

Am I the right anyone?

Series: Come, Holy Spirit

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Luke 11:11-13

Holy Spirit.

We have been talking about the Holy Spirit. For some people, he is a familiar stranger. Yet He is the promise that excited Jesus most. That we would all be filled with the Holy Spirit. And this is the story as it was to be from the creation time. We were meant to have God in us, to be temples containing His glory and presence. Yet for many, this is not their experience.

Moses, one of the earlier prophets once said that he wished all of God's people were prophets so that they would prophesy. All? Could it really be something for all people? Ezekiel another prophet had a vision of dry bones being brought back to life. But it did not stop there. He was asked to prophesy and as He did, the wind came powerfully and filled the lungs of the bodies that now stood in front of Him. The wind being God's Spirit, could it really be that all people can be filled with Holy Spirit?

Then fast forward we get Jesus. This is the one who contained the presence and the glory of the Father. He was anointed and filled with the Holy Spirit. He lives in union with the father, we see him from this preach the gospel but also demonstrate it in signs and wonders. He makes a promise that anyone would be filled like Him and do even greater things. Anyone? You, you, you and even me?

But did Jesus really mean anyone? Why do I sometimes feel like the wrong anyone? I wonder how many of you have sat through this series and felt like this whole Holy Spirit conversation is just for a certain kind of people or even worse that you are the wrong anyone? This is what we want to talk about today. To echo the invitation that it is for you, you, you and even me.

Let's pray...

Here is one of Jesus' most taught sermons

Then Jesus said to them, "Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.' And suppose the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't

get up and give you anything.' I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity, he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.

"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

Now Jesus was teaching specifically about prayer. And often when we look at this portion, we think about the encouragement to keep persistently asking God for our needs. And that is true but is just very narrow teaching of this. Mostly because we have very shallow teaching on prayer. For Jesus, this was more than asking for what you wanted, prayer was a way into a relationship. It was a means to an end and not an end to itself and the end was being with the father. So teaching persistence in prayer was more about teaching being with the Father and guess what the greater reward is? Receiving the Holy Spirit. Here is how he finished his teaching on prayer;

"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

While we can argue about why prayers are not answered and what to do about unanswered prayer, what we cannot dispute is the father's willingness to pour out his spirit on anyone who asks. The main function of prayer at least in the economy of God is not a means to get whatever we want, but rather a way of being with the father. Regardless of what the answers to our prayers look like, the father is always sure to give himself to us, which is what we really need and are created for. Who can receive the Holy Spirit? You, you, you and even me. All you need to do is ask the father. He is more than generous and willing to give His Holy Spirit to anyone who asks.

So are there hoops to jump? Is it really anyone who asks? What if you have just recently started believing in Jesus and you still do not know much? What if are not serving in a church? What if you still have a pattern of sin you struggle with? Is it really for anyone or are there some right anyone?

We are not the only ones to struggle with this question. Even the early disciples, despite being with Jesus struggled with this question. And especially one particular

disciple. But God had revealed to Him that indeed everyone is not only welcome but can be filled with the Holy Spirit.

One day, all the key church leaders were meeting in Jerusalem to debate the question of whether the gentiles were included in the family of God. Were they the 'right anyone's' or did they have to jump some hoops? Get circumcised and even keep the food rules of the Jews. Here is how this disciple and respected leader responded.

The apostles and elders met to consider this question. After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith.

He like many of us is thinking, certainly not everyone. And like some of us, we are thinking certainly not me. The Jew and non-jew divisions were one of the biggest issues at that time. But had an experience that completely changed how he thought about these things. He repented. Not only could anyone be saved, but God would pour out His spirit on anyone who asks. He saw exactly what Jesus had promised.

What had happened to him before this time is quite interesting. He was sleeping on a roof and had a vision where God brought him all the animals he would not have eaten as a Jew. And in the vision, the Lord asked him to slaughter and eat. And out of deep honour for God, he refused. And a voice said to him that he should not call what God has made clean unclean. And this vision repeated itself 3 times. Because sometimes we are just not too smart to get what God is saying. I know for sure that is always my story.

As soon as he gets out of the vision, the Holy Spirit told him that people were coming to get him and he should go with them. Guess what? The men who came to get him were people Peter would consider unclean even what they ate was unclean. They were the wrong anyone. Think of your own wrong anyone; Maybe they vote wrong because Jesus definitely agrees with you politically. Maybe they go to the wrong church because they are not in the Vineyard. Maybe they have not been saved long enough and you think them immature Christians. Or they have the wrong sexual preference or their view on sexuality you think are old school. Or maybe it is you. You think you are the wrong anyone. This was Peter going into this.

Peter gets to the house of a Roman Soldier and there is a group gathered. Peter was only there out of obedience, he would never have been in this house yet here he was about to preach the Gospel to them. Here is the experience that changed Pete's view;

While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles.

Peter does not even finish his sermon. They do not need to know any more than they did to receive the Holy Spirit. They did not need to jump any hoops to receive the Holy Spirit. The father is so generous with His spirit. They did not need to have been saved any longer than that moment. They did not need to have been disciples any longer than that time. This was a fulfilment of Jesus' promise. That the father will pour out the Spirit on anyone who asks. You, you, you and even me. You are the 'right anybody'.

So what do we do? We are a people of unclean lips and unclean hands? David wrote in the Psalms; Who will ascend the Hill of the Lord? Only those with clean hands and pure hearts? Who then can really receive the Holy Spirit? Doesn't the word holy in the name Holy Spirit imply Holiness? What if I am not Holy and struggling with sin

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Yes, sin always comes between us and God. What does this mean for us who are still struggling with sin? Are we still the 'right anyones'? You see, being filled with the Holy Spirit does not mean we no longer contend with our humanity and life itself. The story in the book of Acts of ordinary human beings filled with the Holy Spirit joining God in victorious adventures but it is filled with stories of suffering and even failure despite all that raw power. Yet God still filled them with the Spirit.

We need to stop measuring our acceptability with our performance. God pours out His Spirit on His children. You are not any more his child because you prayed harder or gave your tithe. You are no anymore his child because you did not visit that site and you have not given into lust for a whole week.

Instead, we are called to be a people of confession and repentance. Sin means to miss the mark, to fall short. The mark is holiness and holiness is about being one with God. This is what the old Prayer of Israel, "Hear Oh Israel, Yahweh is our God, Yahweh is one." The problem is not the target, the problem is the arrow, the arrow that misses the target is sin. Anytime we try to achieve oneness with God by any other means but Jesus we miss the point. Whether that is failing morally or keeping moral rules hoping that makes you a better person. We all fall short.

Remember where we started today? Jesus said the Father pour out His Spirit to His children. It has nothing to do with performance but with His relationship with us. And we see that in Jesus' own life. When He got baptised he was filled with the Holy Spirit, and a voice from heaven was heard saying that He is God's beloved son. Jesus had not performed anything yet and moving on and it was not tied to His moral performance either.

It is the same for us. We are given the Holy Spirit because God is our father. You are the right anyone because God is our father and He is generous with Himself.

So John continues like this

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

So if we say we are without sin, we lie to ourselves and God is not in us. So we are called to be a people of confession. This means we can come before God with confidence because we know we are accepted not because of our performance but because He has called us His children. Be a people of repentance which means changing our minds and turning our lives around about how to reach the goal of union with God. Even though we are a people of unclean lips and hands and impure hearts, if we become a people of confession, God cleanses us from all unrighteousness.

You, you, you and even me. You are the right anyone. The father wants you to receive the Holy Spirit because He is a good father.

Let's Pray