

## Receive the Holy Spirit

A sermon by Ted Atkinson, Minister, Oxford Presbyterian Church, Oxford, PA on Pentecost Sunday, May 26, 1996. Scripture Lessons: Acts 2:1-21; Psalm 104; 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13; John 17:19-23.

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

God says, "I will pour out my Spirit on all people." I like that word "pour". It's a generous word. It's a lot more generous than the word "dribble". "Dribble" isn't a very generous word at all. The dictionary says that "dribble" means "to fall in drops, little by little." God doesn't dribble his Spirit on us. Nor is "drip" a very generous word. According to the dictionary "drip" means pretty much the same thing as "dribble" - "to fall in drops." "Trickle" is a little better, but not much. "Trickle" means to "flow in a thin gentle stream." You've probably heard of "trickle-down" economics. Trickle-down economics means that financial benefits are given to big business with the hopes that those economic benefits pass, or trickle down, to smaller businesses and consumers. But there's no trickle-down Holy Spirit affect. God doesn't give his Holy Spirit to the spiritual elite with the hopes the gift of his Spirit will trickle down on ordinary Christians.

"Dribble", "drip", "trickle" - these are all stingy words. But "pour" is a generous word. "Pour" means "to cause to flow in a stream." "Pour" also means "to give full expression." When we pour out our feelings we don't hold anything back. God doesn't hold back anything when he gives us the Holy Spirit. We sometimes say, "When it rains, it pours." A pouring rain is a hard rain. Two summers ago, Philip and I went to Hershey to an outdoors Bob Dylan concert. It poured that night. <sup>we got drenched</sup> ~~We go~~It was

great standing out in the pouring rain for three hours listening to Bob Dylan. Guess what his last song <sup>was</sup> ~~he sang~~. "It's hard rain's a gonna fall."

A hard rain fell on that first Pentecost. It poured. The first Christian Pentecost happened fifty days after Jesus rose from the dead. It happened ten days after Jesus ascended into heaven. God poured out his Holy Spirit on all people. Every nation was there. Asians were there. God poured out his Spirit on Parthians and Medes and Mesopotamians - Asians. Africans were there. God poured out his Spirit on Egyptians and Libyans from Africa. Europeans were there. God poured out his Spirit on people from the island of Crete and upon Romans. God didn't dribble or drip or let his Holy Spirit trickle down on them. ~~God poured out his Spirit on them. He poured out his Spirit on men and women. He poured out his Spirit on young and old. The nations and the peoples were drenched with the Holy Spirit.~~

God pours out his Holy Spirit on us. He doesn't dribble, drip, or let his Holy Spirit trickle down on us. God pours out his Holy Spirit on us. The Holy Spirit is poured on us in different ways. The Bible says that some will prophesy. That means "preaching" - speaking the Word of God and applying it to the lives of people in relevant ways. Others will see visions. God gave the building committee of this church vision when they proposed to build this building. They envisioned a church not just for us here this morning - but for all those people moving in to the Oxford area. They had a vision that God wanted to use our church to proclaim the Gospel so powerfully that "everyone

who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" and added to our church. Others will dream dreams. Some people see the world as it is and ask "why?". Others dream dreams. They see the world as God wants it to be and say, "Why not?" In other parts of the Bible we read about many more gifts that the Holy Spirit pours into our lives. St. Paul says that "to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."

Look at the pitcher on the Communion Table. It has water in it. I can pour the water into a glass - then it's for drinking. I can pour it into a cooking pan, over some vegetables - then it's for cooking. Or I can pour it into a basin - a wash my face and hands in it - or wash a baby. Or I can pour that water on flowers in the garden - then it would be to give life. The same water can be poured out for many different uses.

The Holy Spirit is also poured out on us for many different purposes. We need to know that the power of the Spirit is given to all of us. We have all received His power. Even though we have the power in different ways, it all comes from the same Spirit. Imagine what would happen if all 500 members of this church used their Spirit given gift for building up the Body of Christ, the church. Melissa Claypoole takes up the offering at the 8:15 service. What if every member, young or old, had just one job like that. One of you would visit our members at Southern Chester hospital once a week. Somebody else would visit one of our shut-ins once a month. Somebody else would greet worshippers once a year. Another usher. God has poured out his Holy Spirit on us - if each one of us used our spiritual gift

this congregation would be a power house. This congregation would accomplish ~~what~~ the kind of things the book of Acts says the early Church accomplished. God has poured out his Holy Spirit upon his church - but so often the church acts as though the Holy Spirit has merely dribbled, dripped and trickle-down on us.

This morning I'm going to baptize Danielle Maureen McFadien. ~~St. Paul writes, "in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one Body... and we were all made to drink of one Spirit."~~ I'm going to pour water on Danielle. I'm not going to dribble water on her. I'm not going to drip water on her. I'm not going to pour the water on something or somebody else and let it trickle down on her. I'm going to pour it on her. When I pour that water on ~~her -- let it be a symbol of what God does for us.~~ God pours out his Holy Spirit on us. God is a generous God. God isn't stingy. He pours out his Holy Spirit on us.

Baptism isn't a private rite. We're baptized into Christ's body, the church. The great heresy of American popular religion is that religion is a private affair. The great heresy is that we can be a good Christian outside the body of Christ. We can be a good person outside the church. We can be moral person. We can be a loving person outside the church. But God pours out his Spirit on us so that we can do something uniquely Christian for the building up of the Body of Christ and for the salvation of the world.

Paul says. "In the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." Let me try to illustrate this. How many things am I

holding? I'm holding one can. But there are lots of animal crackers in this can. But it's one can of animal crackers. Animal crackers outside of this can are probably going to get eaten up - just like Christians who try to live outside the Body of Christ. Jesus wants us to be a single thing with him. Jesus wants other people to see him when they look at us. If we are baptized into his Body, the church, and use the generous gifts poured out on us by the Holy Spirit - people will see Christ when they look at us. People outside the church will see Christ at work and they will call upon the name of the Lord and be saved.

Let us pray: Almighty God, at the feast of Pentecost you poured out your Holy Spirit on your disciples, filling them with joy and boldness to preach the Gospel; pour out your Holy Spirit afresh on us so that we may witness more effectively to your redeeming love and draw all people to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and The Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever, Amen