

In Our Own Languages

A sermon preached by Ted Atkinson, Minister, Oxford Presbyterian Church, Oxford, PA on Pentecost Sunday, June 4, 1995. Scripture Lessons: Acts 2:1-21; Psalm 104:24-34, 35b; Romans 8:14-17; John 14:8-17.

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Dear friends, we need the Holy Spirit. ^{at His own} We need the baptism of the Holy Spirit like we need a cool dip in a swimming pool in 95 degree weather after a hard day's work. We need the Holy Spirit like a trout needs a mountain stream. We need the Holy Spirit like an eagle needs the air. We need the Holy Spirit like an the flowers need the soil. Our church needs to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit is like "being in the zone". When Michael Jordan is in the zone he can dribble the ball through a crowd of defenders untouched and leap for a perfect slam dunk. Joe Montana once said, "When I'm in the zone it's like all the defensive line men are coming at me in slow-motion. It's like I have all day for a receiver to get in the open." When Steve Carlton was in the zone about 20 years ago he could hurl the ball like it was being guided by a laser beam to the exact spot he wanted it to go.

Being filled with the Spirit is like being in the zone. The Spirit gives us just the right words to say to an unbelieving friend that points them on the way to Jesus. More than that - the Holy Spirit fills us with desire for our neighbors to know Jesus. The Holy Spirit enables a church to pray. More than that, the Holy Spirit enables a church to want to pray - to pray like a child far from home longs to talk to her mom and dad. ^{to be seen ...} The Holy Spirit enables a church to do what Jesus did. ^{to heal, to forgive, to do risk by things to die} The Holy Spirit is like Saul Alinsky coming into the church to organize, encourage, and fill us with enthusiasm to get involved in the mission of Jesus Christ in the community and world.

When the Holy Spirit filled the apostles they preached and people listened. People responded. People got baptized. People were added to the church. People shared their possessions with the needy. People prayed together, ate together, studied God's Word together, worshiped together - people became best friends based upon their relationship to Christ and their desire to serve him. That's what we need. *We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit*
We pray to the Lord for physical healing ^{and we should} but we need the Holy Spirit more than we need physical healing. We ask the Lord for money to meet the budget ^{and we should} but we need the Holy Spirit more than we need money. We pray for the Lord to enable us to move ^{and we should} into the sanctuary. But we need the Holy Spirit to move into us more than we need to get into the sanctuary.

But when we have the Spirit of Christ we have the Spirit of healing and life. We share what we have willingly without compulsion. A church filled with the Holy Spirit converts people - lives are transformed - and those converted people will fill the sanctuary with praise to Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Jesus promised, "I will do whatever you ask in my name.... If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it." We need nothing more than we need the Holy Spirit? So why not ask? If we have the Holy Spirit we have the very Spirit of the Risen Christ and what else do we need if we have Him? Ask! Keep asking like a teenager keeps asking for the car. Ask like a little child asking for a drink of water at bed time. Ask until we get what we need - what Christ promised!

Come, Holy Spirit! Rain upon our dry and dusty lives. Wash away our sin and heal our wounded spirits. Kindle within us the fire of your love to burn away our apathy. With your warmth bend our rigidity, and guide our wandering feet. Amen.