

God in us all: Come, we go!

Series: Come, Holy Spirit

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John 7:37-39

Doing the stuff, Holy Spirit

I don't know what adventure looks like for you. For me, it's new experiences with friends and history. That makes me really love getting to places. I usually do not enjoy the journeys. I do not really like being on the road, and I do not enjoy planes but I really love getting to where I am going.

I will probably have done research on the place; what is the history of the place, what is their system of government, what language do they speak, how do they speak, like their accent and stuff. It makes the experience way richer.

And I try to travel light. But those 3 t-shirts I am carrying for a 2-week trip are often usually packed 2 days before. This is how excited I get about what I think is an adventure.

I think most of us are like this when it is something we are excited about. We cannot stop talking about it. We cannot help but over-prepare. Our excitement has a way of just taking over us.

Sadly for many believers, this is not our experience following Jesus. We say this is the best invitation ever. We speak of it in terms of an adventure. We read Bible stories and there are just mindblowing things happening left right and centre but we could not define our lives like that.

In fact faith often then becomes one part of our life that we attend to on Sunday or a random Wednesday night.

But the invitation has always been; out of our Spirit-filled lives, all these other things will flow. How we love, how we live, how we do business, and how we have fun. It should be the constant stream running through our lives. It is about being naturally supernatural. It does not even have to be weird at all but is always spirit-filled.

But right there is our problem; we have no idea what to do with Holy Spirit. Jesus was so excited about sending the Holy Spirit. Even before his death, despite knowing what is coming, he speaks with excitement about this. Then he says that it is actually better than Him face to face. Imagine that?

Everyone here would trade their experience for just a face to face conversation with Jesus. But Jesus staring at his disciples face to face thinks it is better for him to go away so that we can receive the Holy Spirit. The move from God with us to God in us.

So that is what we have been talking about. Who is the Holy Spirit? How do we receive the Holy Spirit? Who receives the Holy Spirit? And what then does that look like? And this was always the plan from the beginning, that all of humanity will be temples, tabernacles, containers of God's presence and Glory.

And so last week, I wanted us to get to the point that this promise is for everyone who believes. We get to be part of this great adventure. The Holy Spirit makes us naturally supernatural. Which makes life a great adventure. We get to do the things Jesus did and even way more. And that is for everyone. You, you, you and even me.

Let's Pray

So today, let's start our adventure in the old testament with a prophecy from a guy called Ezekiel.

47 The man brought me back to the entrance to the temple, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was coming down from under the south side of the temple, south of the altar. He then brought me out through the north gate and led me around the outside to the outer gate facing east, and the water was trickling from the south side.

3 As the man went eastward with a measuring line in his hand, he measured off a thousand cubits and then led me through water that was ankle-deep. He measured off another thousand cubits and led me through water that was knee-deep. He measured off another thousand and led me through water that was up to the waist. He measured off another thousand, but now it was a river that I could not cross because the water had risen and was deep enough to swim in—a river that no one could cross. He asked me, "Son of man, do you see this?"

Then he led me back to the bank of the river. When I arrived there, I saw a great number of trees on each side of the river. He said to me, "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, where it enters the Dead Sea. When it empties into the sea, the salty water there becomes fresh. Swarms of living

creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish because this water flows there and makes the saltwater fresh; so where the river flows everything will live. Fishermen will stand along the shore; from En Gedi to En Eglaim there will be places for spreading nets. The fish will be of many kinds—like the fish of the Mediterranean Sea. But the swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they will be left for salt. Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear fruit because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing.”

Ezekiel 47:1-12

Now, this prophecy is not just good poetry, neither is it random. In the book of Genesis, the story of creation is really the Holy Spirit creating life as the father speaks the word.

Genesis 1, the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. Of course, we get the image of water there. But for the ancient middle eastern cultures where this story comes from the sea represented the unconquered, dark powers of chaos and confusion.

So God speaks the word, and the Spirit proceeds from Him bringing life and order into all that chaos. Causing it to be all that we see and do not see. Bringing something out of nothing. Do you see the same imagery? Just like that river, as the Spirit proceeds from the father, it causes life to spring out even where there was just death, chaos and confusion.

Another image I want us to get is about things moving to the east. Of course, the fall of man happens. And guess in which direction Man moves as he leaves the garden? East. So because of sin, death, chaos and destruction are with Man, east of the garden.

So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden

Genesis 3: 23,24

It is no coincidence that in this vision the river is flowing Eastward. God is being consistent. Now, remember the temple is where God dwells and this stream that the

prophet is seeing proceeds from God's presence. The Spirit proceeds from the father in pursuit of the beloved of God.

And as the Spirit flows from the father, just like in the beginning he is creating order and bringing life even where things look completely dead, like in the dead sea. The dead sea is called so because nothing can live in it. But when the river from the temple flows into it, it changes things. It brings it to life and there are fishes.

This has been so encouraging to me as a pastor because I desire for all of you to have the Holy Spirit. But some of you feel dead. Some of you have never known the Holy Spirit or have no idea what to do with Him. Some of you have been hurt by past church experiences. Some of you are just in a dry place in your faith. But the life God brings to the dead sea has nothing to do with the sea. It is simply because the river that is flowing brings life.

But the life God brings to the dead sea has nothing to do with the sea. It is simply because the river that is flowing brings life. If you open yourself up to the Holy Spirit he will bring you to life again. And this is what it looks like. It is you saying, "God whatever it looks like, I am ready and I am saying Yes."

A powerless people want theological debates. A hungry people want power, presence and life I know which one I wanna be. I know which we are being invited to be as a church, A hungry and surrendered people. That we will want the Holy Spirit, both as a community and as individuals and then surrender and say, "Yes, whatever it looks like."

Now, I want us to go to a different story. This time it is with Jesus

On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

John 7:37-39

Now, let me just tell you how significant this is. Do you keep wondering why Jesus was killed by the Religious leaders? He kept doing stuff like this.

This is a big festival. People are at the temple. On the seventh day of this festival, people would come out of their tents and gather at the temple having fetched water in cisterns from a nearby watering point. Then as they sang hymns, the priest would

pour water down the steps and form a little stream. It was a reenactment of Ezekiel's prophecy.

Then Jesus interrupts this Holy moment and in a loud voice says, that those streams that were prophecied come from him. Everyone hearing him knows exactly what his claim is. He is saying that he is the container of the presence and glory of God and the stream that comes from the presence of God comes from him. And it's for anyone who is thirsty. Anyone who feels dead inside. Anyone who figures God is better at life than him.

And then the promise is that the very same waters we get to drink from and find life will then flow from us and others will find life too.

Not for the theologians or professional church people like myself, not for those who have been Christians for many years, not for men only, not for grown-ups. Anyone who needs life.

And you see the powerful invitation here is come to me and drink. He is not saying come let's talk about it. He is not saying come let's do a 4 week series about it like we are just about to do. The question really is, will you say yes to the Spirit of God.

You do not need to know any more than you do today to receive the Holy Spirit. You do not need to be saved any more than you are today to receive the Holy Spirit. You do not need anything more than you already have but just believe and say. "Yes, Lord." And I mean that. He means it.

And you know what happens at Pentecost when the Spirit is poured out on the apostles? One, they are themselves filled with the spirit and then they start moving Eastwards, out of Jerusalem creating new life. The dead are raised, the lame walk, the mute speak, demons are cast out, the widows are fed, the poor receive good news, the gospel is preached, and new communities are birthed.

These people were not theologians. They were fishermen who drank from Jesus and said yes to becoming streams of living water. Because God now dwells in us, just like He did in Jesus. What is the prerequisite?

Yes, to being known by Him and to know Him. Yes, to whatever it looks like.

So how do we know what it looks like for an individual or community to have received the Holy Spirit?

One day John, who baptised Jesus, was losing faith. He sent his disciples to ask Jesus if He really was the one they had been waiting for or if they should look for another.

Here is what Jesus replied...

So He replied to them, "Go and tell John about everything you have seen and heard: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the good news (gospel) preached to them.

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, what follows is a demonstration of the Kingdom of God. So Jesus reminds John that He is the one with the Spirit. You can see the life coming out of him.

Then after the resurrection, He gives the Spirit to the disciples and what do they go on to do? The very works of Jesus. ***the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hears, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the good news (gospel) preached to them.***

This is the adventure that we are all being invited into. Yes, you, you, you and even me. The Holy Spirit makes the impossible practicable. We become naturally supernatural.

People will cross your mind, and images will come to your mind. Sometimes it will be a voice. Sometimes you will have pain that you are sure is not yours but that God wants to heal it in the room. And when we say yes, when we allow the streams of living waters to flow out of us, it causes life everywhere it goes.

But it is not about the things we get to do, it is out of a relationship with the Spirit that these things flow. The Holy Spirit is a person to know not a power to harness. We need to love and pursue God more than the gifts he gives. After all, it is the nature of God to give us gifts. Healing, prophecy, miracles, faith, wisdom. God just gives these gifts, but he longs for us to know him, to be in us.

The invitation is to first come, taste and see, come drink from the river ourselves. Come have life and then these streams will flow out of you. Ezekiel is invited to first enter the river before he sees what the river is doing. Here is the Invitation, come we go. Come, we go. Come, we go.

There is a story in Acts, where some guy had just watched the disciples do some cool miracles. And he goes to them and asks how much money he could pay you so that they can give me the same power.

And the disciples rebuke him strongly and assure him he will not have a part in it at all. The Holy Spirit is not a power to be harnessed. He is a person to be in a

relationship with. In fact, the things he does with us are out of delight and companionship and really enjoys doing things with us.

So the real question is, will you say yes? Will you relinquish control and say, 'Come, Holy Spirit. Whatever it looks like, I am ready.'

He wants you to experience his life, his presence His glory, and his friendship and then be part of a great adventure. And even that begins with opening yourself up and saying whatever it looks like.

The water started ankle deep. He went further and it was knee deep, he went further and it was to his waist, he went further and it deep enough to swim in. All he had to do is keep going where he was being led.

The more we yield to the spirit, the deeper it becomes. It is the father's joy to give us the Holy Spirit. Also, before there Ezekiel is shown the work of the river, he is invited to get into the river.

Let's Pray