

“We believe in the Holy Spirit, The Lord, the giver of life.”

QUESTION - Do we? Do we really believe in the Holy Spirit? Do we understand who we are talking about when we say these words?

God the Father we understand. Jesus, the Son we understand. But if we are honest, it is harder to understand, or to describe the Holy Spirit.

In his widely read novel, **“The Shack”**, William Young portrays God the Father and God the son as clear easily definable people, but he portrays the Holy Spirit as a mysterious shimmery Asian woman, somewhat translucent in appearance. He tries to capture something of the mystery that we often feel about the Holy Spirit.

The writers of the Nicene Creed must have struggled with this. They eventually came to this simple, brilliant and wholly accurate summary of who He is - **The Lord the giver of life**. So let us think about what this means.

- He was there from the very beginning – The third person on the Trinity.
- Just as involved with the creation as the Father and the Son

Gen 1 1-2 *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. **And the Spirit of God** was hovering (blowing) over the face of the waters.*

Holy Spirit present from the beginning – involved in creation, He is seen throughout the Old Testament and in the New Testament is the Spirit of Jesus.

There is another way in which He is “The Lord, the giver of life”

The Holy Spirit brings us to, and deepens our Spiritual life – How?

- In the general presence of God in the world – or should we say, the world in Him?
Acts 17 27; Paul speaking with the Greek Philosophers at the Areopagus *“Yet He (Holy Spirit of God) is actually not far from each one of us, ²⁸for ‘In him we live and move and have our being’*. Possibly quoting philosopher and mystic Epimenides of Crete
- The call of God – mediated by the Holy Spirit which causes us to become believers and respond to Him; John 6 44 *“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.”* (Context of Religious people objecting to Jesus calling himself the “Bread of Life.”)
- John 14 – The Helper/ Comforter/ Advocate. *“It is better if I go away because then the Helper will come.”*
Implication is that the Spirit will be closer, ever present and more real than Jesus in the flesh had ever been. John 14 16 *“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you for ever, ¹⁷even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”* John 16 3 *“When the Spirit of **truth** comes, he will guide **you into all the truth**, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to **you** the things that are to come.”* For example, read the story of the two disciples unknowingly meeting Jesus after His resurrection, on the Road to Emmaus.
- Specific calling of the of Holy Spirit for specific tasks. Prophets in the Old Testament – even King Saul – anointed to be King – starts prophesying with the prophets. Jesus, who already known something of the Holy Spirit in His life – baptised into the Holy Spirit – Matthew *“Led by the Spirit into wilderness”* Mark, *“The Spirit immediately drove him into the wilderness”* There, in the power of the Holy Spirit in His life He faces and overcomes all the cunning manipulation of Satan. Now tried and tested, He comes out *“In the power of the Holy Spirit”*.
- Ezekiel 47 is a dramatic Old testament picture of the Holy Spirit, flowing from the very Holiest place – the river – a metaphor for the Spirit. Initially not much happens, but as we give ourselves up to Him we are knocked off our feet and swept down the river where it results in abundance – healing/ food / new life and much more.
- **Most extraordinary promise** John 14 12 *“Greater works than these shall you do, because I am going to the Father”*
Implication – because I will send the Spirit.
- Dramatic interventions – the most well known of which is Pentecost

Story of Pentecost And so some hundreds of years after Ezekiel’s prophesy, there was a terrified group of disciples in an upper room – frightened and confused. Jesus had been raised from the dead - AMAZING. But He was different now, in some ways “otherworldly” – He not so much came and went as appeared and disappeared. He spoke of a mysterious power that would come. He gave them an impossible task – How would they do it? “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel” Us? Does he really mean us – most of us are comparatively uneducated despised people with strong Galilean accents – why some of us have only ever trained as fishermen. Most people have always kept their distance from us because of the smell of fish! There are a few from the religious establishment who have tentatively been following Jesus – but they are keeping their heads down. Yes, we have known something of God giving us insights and power that have surprised us – our hearts burned within us as Jesus taught us – not that we really understood much of it. But he tell us to “Wait in Jerusalem until we received power from on high. We have no idea what that means but we will be obedient and do what he has asked and use the waiting time to pray. And so they did – until

The same wind that was there over the waters in Creation, the same wind that blew the red sea into two mountains of water letting the Israelites through – the same wind and fire that Moses experienced on Sinai and later Elijah, hiding after the contest on mount Carmel, but this time experience as “A sound of gentle blowing” – “A still small voice.” This same mighty wind blew them out, with fire in their hearts, into the streets and market places of the world – and the rest, as they say, is history.

Down through history ordinary men and women filled with this same Spirit have drawn others to Jesus and caused the Church to grow. The church did not grow primarily because of academics, priests or bishops, but because of ordinary, spirit filled men and women, a few of whom have been academics, priests and bishops. The key has been the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

As I read the Bible, I find several important principles regarding the Holy Spirit;

- The need to seek Him regularly, Paul writing to the Ephesian Christians in Ephesians 5 19 exhorts them to go on being filled. Whatever our experience – the injunction in scripture is to be filled and to go on being filled.
- While we may have experienced something of the Holy Spirit, there is always more. But this precious gift is for the genuinely earnest. **See Luke 11**

All true Christians share something of the Holy Spirit’s work in their lives. It is the Holy Spirit who draws us to God and stirs our hearts to worship Him.

But consider this – Jesus before His baptism knew about His Father – but after He goes into the wilderness is tempted by Satan, but also full of the Spirit – He comes out in “The power of the Holy Spirit.” With these characteristics.

- Greatest joy – to commune with His Heavenly Father – “I go to my God and your God, My Father and your Father”
- “Live a life of absolute obedience’ John 5 19 – Did only that which He saw His father doing – worked not according to rules, fairness or a committee, but to the voice of His Father – pool of Siloam – “when waters moved”
- So it is with those who are filled with the Spirit.
- And then there is this most extraordinary promise – John 14 “Greater works than these shall you do.”

So in conclusion this morning, I pose these questions;

Do we really believe in the Holy Spirit? Are we hungry for more of Him?

Do we really want to know God, to absolutely submit to His direction in our lives? We call Him Lord. Is He?

The promise of Jesus is an active one – “I will ask the Father and He will send another “comforter” “helper”, “advocate”.

We have an opportunity as we stand around the Communion table to seek Him together - But first let us affirm to God and to each other our belief as we say the Nicene creed. As we sing our next hymn, “Breath on me Breath of God”, let us make it our prayer.