**January 10, 2021 Acts 19:1-7**

***The Holy Spirit***

**Scripture:** *Acts 19:1-7 NRSV*

*(1)While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. (2)He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" They replied, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." (3)Then he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They answered, "Into John's baptism." (4)Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus." (5)On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. (6)When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied-- (7)altogether there were about twelve of them.*

**Notes:**

1. Paul discovered a small, but ***active***, group of Christians.
   1. The baptism of John was merely a baptism of ***repentance***;
   2. ***Renounce*** the power of sin and evil over your life, then ***receive*** the promise of new life through the Holy Spirit.
2. The Spirit brings us ***life***.
   1. To be ***filled*** with the Spirit is to be fully alive,
   2. God created us to ***live*** life to the fullest.
3. The Spirit ***leads*** the way.
   1. look and listen for the Spirit to give ***direction***.
   2. To be led by the Spirit is to walk by ***faith***, not by sight;
   3. The Holy Spirit is our ***Prompter***;
4. The Spirit anticipates our ***needs***;
   1. The Spirit ***intercedes*** on our behalf; He prays for us.
   2. God already knows your ***need*** before you ask, and his grace is sufficient for every ***need***.
5. The Spirit also brings us into ***unity*** with God and each other.
   1. ***Unite*** and work together as the body of Christ..
   2. When we focus on God, the Spirit brings us together despite our ***differences***;
6. The Holy Spirit enters your life when you ***acknowledge*** Jesus as Lord and Savior.
   1. The ritual of ***water*** Baptism represents ***spiritual*** baptism as an outward sign of the inward grace of our Savior.
   2. As you grow in the Lord you may encounter a second work of grace, known as ***sanctification***.
   3. Follow the ***Holy*** ***Spirit*** where he will be able to work through you to change the life of those you encounter.

**Script:**

Growing up I spent a lot of time in church. I learned about Jesus first and foremost. How Jesus loved the little children; how he taught us how to love as he loves us; the need for each of us to obey the commandments; and most important that we must have no other God’s before the one true God, the Father in heaven. And then we would be taught a little about the Holy Spirit, or the Holy Ghost as he was referred to then. I must admit the Holy Spirit was something I was oblivious to until I became much more mature in my spiritual walk. Until I started really digging into the Word of God I thought that the Holy Spirit did not appear until Pentecost. But as I studied, I soon learned that the Holy Spirit was around from the very beginning of creation, just as Jesus was as well.

But what do we know about the Holy Spirit, who is he, and what is his purpose. We know of him as the comforter, the still small voice, the Spirit of God. We also know him as a third of the trinity consisting God the Father, Jesus the only Son of God, and the Holy Spirit.

So today as you may have guessed we are going to look at the Holy Spirit. We are going to look at a portion of Paul’s ministry in Ephesus, found in the book of Acts chapter 19:1-7 and see what we can find here regarding the Holy Spirit. Would you join me in the reading of God’s word today; Acts 19:1-7.

*Acts 19:1-7 NRSV (1)While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. (2)He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" They replied, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." (3)Then he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They answered, "Into John's baptism." (4)Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus." (5)On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. (6)When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied-- (7)altogether there were about twelve of them.*

At this point in the story of the Acts of the Apostle’s, Paul is in the city of Ephesus. He is well into his third missionary journey. Ephesus was a major Roman city and home of the temple of Artemis, one of the great wonders of the world in its day.  The temple served both as a holy shrine and a thriving marketplace.  People came from all over to shop and trade and pay their respects to the goddess of fertility.  If Paul could win the Ephesians for Christ, he stood a good chance of winning all of Asia Minor.

When he got to Ephesus he discovered a small, but active, group of Christians.  They’d accepted Christ and were baptized, but baptized in the way that John the Baptist had been baptizing. Paul told them that the baptism of John was merely a baptism of repentance; that it was just the first step in coming to Christ.  Paul explained that first, you renounce the power of sin and evil over your life and then you receive the promise of new life through the gift of the Holy Spirit.  The Ephesians listened intently and then wasted no time. They immediately were baptized; the Holy Spirit came down upon them; and they began to speak in tongues and prophecy. Much like the Baptism of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, the people were filled with the Holy Spirit and their lives were changed forever.

I wonder, did you receive the Holy Spirit when you were baptized? I wonder how many of you have been baptized and perhaps how that may have occurred. What does the scriptures say about the Spirit and to what extent have you received that Spirit? The more that we understand the Spirit, the more we are able to recognize his work in our lives, as we strive to live these lives of faith.

SO what do we find in scripture regarding the Spirit? I will not be able to cover it all, but I would like to cover the most basic of ideas. The first thing we find is that the Spirit brings us life. This goes all the way back to creation, *“…then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being*. (Genesis 2:7 NRSV)” When God removes his life-giving breath, our bodies will return to dust. Our life and worth, therefore, come from God's Spirit. The Spirit brings us to life, and what that means is this: To be filled with the Spirit is to be fully alive, with all the curiosity and wonder and taste for adventure that goes with it.  In other words, God didn’t create us simply to go through the motions; God created us to live life to the fullest.

So many times, I am contacted to help somebody who is in the midst of a difficult situation. Many need help to get the essentials; food, clothing, shelter, and while they may be asking for material things, they never refuse to have me ray over them; in fact many times they are eager to have me do so; but they still have the physical need in their life. The Spirit brings us to life – not go through the motions – and not settle for a menial life of begging or stealing or working at a job where you’re stressed out and miserable.  Jesus said, “*… I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.* (John 10:10 NRSV)” God breathes his Spirit into us in order that we might come alive to the knowledge of his presence and play a part in the wonder of his creation.

The Spirit brings us to life, and then He leads the way. That’s the second point.  Paul said, “*For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. (Romans 8:14 NRSV)*” So, what does it mean to be led by the Spirit?  It’s first to pray, “Lead me, Lord.”  Then it’s to look and listen for the Spirit to give direction.  Sometimes that comes as the voice of conscience (that still small voice), and sometimes it comes as a gut-level feeling that you ought to take a left instead of a right at the next fork in the road.

The leading of the Spirit is unique to each of us, and is not something you can define or explain in any way. To be led by the Spirit is to walk by faith, not by sight; it’s to seek God’s will for your life and trust God to lead the way.  You may think of the Spirit like the Prompter in an opera. The Prompter is the person who stands in a little recessed compartment at the front of the stage with a little hood hiding him from the audience.  Only his head and shoulders are visible from where the actors stand.  He has the complete script in front of him so that, as the drama unfolds, he can prompt the actors if they forget a line or miss their pitch.  All they have to do is glance down at the prompter, and he’ll give them the help they need to play their part. The Spirit is our Prompter; He gives us the direction and support we need to live out our lives as children of God.

The Spirit not only leads us, it anticipates our needs; which brings us to point three. Have you been in a funk or down in the dumps? Perhaps a friend asked you, “What can I do to help?” and you honestly know how to respond to them. Jesus told his disciples, “*I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it. (John 14:13-14 NRSV)*”

The problem is we don’t always know what to ask for.  Sometimes the things we want the most are the things we need the least; and the things we need the most are the things we never thought about asking for.  The Good News is that the Spirit intercedes on our behalf; He prays for us.  Paul told the Romans, “*Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. (Romans 8:26 NRSV)*” God already knows your need before you ask, and God’s grace is sufficient for every need. We do not need to identify every problem we face and identify the remedy to that problem to the Lord; we only need to submit to his will in your life and he knows what you need and the best remedy for it. The Spirit takes care of the rest; He prays for us.

The Spirit also brings us into unity with God and each other.  As Paul told the Corinthians, “*For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--Jews or Greeks, slaves or free--and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:12-13 NRSV)*” Last week I mentioned the importance of unity. If we are able to unite and work together as the body of Christ, we combine our individual strengths and resources for the common good: and through the Spirit, are able to accomplish far greater things than we could imagine. When we focus on our selves and our selfish desires, we create division and little gets accomplished, let alone accomplished well.

When we focus on God, our differences seem so small and petty; hardly big enough to divide us. The Spirit brings us together despite our differences; He enables us to declare that Jesus Christ is the Lord of our lives. Paul told the Corinthians, “*… no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says "Let Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:3 NRSV)*”

The Bible has more to say about the work of the Spirit, but I am going to stop here and ask: Have you received the Holy Spirit? This is where I pray that you nod your head. When you ask the Lord to come into your heart and forgive you your sins, you receive the Holy Spirit. Peter preached at Pentecost, “*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38 NRSV)*” The Holy Spirit enters your life when you acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit enters into your life and begins to clean the impure things that exist there. What baptism is Peter talking about here? For many it is the baptism of the Holy Spirit that washes over you taking away your sins. We perform the ritual of water Baptism to represent this spiritual baptism as an outward sign of the inward grace of our Savior.

As you grow deeper in your walk with the Lord you may encounter a second work of grace. The Church of the Nazarene identifies this as sanctification. In this we realize our dependance upon the Holy Spirit and dedicate our lives to place Him first and foremost in our lives. We find it much easier to identify the Lords work in our life, more frequently we see his hand involved in the events of our life and realize we are nothing without Him. Again, there may be an experience that feels very much like the Holy Spirit washing over you and cleansing again.

Today I ask you very much like Paul asked the men in this passage, “*"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?*” Did you ask Jesus to forgive you of your sins when you believed? When you asked Jesus to forgive you of your sins, he freely gave you the grace and forgiveness you asked for, and he sent the Holy Spirit to do His work in you, until he is able to do His work through you. Have you demonstrated this inward sign of God’s grace with the outward sign of Water Baptism? You know that is something we would love to help you with; just let us know if this is something you would like to do.

Finally, here are the things I pray you will take with you today; The spirit brings us to life. The Spirit leads us in His way. The Spirit anticipates our needs and brings us into unity with the Lord and each other. The spirit allows us to know and acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. We have been baptized with the Spirit when we acknowledge and accept Jesus as Lord and Savior; and His love is continually washing over us strengthening us each and every day of our life.

Follow the Holy Spirit today into the places of this world where he will be able to work through you to change the life of those you encounter.