

BELPRES CHURCH

Sermon Title: Spirit-led

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Scripture: Acts 2:1-15, 22-24, 33

¹When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.

² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.

³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.

⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.

⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken.

⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans?"

⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language?

⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome

¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!"

¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

¹³ Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine." Peter Addresses the Crowd

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.

¹⁵ These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning!

²² "Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.

²³ This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men,^[a] put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

²⁴ But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

³³ Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.

Transcript:

The scripture comes from Acts chapter two. "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 on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the spirit enabled them. Now, they were staying in Jerusalem, God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard the sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked, 'Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language?' Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, 'What does this mean?'

"Some however made fun of them and said, 'Ah, they've had too much wine.' Then Peter stood up with the 11, raised his voice and addressed the crowd, 'Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem. Let me explain this to you. Listen carefully to what I say. These people aren't drunk as you suppose. It's only 9:00 in the morning.'" To be continued. The Holy Spirit asks that you would use these next few minutes to help us understand your word and how we live in light of it as well as follow you. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen. Well, over the last couple of months, my wife and I have been watching all of Clint Eastwood's movies, the ones he both star in and or directed. And some of you may be too young to know who Clint Eastwood is. I just need to let you know that hurts my heart a little. He's an actor and director for the last 60 years. And not all of his movies are good. There's some real stinkers, but some are really, really smart, like Unforgiven.

And the thing about Clint, especially when he was young and especially in the spaghetti westerns that he did with director Sergio Leone, also really smart films, the thing about Clint in those early days is, the thing is he's just so darn cool. I mean, just look at him. He's just like, "I'm so cool. I'm just super cool." And in these movies he does this thing where whenever he lights a match, he lights it on his pants. I was like, "I could practice that for a month and not get it right." But with Clint, you just get the sense that he was born knowing how to do that. Like as a baby, he just came out and swiped the match on his diaper. "Go ahead. Make my dad." He just instinctively knows how to cool. He has the spirit of cool. I wish I had that. Wouldn't it be great if you just instinctively knew what the right thing to do or say was in any given moment? And you know where I'm going with this.

We may not have the spirit of cool like Clint, although some of you are very cool, but we do have the Holy Spirit who guides us and who helps us know in any given moment what the godly thing need to do or say is. We're doing a sermon series called Lead about how all of us are leaders. Leadership is just another word for influence, and by what we post, by what we say, by what we do, we are influencing our friends, our coworkers, our fellow students, our kids every single day. So here's the thing. You do not have a choice whether or not you are going to be a leader. You are leading, that is influencing people, every day of your life. The only question is, are you leading them in a good direction or not? Are you leading them to join you in gossip or materialism or worrying about appearance? Or are you leading them in life-giving ways?

Now I know that sounds daunting. I'm not sure I'm equipped. I don't know if I can do this, lead other people well. Well, here's the thing, God equips us to not just influence others in a good direction, but also just live a better life, more filled with meaning, better relationships, more purpose. And the way he equips us, one of the ways, is through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit

is God himself. God exists in three persons, father, son, and Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God himself living inside of us, and over time, day by day, year by year, he changes us. The theological word is sanctification, to be more like Jesus and know instinctively the godly thing to do in any given moment. In that meeting, in that argument you're having with a family member, in that decision you have to make, the Holy Spirit is God himself living inside of us to help us live a better life and influence others in good directions and life is just more rewarding, more meaningful, better relationships when we are walking with the Spirit.

And the Holy Spirit helps us do that in a number of ways. The Holy Spirit leads us to faith, intercedes for us, gives us insight, helps us make decisions, comforts us, teaches us, directs our step, convicts us of sin, gives us the right words at the right time, empowers us, and he makes us brave. That's a long list and I'm going to talk about every single one of those. You're never getting out of here. Let me just touch on a few of these. First, the Holy Spirit makes us brave. So the setting for this passage that we read today is that Jesus has been crucified and raised from the dead and ascended into heaven. And it's the Day of Pentecost, which is a Jewish holiday, where people from all over the world, every different race, different languages, they've assembled in Jerusalem. And the disciples are filled with the Holy Spirit and they start talking, but people hear the disciples in their own native language.

And they say, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans, how is it that we hear each of us in his native language?" And all were amazed and perplexed, but others mocking said, "They've had too much wine." Well, then the apostle Peter gets up and he says, "These people are not drunk as you suppose. It's only 9:00 in the morning." Mimosas haven't even been invented yet. This is not exactly reassuring. It'd be like if I started a church service by saying, "Don't worry, our elders aren't drunk yet. It's only 9:00 in the morning. Come back at 11:00." Someone said, "Amen." All right. One of our elders, actually, I think. Not reassuring. And then Peter preaches this powerful sermon about Jesus, and he says to the crowd, "You, with the help of wicked men," that is the Romans, "put him to death by nailing him to a cross, but God raised him from the dead. Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Notice we receive the Holy Spirit when we turn our lives over to Jesus. No special prayer is required. And the text says that 3000 people became Christians that day. It's a very brave sermon. It's a very brief sermon because by telling the crowd to put their faith in Jesus, Peter is confronting the religious authorities who had Jesus killed as well as the Roman authorities who carried out the death sentence. And this gets him in trouble. In the next chapter, he gets them thrown in jail and eventually it gets him killed. And here's what's interesting. Just a few weeks before, just a few weeks before at Jesus' trial, when Peter was asked, "Do you know Jesus?" he was so cowardly, so afraid, so wimpy that he denied knowing Jesus at all. This is a radical transformation from cowardly wimp to courageous warrior, and the thing that did it was he's filled with the Holy Spirit and it made him brave.

And by brave, I don't mean we don't feel fear. Courage is not the absence of fear. Courage is the presence of action in the face of fear. And there have been times in my life where I know I need to do something God wants me to do, but I've been afraid, but supernaturally just feel the Holy Spirit inside of me moving me on to take some action. And that just feels better. Action dissipates anxiety, and it feels better to just move in the face of fear rather than be paralyzed by it. The Holy Spirit makes us brave. Second, the Holy Spirit guides us. It's through the Holy Spirit that Peter knows the right thing to do in this moment is to preach a sermon, because it's always the right time to preach a sermon, right? No, there are lots of times you shouldn't

preach a sermon. Sometimes when the pastor's preaching a sermon, people are thinking, "This is not the right sermon. This just needs to be over."

No, it's the Holy Spirit working through Peter that guides him to do the right thing and gives him the words. The passage says, "All of them began to speak in other tongues as the spirit enabled them." In other words, the Holy Spirit was literally giving them the words to speak. One of the things that can happen to you if you're a pastor on a mission trip in another part of the world is you'll be sitting there in the church during a church service and the pastor of that church will say, "We have an American pastor with us today and he's going to give today's sermon." This has happened to me, and I've just been sitting there and pointed out. This is terrifying. I'm Presbyterian. I need three days of preparation. I need my Greek and Hebrew dictionaries. I need my commentaries. So there's been a whole lot of times where I've been walking up to the pulpit in some foreign country, just praying, "Holy Spirit, give me the words."

And sometimes, because I know this can happen, I've even brought a sermon because I know this can happen and it's clear to me when I'm sitting there this is not the right sermon for this place, so I still have to rely on the Holy Spirit, as if that were the point. Because sometimes it's not our anxious efforts God is after, he just wants us to rely on him. The Holy Spirit will tell us what to do, guide us. One of the things that our prayer ministers here will say is that sometimes someone will come and ask them for prayer, but won't tell them what they need prayer for. And the prayer minister will ask the Holy Spirit to give them the right words, and they'll start praying for the burden that person has even though that person didn't say what it was. And the person's like, "How did you know?"

There was one time I was at a church service in Kansas City, and during the worship time, this man came up to me. I'd never met him in my life, starts praying for me. Starts praying for my preaching. He started to pray for my leadership of the church. And I looked at him and I go, "You know I'm a pastor, right?" And he goes, "Yeah, of course, I do. The Holy Spirit told me. That's why I'm here to pray for you." It was just supernatural. And right now, some of you are thinking, "That's never happened to me. I've never had an experience like that. How do I get an experience like that?" Well, I've actually told you how to do this 9,032 times. So here's the 9033rd. Follow the nudge that you get from the Holy Spirit. Just that little nudge, follow the nudge. How do I know if it's the Holy Spirit? Well, does it align with scripture? Does it have the character of Jesus? Here's a big one. Is it the kind of thing you don't normally think or do? That might be the Holy Spirit?

Don't overanalyze it. Just do it. If it's biblical, moral, ethical, do it and see. And yeah, you might make some mistakes, and yeah, you might end up looking like a fool sometimes, but you already do. At least this way, you'll be a fool for Christ. Just try it out and over time we begin to recognize the Holy Spirit more and more, and trust the nudge and just follow it. Holy Spirit makes us brave. It guides us. Third, the Holy Spirit comforts us. Life is hard and we need comfort and we need encouragement. And leadership is even harder. And when you're trying to lead people in a good direction, some people may reject you, they may make fun of you like they did the disciples in this text. They may reject you in some way. Leadership is hard, and we need to be encouraged. But here's the thing, the Holy Spirit is always there and he's always with us.

And there have been times in my life where the Holy Spirit has comforted and encouraged me. Encourage me, he's literally put courage back into through maybe calling to mind a scripture passage or a song lyric. Or there have been times where someone will out of the blue text me just at the right time just the thing I needed to hear because the Holy Spirit had prompted

them. Or I get those thoughts that aren't my thoughts. Some of you have been lied about, some of you have been gossiped about, some of you have been abandoned by someone you were just trying to help, and you feel alone. But we are never alone. The Holy Spirit is always with us. And as we tune into him, he says, "I am with you and I am for you. Be strong and courageous." The Holy Spirit makes us brave, guides us, comforts us, and finally, amplifies what we do.

In this passage, Peter preaches a pretty basic sermon, basic theology. Nothing fancy, no fancy rhetoric. And 3000 people become Christians because the Holy Spirit took his little basic sermon and amplified it, magnified it. Whatever steps of obedience we take, God will amplify them to have a disproportionate effect on the people around us. Collectively, one of the things we've experienced as a church is God doing this through things like Jubilee Reach, which is helping hundreds and hundreds of families in partnership with business and government and school districts. That doesn't normally happen with Christian organizations. That's the Holy Spirit amplifying our efforts, making them bigger. I mean, if we'd made a strategic plan to do all that, we'd just have screwed it up. It's the Holy Spirit that's doing that. The Holy Spirit makes us brave, guides us, comforts us, amplifies what we do.

So then practically, how do we apply this? What do we do? How do we apply this in our life to walk with the Spirit more? Well, first, pray. Holy Spirit, help me have a deeper experience of your presence and be more aware of your guidance. The text says today, "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit," and in the original Greek, the verb for filled is in a repetitive form. It means to fill over and over and over and over again. And if we've accepted Jesus, we have the Holy Spirit, but we need to ask for new and more and more fillings over and over and over again daily, deeper and deeper experience, and be more aware of how he's guiding and nudging us. Second practical step is prioritize community. One of the best ways to experience the Holy Spirit is with other people who have the Holy Spirit. I think that's part of why we worship together, so that something happens in the room when we're together.

The passage we read today starts with community. It says, "When the Day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place." Not on their own, together. We experience the Holy Spirit together. The passage starts with community and it ends with community. After 3000 people become Christians, the text says, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship," that means community. Every day, they continued to meet together," not just once a week, "with glad and sincere hearts." In other words, it gave him joy. The passage begins and ends with community. And this last year, we've done better as a church on community than we've ever done before. More people in all-in groups than we've ever had before. That's community. And so many of you are saying, "It's helping me with my faith. I understand scripture better. I feel more connected."

So I'm pleading with you, I thought about getting down on my knees, but I'm not going to do that, I'm pleading with you, I am pleading with you, as things go back to normal, please do not, do not, just fill your schedule back up again, but continue to prioritize Christian community. Ask for a deeper experience of the Spirit. Prioritize community. And then finally, let the Holy Spirit have you. Because sometimes I think the question is not so much, do we have the Holy Spirit? It's, does the Holy Spirit have us? One of the things I hear, the questions I hear is, "Why don't I experience the Spirit more? Why doesn't God do things through me that I hear him doing through other people?" I think it's because we're not maybe letting the Spirit have us, not submitted to his leading, not following the nudges. And do this every day, even the little mundane things every day.

The Holy Spirit is with you in that meeting that's not going very well. Ask him to show you what to say. The Holy Spirit is with you at school. In that social interaction that is painful, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you. The Holy Spirit is with you in that parenting or grandparenting moment where you don't quite know what to do. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you. I mean, I've even asked the Holy Spirit to help me find my wallet when I've lost it. And I don't know about the theology of that. Actually, it usually works, but the point there is every day, in little things, let the Holy Spirit guide you. A while back I got an email from a woman I'll call Sarah, because that's her name. And she said, there's so many Sarahs I can use it because you'll never figure out who she is. And this is what Sarah wrote in her email to me.

She said, "Today's story is so far outside my normal, but here goes. I'd bought something online and could save on shipping costs if I picked it up at the store. So I looked up how late the store was open and felt that if I hurried to the mall I could quickly pick up my package and make it back for dinner, probably. So I ran to the car and got me to Bellevue Square. As I walked through the mall, I noticed a woman sitting and I could recognize the look on her face. It was the classic "I think I need to cry, am I holding it together, I think I got this" look. I walked right past her. And as I did, I heard your voice," meaning my voice, "in my memory saying, 'If the nudge is unusual but not wrong, act on it and see if it's God.' So I walked up and I asked if she was okay. I don't remember her exact words, but it was something like, 'No, but I'm fine. I'm just going through something.'"

"I asked if she needed prayer. She said, 'No.' Okay, already, this is way outside my comfort zone. But then it happened, I hesitantly asked her if she would like me to pray for her. And that's how I wound up crouching in the middle of the mall, holding up the hand of a stranger, and praying for her to experience comfort and peace. And she was definitely crying at the end of it." Wow. I mean, just, wow. "This is not me at all. I am not the walk up to strangers and pray for them type of a person." Remember how I said, if it's not your usual normal, maybe that's God? And she said, "Boy, did I have a dizzying sense of being in the right place at the right time to do the right thing. In hindsight, I remember feeling so clearly the pressure to act on that sale to hurry and get to the mall. But obviously God sent me there for a different purpose. So thank you for helping me to hear God's voice more clearly today."

Okay, that's a good day at the mall. That is definitely more interesting than whenever she felt when she bought whatever it is she bought. She didn't email me to tell me about her feelings about what she bought. She emailed me to tell me about how God showed up and God was using her to comfort a stranger. But more than that, to be a messenger from God, to tell that woman in need, "You are not alone. God has not forgotten you." The Holy Spirit made Sarah brave willing to step outside of her comfort zone. Guided her to this woman and gave her the right things to say at the right time, took the little bit of obedience and amplified it to bring comfort and healing to someone who really needed it, which encouraged, not just this woman, but encouraged Sarah as well that God is real, God is working, God is using me, God is talking to me.

The Holy Spirit empowers us to live a bigger life so that routine trip to the mall or to school or your retirement community or your soccer team, whatever it is, that routine trip becomes more interesting, where every day we get up and we say, "God, Holy Spirit, guide me. How do you want to use me today to change someone's day, change someone's year, change someone's life?" So follow the nudge. You don't know where it will lead, but you do know the one who is leading you to lead others to the feet of Jesus. So Holy Spirit, you are welcome here. You are welcome in our lives. We ask that you would lead us, guide us, nudge us, urge us, hit us

upside the head if you have to, to help us follow you more and more and more to the glory of God the father. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Discussion Questions:

Read Acts 2:1-15, 22-24, 33 and answer the below questions with your friends, family or All In small group.

Ice Breaker Question:

- Where did you grow up?

Opening Questions:

- Looking back, were you able to apply any of the things we talked about last time to your life this week? What did you do? How did it go?

Scripture Reflection Questions -- Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- What do we learn about God (e.g., traits, personality, what matters, priorities) in this passage and sermon?
- What do we learn about people, and ourselves in particular, this week?

Sermon Reflection Questions – Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following

- Has there been a time when you have felt led by the Holy Spirit? If so, what happened?
- In what area of your life do you feel you need to experience the Holy Spirit more?

Closing Question and Application:

- Given what we've discussed together today, how might God want you apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week? Who might you share this with?

Closing group prayer: Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement in the week ahead.