

Communion - Saturday Service

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[0 : 00] I like to read two brief texts now. First of all in Acts chapter 2 and then in Luke chapter 3. So I'll read them in that order and we'll work through them in the other order. Acts 2, I'll read one to four. Very familiar words in both cases. When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest in each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. And in Luke chapter 3 at verse 21.

When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, you are my son whom I love. With you I am well pleased.

Now here we are at a communion weekend. And I hope that we will have communion together and communion with the Lord in different ways. Very obviously tomorrow, communion around the Lord's table, remembering what he has done for us. What I want to do tonight is to think of the importance of the Holy Spirit in our communion. We are linked with Jesus in various ways. But for me, one of the most important ways to think about my connection with Jesus is that I have communion with him in the Holy Holy Spirit. When you think of the Holy Spirit, we have the Holy Spirit.

We have the Holy Spirit, if we are Christians. From the moment somebody becomes a believer in Jesus, they have the Holy Spirit living in their hearts. God in my heart making my body a temple of his Spirit.

Every Christian has the Holy Spirit. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit from day one, and we have the Spirit forever. Well, who else has the same Spirit? Jesus. The man Christ Jesus, who had the Spirit here as a child, as a boy, as a teenager, throughout his ministry, he is still the God-man. He still has the Spirit, the fullness of the Spirit in his humanity in heaven. So, Jesus has the Spirit. You have the Spirit.

[3 : 25] We each have the same Holy Spirit. We are linked with Jesus in union through the Spirit.

So, I thought tonight I would just fairly briefly try and connect these two events. I've actually never done this before, and I hope I'll be able to connect them in a way that's convincing to you. You see, I believe that here in Luke and in Acts, we have two anointings, two baptisms that Luke wants us to see linked in his mind and in ours. The first is, of course, the great event of the baptism of Jesus, a baptism in water, but also a baptism in the Holy Spirit as heaven is opened and the Spirit descends on Jesus in the form of a dove.

Jesus anointed for his particular ministry. Then in the book of Acts, we have the church anointed, baptized in the Holy Spirit, baptized in the Holy Spirit, another great event, a real one-off.

And again, it's an anointing for ministry. The church is anointed for her particular special ministry. And remember that Luke wrote both of these books. He wrote the Gospel of Luke, as we call it, and he wrote the Acts of the Apostles. And I believe that early in each of these books, he wanted us to see these great events linked, as Jesus is anointed for his unique ministry by the Spirit, and as we are anointed for our ministry as a church by the Spirit. These events are also, of course, linked by the fact that they are so clearly Trinitarian. We believe in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And we should be Christians who remember the three persons of the Trinity all the time. In the baptism of Jesus, the Father speaks from heaven. The Spirit comes from heaven. And the speaking and the coming are for the Son who's on earth. And then in the book of Acts, Jesus says the Father is going to give him the Spirit. And then Jesus, the Son, pours out the Spirit. And the third person of the Trinity comes down in power on the church.

Two great events that remind us that we believe in one God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and we worship Him. Now, what I call the sermon tonight is thank you to the Spirit. I believe that all of us should want to say thank you to this humble, self-effacing Spirit. He doesn't push Himself into prominence. He's so often in the background in the New Testament. But I want you tonight to say thank you to the Holy Spirit for what He did in the life of Jesus, and to say thank you to the Holy Spirit for what He's done in the life of the church. We owe so much to the Spirit of God. We should say thank you to the Holy Spirit. Let's take a few minutes on the baptism of Jesus. I just want to make one or two points, and then we'll move to the baptism of the church. So, first of all, in Luke 3, we have Jesus receiving the Holy Spirit. Now, at one level, of course, this is a very important, if I can use this word, official event. Because Jesus has come to be, you know, the Christ, which is the same word as

[8 : 05] Messiah in another language. Christ and Messiah both mean anointed one. So, Jesus has come to be the anointed Messiah, the anointed Christ. And here at His baptism, He is being anointed in a special way by the Holy Spirit for His unique work. Now, we know, of course, that Jesus would have had the Spirit from the very beginning. He was conceived by the power of the Spirit. And, you know, if John the Baptist was filled with the Spirit from the womb, then obviously Jesus, who was much greater than John, was filled with the Spirit from the very beginning. But on this great occasion of His baptism, He has given the Spirit in a special way that will empower Him for His unique ministry as the Christ, the Messiah. He's being baptized for His public ministry, and the Spirit is the one who is going to guide Him and uphold Him throughout that ministry. So, Jesus here is receiving a very special gift, a very special effusion of the

Spirit for His Spirit for His work. I believe that Jesus is here being anointed for a ministry as prophet, priest, and king. You've often heard that language, these three things put together. They sum up what is really the one office of Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ. He came to discharge that office in these three ways. In the Old Testament, prophets were anointed with oil. Priests were anointed with oil.

Kings were anointed with oil. And oil is a symbol in the Bible of the Holy Spirit. So, here is Jesus actually being anointed by the Spirit so that He can be the great prophet in His ministry, so that He can be the supreme priest in His ministry, and especially in His sacrifice on the cross.

And so, He can be the great king throughout His ministry. All of these prophet, priest, and king offices, if you want to use the word, being supported, helped by the ministry of the Spirit.

But it's not just official, but I think it's also, of course, something very personal. Wouldn't Jesus, as a man, have felt something as He set out on this ministry of fear? We know that He is afraid at other points in other points in His ministry. And we know the terrible terror, for example, in Gethsemane, when He's appalled at what the cross will mean. Jesus was a really emotional human being who could be upset, who could be angry, who could weep, who could be afraid.

[11 : 41] And on the outset of His ministry, how would Jesus have felt knowing what was before Him, and maybe in some cases not yet knowing, because the Spirit hadn't yet revealed all that was before Him to His human mind. So, Jesus needed encouragement, and here God encourages Him at His baptism. The Father speaks from heaven and says, My Son, I love you. Don't ever forget that. And the Spirit anoints Him, and the Spirit is saying, I will be here for you and with you through every single experience, however difficult they will be. And so, Jesus would have found huge encouragement for His human heart and soul in the assurance of the continuing love of the Father and the continuing presence of the Holy Spirit. Another thing I think that would have encouraged Jesus would have been the knowledge, of course, that what was happening here, what was being done here, was the fulfillment of prophecy.

That's why I read earlier from Isaiah 42, Behold my servant whom I uphold, I will put my spirit on him.

And here is Jesus setting out on His public servant ministry, and Isaiah 42 is fulfilled at the very beginning of that ministry as the beginning of that ministry as the Spirit is put on Jesus. Jesus, who is a man of the Word, is here being reminded that throughout His ministry, God's infallible Word will be fulfilled in every aspect of His life and work.

And of course, one of the great things that's being said about Jesus in the ministry of the Spirit here and elsewhere is that Jesus was to be dependent on God. My servant whom I uphold, I will put my spirit on him.

Jesus was the servant's Son who had to lean on God as a human being leans on God. Jesus had this dependent humanity. That's why Jesus had to pray, why Jesus loved praying, because He was communing with His Father in the Spirit and drawing strength and courage and guidance and help from God in the Spirit.

[14 : 47] And of course, all of that was going to be true right through His ministry just beginning here at His baptism. Jesus was going to speak in the Spirit. Jesus was going to work miracles by the finger of God by the Holy Spirit. Jesus was going to live a life that was characterized by the fruit of the Spirit.

Of course, in the very next chapter here, Jesus is driven into the wilderness by the Spirit, and He is upheld there by the Spirit. Verse 14 of chapter 4, He returns to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. It's there right through Luke's story of Jesus, and it's there right up to the cross and beyond, I believe. For example, we read, though it's a very mysterious verse in some ways, but in the book of Hebrews 9 and 14, Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished to God.

I believe that Jesus was supported by the Holy Spirit on the cross. You remember when He said to His Father, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? I believe that Jesus felt nothing of the nearness of God or the help of the Spirit, but I believe that the Spirit at the same time was still upholding Jesus, though He couldn't feel it. And so, He offered Himself through the eternal Spirit on the cross.

And then the resurrection itself, another Trinitarian event. We read in Romans 8 and verse 11, And if the Spirit of the Spirit of the Spirit of the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your bodies through His Spirit who lives in you.

So, the Jesus who was conceived by the power of the Spirit, who here is being baptized for His unique ministry in the Holy Spirit, He offers Himself on the cross through the Spirit, and He is raised from the dead by the Holy Spirit. Just think of how much Jesus would have said looking back on His life from the vantage point of His victory and ascension, how much Jesus would have thought He owed to the Holy Spirit.

[17 : 32] Every moment of every moment of every day, in every task, in every routine duty, in every emergency, every sermon, every conversation, every miracle, every threat on His life, every everything, all the way through His ministry, the Spirit was always there for Jesus. At the end of it, Jesus could look back and say thank you to the Holy Spirit. Now, I'm suggesting that you all tonight should do the same thing. Say thank you to the Spirit for what He did in the ministry of Jesus.

Jesus was able to accomplish what He did because the Holy Spirit was there from beginning to end. But I want now to turn to the book of Acts and say a little about the anointing of the church in Acts chapter 2 and the baptism that comes upon the church in this great event and that we also inherit, as we know, the ongoing ministry of the Holy Spirit. Now, what happened in the gospel of Luke was that Jesus received the Spirit. What happens in Acts chapter 2 is that Jesus bestows the Spirit. Jesus has now finished His ministry on earth. He has ascended to heaven, and from heaven, He, Jesus, pours out the Holy

Spirit on His Spirit on His waiting church. This is a wonderful occasion. It's in all kinds of ways, this sort of birthday of the Christian church, as these people in Jerusalem on this great feast day of Pentecost receive the Holy Spirit. I believe that this is one of the great moments in the history of salvation.

It's something done by Jesus that He actually came to do. If you think of, just to take a different writer of the New Testament, you remember in the gospel of John in chapter 1, where John the Baptist sees Jesus and says, Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And you might think, well, that of course is, I would say, the key thing for which Jesus came, but it's not the end of the story why Jesus came.

John, that paragraph in John chapter 1 goes on to talk about the fact that Jesus is the one in whom the Spirit will come down and remain, and He is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.

[20 : 41] And I think you should hold that whole paragraph together and see that John's gospel and John the Baptist there are teaching us that Jesus came to be the Lamb of God so that He might baptize us with the Holy Spirit. So, when somebody says to you, what did Jesus come to do?

Don't stop with the cross, though again I say I think it's the key moment. Don't stop with the resurrection. Don't stop with the ascension. Go on to Pentecost at the very least. Jesus came to give Himself on the cross and to rise from the dead and to ascend to heaven in order that He might pour out His Spirit on His church so that we could be His people in this world. The day of Pentecost is something Jesus does, and He does it for His church. This was, of course, a wonderful feast day. I'd like to spend a lot of time talking about the day of Pentecost and the symbolism of this feast, but I don't think I should risk getting into it because that would probably take a long time. But it's a feast day associated with harvest, and there's all kinds of symbolism there, I think, that's maybe relevant to the occasion. Just one other detail about this particular feast day.

Some people think that in the first century it was not just a day that remembered harvest and associated things. But they also say that maybe in the first century it was also a day that Jews associated with Sinai and the giving of the law. And if that's true, I think that there might be an interesting, this is just a detail for those of you who like details that you may not have seen before.

If there's a connection with Sinai and Jewish minds, there's a real contrast between a detail in Exodus 32, you know, the golden calf story, and what happens at Pentecost. In Exodus 32, after the golden calf episode, Moses comes down to Mount Sinai, and he's told that he is to say to the people, verse 27, that some people are to be put to death. Verse 28, the Levites did as Moses commanded, and that day about 3,000 of the people died. You know that on the day of Pentecost, 3,000 are saved.

I think it's a very deliberate contrast there in the two events. In Exodus, 3,000 die in that tragic event.

[23 : 59] But here, people who would have been thinking about Sinai around this time, they see 3,000 people living in Jesus and the power of the Spirit, and they're being told that they're going to live in a very different dispensation. The great symbols of this day, of course, are wind and fire. These are symbols of God Himself coming, and I think coming in power. The wind speaks of power and energy and life, and also the fire, I think, speaks of life and a particular kind of power and energy.

Maybe the fire is going back even to Exodus 3, and the bush that wasn't burned up. And here, the fire comes down on these people, and they are not consumed. It's the fire of God, God with life in Himself. And God comes down in wind and fire. This lively, fiery, powerful Holy Spirit comes down on the church for the church's ministry. One or two things just to highlight about what the Spirit is doing in Acts chapter 2, and what He wants to accomplish then, and I think what He wants to accomplish in our lives too. I think one thing that's very significant is the emphasis in Acts 2 on Scripture. The Holy Spirit comes down on the church, and what suddenly happens is that Peter has a new insight into the Bible. You see from verse 14, he raises a voice, addresses the crowd, and he begins to tell them from verse 16 what Joel said, and he interprets it. Then from verse 25, what David said, and he interprets it. Verse 34 again, he quotes from the Psalms, and he interprets it.

You know, this is Peter who, not so long before, had been completely confused about what Jesus was going to do, and he didn't want Jesus to go to the cross, and he didn't understand how all of this that Jesus was saying fitted into the Old Testament. But now the Holy Spirit comes down, and Peter is given by the Spirit insight into Scripture like he's never had before, and he expounds Scripture. He applies Scripture. He's thrilled with talking about the Bible and making it relevant to these people's lives. So it's very important to connect the Holy Spirit and the Bible, isn't it? Because that's what the Spirit himself does on the day of Pentecost.

He comes down in power, and he gets people thinking in new ways about the Bible. The Holy Spirit and the Bible belong together. He inspired the book, and he loves when we read the book and think about the book and use the book. Another key thing about what happens at Pentecost is that the focus in all of this is on Jesus. The Holy Spirit loves to glorify Jesus. That's what Jesus said the Spirit would do.

When he comes, he will take my things and make them known to you. He will glorify and honor me, Jesus says in the Gospel of John. The Holy Spirit doesn't come down at Pentecost and say, look at me, look at me, but he comes down at Pentecost and he says, look at Jesus.

[27 : 44] So for example, you see in verse 22, as Peter begins to explain what he's talking about and why this has happened, he says, listen to this, Jesus of Nazareth. Then he goes into a sermon all about Jesus. That was also very important to remember, that the Holy Spirit will be thrilled over this weekend if we focus on Jesus. He doesn't want us to focus on him, but he wants to point us to Jesus.

The Holy Spirit is obsessed with what Jesus did, and he wants us to be obsessed with Jesus and what Jesus did. The Spirit wants to glorify the Son. And the more you focus on Jesus, if I can put it this way, well, it doesn't sound right to say the happier the Spirit will be, but you can translate that into something that's more theologically orthodox, all of you.

The Spirit is thrilled when we focus on Jesus and make more of Jesus, talk about Jesus and witness to Jesus. Other things going on here, of course, are the Spirit given for holiness because he is the Holy Spirit, the fiery, burning Holy Spirit. So there's stuff about holiness, I think, here.

He's also clearly given here for mission. Jesus has said in chapter 1, you'll receive power when the Spirit comes on you, and you'll be my witnesses. So the Spirit is coming down to give strength to the church to be able to witness to Jesus. And I think the tongues are probably a sign of that, the gospel going out in different languages to the whole earth. The Spirit is the Spirit of mission, and he wants the church to be scattered through the known world and speak about Jesus in every single language. And just to come back to something I was talking about earlier, I think that if you reflect on Acts 2 and the Spirit anointing the church as Jesus pours out his Spirit, you can see perhaps that Jesus is doing this as prophet, priest, and king. Jesus is pouring out his prophetic Spirit.

He prophesied that he would do this, and now he pours out his prophetic Spirit, and people prophesy. Jesus also does this as a priest. He does it on the basis of his finished work, and he pours out his Spirit. And his people are able to be a priestly people, as we are called to be. And Jesus also pours out his Spirit as the King in heaven. The royal Son pours out his Spirit so that we can be his royal family and live to his glory in the power of the Spirit. On the day of Pentecost, the prophet, priest, and King Jesus pours out his Spirit so that we can be prophetic and priestly and royal in the power of the Holy Spirit. Well, I really need to wrap this up. There's a baptism in a minute or two, but I just want to say one thing in conclusion that maybe once again will link these two passages.

[31 : 28] And it's to end on the theme of prayer, and prayer for the Spirit, prayer for more of the Spirit in our lives. I don't know if you noticed as we read in Luke chapter 3 very briefly that Jesus, we're told, it's as he was praying that heaven was opened and the Spirit came down. The Spirit comes down and the context of the context of the praying of Jesus. And in the book of Acts, if you look at Acts 1 from verse 12, you see the focus is on the church waiting prayerfully. And it's in the context of a prayerful church that the Holy Spirit comes down in power. And you see something of the same message when the Spirit again empowers a group of people in Acts chapter 4. In verse 31, after they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God boldly.

Once again, prayer leads to filling, leads to power in mission. So, I think both of these passages of Scripture, the baptism of Jesus and the baptism of the church, are reminding us again about the importance of prayer. Jesus himself said that the Father gives the Spirit to those who ask him. We need to ask for the Spirit. We need to ask for more of the power of the Spirit in our lives, that the Spirit might have more of us, that he might fill us, that we might daily know more of the ministry of the Spirit as we ask Jesus for his Spirit, and as Jesus answers our prayers by giving us more of the Spirit who meant so much to Jesus, for whom Jesus was and is and will always be grateful. Let's say thank you for the Holy Spirit. Let's pray.