, we can understand that God is our Creator, a greater power—“we can get a glimpse of God’s tenderness and strength through Michaelangelo’s Sistine Chapel.”<sup>1</sup> As Christians, we believe that God sent his Son in both human and divine form; we have seen artistic rendering of Baby Jesus in a manger or Our Savior hanging on the Cross. Jesus was sent as our tangible reminder of God’s love and forgiveness. God’s mercy and compassion. Jesus was made real to us because we needed a living reminder that God walks with us. But then there’s that third part of the Trinity. The Spirit. The Holy Spirit? The Holy Ghost? How do we make sense of that? Dr. Marcellino D’Ambrosio of the Crossroads Initiative says that we can’t quite feel the same way about a [descending] dove as we do about a child on its mother’s lap. And then what does the “Spirit” do? If the father creates, the Son saves, but what about the Spirit? We already tell our own kids that ghosts aren’t real so that they aren’t afraid to go to bed at night or that there are no such things as invisible friends that we can blame for our mischief.

Yet when we read the Bible, we find that it is more than a storybook with morals and values, and more than a history book of the existence of creation. Through these stories and through our traditions and history, we need to look further into the images and illustrations to understand how the Holy Spirit is made real and fills our lives. We need to look as witness to the transformations of the lives that have been affected through the Holy Spirit. It is looking at the workings of God being in our lives in each of our moments—from happiness and joy to our deepest times of trials and hardships. As we

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Marcellino D’Ambrosio, *The Holy Spirit, The Paraclete*, [http://www.crossroadsinitiative.com/library\\_article/593/Holy\\_Spirit\\_The\\_Paraclete.html](http://www.crossroadsinitiative.com/library_article/593/Holy_Spirit_The_Paraclete.html), Internet Accessed 16 August 2009.

examine where God is in our lives, we become able to see how the Spirit works through us.

Theologian, John MacArthur wrote a Bible Study on, “Living in the Spirit: Be Filled with the Spirit,”<sup>2</sup> And says that “many people are confused about what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Some people think that you must have some kind of ecstatic experience and speak in tongues, while others approach it very stoically. They simply recognize that the Holy Spirit is present, but think He [that it, *Holy Spirit*] makes little or no impact. Both are wrong. The filling or controlling of the Holy Spirit is a profound reality in the believer’s life and understanding and it can change your life.” The fact that we need to be first of all, even open to the concept of the Holy Spirit is a mere beginning. But once we allow the Spirit to enter into our lives, to be able to trust and let down our guard, we can fully let the Holy Spirit transform us.

And how is it transforming us? In our joys, we easily notice the Spirit bringing us happiness and showering us with blessing. We thank God for our joys as we witness the Spirit of Abundance in raises and yields of crops, in Spirit of Newness of healthy babies and recoveries, in the Spirit of Calling as we send people in our community to seminary and on missions, the Spirit of Celebration of birthdays and anniversaries, and the Spirit of Mercy in the returns of loved ones. Although sometimes harder to find, we can see the Holy Spirit working through us in times of great sadness in the brokenness of friendships, the loss of work, the pain of losing those close to us. We see the healing Spirit of Compassion and Comfort in death and loss, we are present to the Spirit of Guidance and

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<sup>2</sup> John MacArthur, *Living in the Spirit: Be Filled with the Spirit Part 1*, <http://www.biblebb.com/files/mac/sg1939.htm>, Internet Accessed, 6 August, 2009.

Wisdom in times we are in need of understanding. Yet sometimes, it takes patience to see that the Holy Spirit is present.

Last week, As the House of Representative and Senate have been on August break, many Council men and woman and State representatives have returned to their hometowns to conduct Town Hall meetings on the particular subject of Health Care Reform. While Town Hall meetings are supposed to be a place where orderly business is dealt with (usually civilly) and members of the community are given equal opportunities to share their opinions and feedback to their representatives, we have been hearing of the outcries of protest and even violence in places like Tampa and St. Louis. Where protestors in Pennsylvania have screamed and yelled at each other. Where police have handcuffed and arrested those disturbing the peace. Where is the Holy Spirit in this? Is the Holy Spirit taking sides? Is this an issue about who's right and who's wrong? Is it about taking away insurance from others or covering everyone? Where I see the Holy Spirit working in this is in the passion and advocacy for humanity and God's people.

The word used in the scriptures to talk about the "Spirit," was *paraclete*. *Paraclete* comes from Koine Greek *parakletos* or one who consoles, one who intercedes on our behalf, a comforter, or an advocate. Paraclete is used in Trinitarian theology to describe how God is revealed to the world and God's role in salveation. Spirit of Truth, Lightful Spirit of God Almighty, Holy Breath (ruah), Almighty Breath, Giver of Life, Lord of Grace, Helper, Comforter. Counselor, Supporter. This is where I see the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of the Paraclete. Where we turn as our intercessory role of Jesus to guide us with wisdom and understanding of one another.

Yet sometimes putting our faith in the Holy Spirit as our Advocate, our Intercessor, our Consoler is scary. But that is our consolation. This is God's love transforming us in Spirit. It is about the Spirit working within us together to find a solution that works out for all of us. Sometimes the Spirit takes a while, but the Spirit is always with us.

A wise friend of mine from seminary had said to me once that he can see the Spirit at work during conflict and struggle because it is in those times that we really need the Spirit to work through us to open our eyes, to let us really hear the Spirit, and to keep our hearts open to reconciliation and forgiveness. The Spirit of God, The Spirit of Christ is always with us.

And it has always been my understanding that God's Holy Spirit is in everything. Part of understanding the Spirit is being willing to let go. As Lee Bothast loves to tell me, there is a book on his shelf called, "Let Go and Let God," and he has yet to open it because he doesn't need to. Believing in the Holy Spirit means to trust. To be willing to let God enter into us without any judgment, without any fears. But first you need to be willing to trust God.

*It's like the story of the climber fell off a cliff, and as he tumbled down, he caught hold of a small branch.*

*"HELP! IS THERE ANYBODY UP THERE?" he shouted.*

*And just then a majestic voice boomed through the gorge:*

*"I will help you, my son, but first you must have faith in me."*

*"Yes, yes, I trust you!" cried the man.*

*"Let go of the branch," boomed the voice.*

*There was a long pause, and the man shouted up again, "IS THERE ANYONE ELSE UP THERE I COULD TALK TO?"*

The Holy Spirit is asking you to “Let Go and Let God” and trust in God to fill you with the Spirit. And only when you do so, it is then we can be filled with the Holy Spirit. It’s like filling a clay pot with a gallon of water and carrying it on your head. It will soon grow very heavy. However, when you swim underwater, you actually have many gallons of water on top of your head and the weight is not nearly as burdensome. Why the difference? It’s about where you are in at life, your environment. Are you able to allow the Holy Spirit to fully enter into your life to transform you? When you are in an environment of air, water is hard to carry, but when you are in the environment of water it is easier. So it is in the Spirit. If you are in the environment of the flesh, God’s work and commands may seem extremely burdensome, impossible to be filled with God’s love. But if you are in the environment of the Spirit, you are open and ready to be transformed.

So keep you hearts and minds open to the Holy Spirit of Transformation. Rejoice and sing psalms and hymns as God will show the power of God’s works. As God sent redemption to his people, he has commanded his covenant forever. Holy and awesome is God’s name!

### **Benediction**

*And as you are each sent off, out of these doors today:  
Remember the Spirit is at work in each of us for we are filled with the Spirit.  
As we leave these doors, we ask for courage, patience, and vision  
As we leave these doors, strengthen us all in our Christian vocation of witness to  
the world and of service to others. Amen and Amen.*