

The Power
Message #5 in the Series "Fresh Wind"



Pastor David Wolverton

Well, good morning, everybody. Grace and peace to you in the name of God, our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ. We welcome you to this time of worship. My name is David Woolverton. For those of you who are joining us for the very first time, either in person or online, we bid you greeting. And in his name, we believe in the power of the risen Lord Jesus Christ. And on this July 4th weekend, we celebrate freedom first and foremost because of the power and presence of Jesus in our lives. Amen? Amen! So, as we gather, I have the wonderful privilege of sharing with you the Word of God. And as we as we open up the word of God, I invite you to join with me in prayer. Let's pray together.

Gracious Lord, we give thanks for this your word. Open us up to that word and open your word up to us. Teach us, Lord, what you would have us learn as you conform our lives into the disciples that you have called us to be. All of this Father, we pray in Jesus mighty name. Amen.

Well, we are finishing up a series that we have been calling Fresh Wind. It's a series about the Holy Spirit and the power today. The power of the Holy Spirit is our focus. For those of you who were able to either tune in last week or be present with us last week, you heard me say a very important phrase that the spirit inside us, the spirit inside us is the God who defines us. The spirit inside us is the God who defines us. It's a really important focal point. Everything about who we are as followers of Jesus Christ is made known by the Revealer. That's what we focused in on last week 'The Divine Revealer', the Holy Spirit. And so, the Spirit inside you today is the God who defines you.

Today, I want to push that just a little bit further by sharing with you a very powerful quote. Henry Blackaby is a pastor and an author, has written numerous books. He wrote once the following:

"Will God ever ask you to do something you are not able to do? The answer is yes--all the time! It must be that way, for God's glory and kingdom. If we function according to our ability alone, (he says), we get the glory; if we function according to the power of the Spirit within us, God gets the glory. He God wants to reveal Himself to a watching world."

-Henry Blackaby, Experiencing the Spirit: The Power of Pentecost Every Day

God wants to reveal himself, and listen - He does it through the church, not just the buildings we call churches, but the people we are the church. You remember that? 'I am the church. You are the church. We are the church, together.' All of that is true. In reality, the Holy Spirit empowers us to be in witness. So, I have a question for us today. And the question is, how do you know that the Holy Spirit resides inside of you? How do you know? How do you know that the Holy Spirit resides in you? I'm here today to tell you something that some of you, I'm sure already know, and that is that the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit always leaves traces. More specifically and perhaps a little bit of scientific playful words. The Holy Spirit always leaves DNA evidence. Right? Anybody like these cop shows are detective stories on TV? Kristine and I are just really into all of those. We love a good mystery. And right now, in our culture, you always hear on these TV shows, DNA. What's the DNA? Well, the DNA of the Holy Spirit is residential in potential in each and every one of us. And any time the Holy Spirit is active, the Holy Spirit leaves evidence. There's evidence and wherever the Holy Spirit is present, have a clear picture of God's activity. So how do we begin to identify what that DNA evidence is? The Apostle Paul in Galatians Chapter five gives us a very strong clue. This is what he says:

"The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." [Galatians 5:22-23 NRSV]

Those of you who know this, this is really what Paul calls the fruit of the Spirit. It's what I want to say is the DNA evidence of Jesus' presence within us. Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit, gives us the evidence of God's activity in and through us- His Church. So, Galatians Chapter five, Paul is detailing that. So, the list I'm putting on your screen right now, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness. It says goodness in some translations. Generosity. In the new revised translation. All of that is very appropriate for the word that is original to the Greek and the New Testament. Generosity is a very unique framework for that word, because most of us don't think about generosity when we connect it to the word goodness. King James just describes it as goodness. The that the word change is really important for us. But just kind of hang with me here. Generosity, goodness, either one, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

All right. It's Sunday. We're in church. I got to do some confessing. When I go through this list for myself, I'm asking myself, what's the DNA evidence of the Holy Spirit in me? If this is the list showing that God is at work in my life, how am I doing? How am I doing bearing witness to the truth of God's activity in my life. Okay, love. I can tell you, I'm an Italian kid from New Jersey. Without the Holy Spirit, there are individuals that I find very hard to love. I know you don't have to be from New Jersey, and I know you don't have to be Italian, but anybody with me out there? You know that they're individuals. And I'm watching you online, too, because there are people in our lives that it's very difficult for us to love. But here's the deal. The Holy Spirit gives us the capacity to increase our love for even the most unlovable, for even those individuals who rub us the wrong way. Love. I am one who can testify that the Holy Spirit in me has given me over the years an ever-increasing capacity to love people that I would not normally love.

Joy. Joy is probably the one that I trip over, especially in our day when I look at the news and I've started a real new spiritual discipline. You know what that is? It's not in your Bible. It's a brand-new spiritual discipline. It's not watching the news. Right? And every time I watch the news, my joy begins to dissipate. And it really challenges me as I turn off the news broadcasts, because then I can experience the full range of joy. The Holy Spirit gives me that ability. Peace is similar. Peace in I have I have great capacity for peace because of the Holy Spirit. Doesn't mean I don't worry, doesn't mean that I don't get anxious about different things, but in the midst of the circumstances, I begin to translate my anxiety into peace. When I turn things over to the Holy Spirit's activity, God is in control. Nothing that's going on in my life or in the world is a surprise to God. So, peace comes when we relinquish control to the one who is in control.

Then there's patience. I have a very strong capacity for patience. Except when I'm on route 283. For some reason, you know, coming onto 283, it robs me of my patience. My wife, Kristine, and I, we're just at a family reunion over the weekend. So, I was in New Jersey with my family. And it's funny, as I was driving across the bridge into New Jersey, Kristine said, you know, you're driving has shifted. It's like it's like your Jersey driving skills have kicked in the gear. And I think, yeah, that's very interesting. What happened by crossing the river did the Holy Spirit vacate? I wonder? So, patience, kindness, kindness, and generosity are part of who I am. I watched that over the weekend when I saw this this trait show itself in my parents, they ooze generosity and it kind of infiltrated all of us in the family. You know, the Holy Spirit gives us the capacity to see the other person's need and to put it ahead of our own. Faithfulness, faithfulness to God, to our promises, to our spouses, to our loved ones, to those who are important to us. Faithfulness is a sign that God is changing us. Why? Because our normal human condition, slanted DNA, is to be selfish. So, when you see somebody who is giving who is faithful, who is gentle, God's clearly at work in that person's life. Gentleness is being able to approach another person in humility and to realize that their life story is something worth listening to, even if you disagree with it. Gentleness as a reflection on us and what God is doing in us, not necessarily what God is doing in the other person. It's the fruit of the spirit in us. And then self-control. You know, self-control is a very interesting one, especially in our culture. We have been, dare I say it, we have been nurtured in an environment of immediate gratification. And over

the past decades, probably even centuries, we in our human condition have been nurtured to want what we want, when we want it. And when we don't, we get irritated. We have actually developed whether we realize it or not an addictive culture, and we are part of it. Again, whether we realize it or not. Want to test that out? In our day and age, for those of you who are tech oriented, how do you start feeling when it takes more than 20 seconds to upload something on the Internet? Now. Now imagine yourself doing mission work at Philippi, West Virginia for Heart and Hand. Imagine yourself going to the southern part of Puerto Rico to do mission work. Imagine yourself going to third world countries and realizing that what they don't have and never even heard of you expect every day here in America. Imagine what you feel in those cultures and ask yourself, at what level is the Holy Spirit empowering self-control in me? In us? Well, hold on to that list. I want to draw you into one additional element of DNA that shows that the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives. And I want to direct your attention to the Book of Acts, starting in just a couple of verses of Chapter one and then jumping over to chapter two verses one through nine. Let's listen. As God opens up his word, perhaps in a new way for each of us. This is what it says Acts chapter one, starting in verse six.

"So, when they, the disciples, had come together, they asked, Jesus, Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?". [Acts 1:6 NRSV]

Let me pause there. You know that question is really a question that we ask all the time. Right. I mean, we look at the conditions of the world and we go, is this the end of the age? Is this the end time? Is Jesus coming back soon? We're not new to ask that question. In fact, this question has been going on ever since Jesus was resurrected. In fact, that's the context of this passage. Jesus has been raised from the dead and he has now appeared to the disciples. And at the beginning of the Book of Acts, Jesus is about to ascend to heaven. So, he's been kind of roaming around with the disciples as the risen Lord. He's revealing himself, and he's calling the disciples to a new day. So, and he says to them, hey, I got some information for you that's yet to come. The Holy Spirit is going to come upon you. And this is this is what he says. Verse seven:

"Jesus replied to that question, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the father has set by his own authority." [Acts 1:7 NRSV].

That should do it for all of us, right? Even today, 2000 plus years later, those of us who are asking the same question, is this the end times? Is Jesus going to be returning? It feels that way because all chaos is breaking out. Is this the end? We don't know. And no matter who you listen to on TV, including me, and no matter what preacher is opening the word of God to say, there's a code in here. And as long as you interpret the code, we're going to have a specific date in mind. No matter who you listen to, what Jesus himself is saying nobody knows except the Father. Verse eight. But. Any time you see the word 'but' when Jesus is speaking, you're looking at a big but. Right? And we have to listen for what's coming next.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the Earth." [Acts 1:7-8 NRSV]

So what Jesus is basically saying the disciples so characteristic of the disciples as we read about those guys in the Gospels, we see it all time, they get into themselves, and they fail to see the big picture. And so, they ask Jesus, are you doing it now? Is this the end? And Jesus says, No. But. But you have a job to do. And I'm going to equip you with what you need to do that job. I'm going to equip you with the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is going to empower you to be my witnesses. Now, look at this- it says you're going to be my witnesses. Whose witnesses? My witnesses starting in Jerusalem, which is the city going to Judea, which is the region. It's kind of like saying you're going to start in Elizabethtown and then you're going to go to Lancaster County. And then he says you're going to go to Samaria, which is the I mean, it's really pushing the edge for the disciples, that's enemy territory. So, we're going to cross those lines, those lines that are self-imposed on us, what we do as human beings, he's saying, you got to cross those lines. You have to be my witnesses to those people that you would not necessarily love. And then to the ends of the earth. Small.

Large. Larger. And to do that, I'm going to give you the Holy Spirit. So, he then says to the disciples, he said, Now, what I want you to do is I want you to stay in the city and wait for me to empower you with the Holy Spirit. And so, they do that. They gather together in the upper room, and they do something very important. They pray. They are together and they're praying. And now jump to chapter two, starting in verse one. This is what it says:

"When the day of Pentecost (and the Pentecost here is not what we know. It becomes what we know of Pentecost. But back then it was a Jewish festival. And so, there's people from all over the world that have gathered for this Jewish festival.) So, when the day of Pentecost arrived, they, (the disciples,) were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven, a sound like a mighty rushing wind and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as a fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues (or languages,) as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound the multitude came together, and they were bewildered, because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. And they were amazed and astonished saying, 'Are not all of these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us in his own native language?'. (And then the writer Luke is explaining all of those present in that arena) Parthians and Medes and the Elamites and the residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians- we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." And all were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others mocking said, "They are filled with new wine. But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these people are not drunk, as you suppose since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was uttered through the Prophet Joel: (and now he begins to quote from the Old Testament Prophet Joel. This is what Joel says.) " And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see vision, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants, in those days, I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. (And then here sums it up, verse 21) And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." [Acts 2:1-21 ESV]

I want to demonstrate something very quickly with you. I know it may be a little bit difficult to see this from the distance, but I have a cup, I have a pitcher of water and the bowl is just to catch all of that. We in the church, we who are followers of Jesus, we believe that when we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, when we say yes to God's yes of us, God gifts us with His Holy Spirit. And we believe that we are to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Trust me, you may not be able to see this, but this glass is filled with water. Water here is just a symbol of the Holy Spirit. And we are content with that. In fact, many of us strive to be filled with the Holy Spirit. But friends that's not what scripture is telling us. Do you know what scripture is telling us? Is that God is pouring out his Holy Spirit. (The cup is overflowing with water, spilling over into the bowl) And when God pours out His Holy Spirit, it overflows in our lives. So, we should not be content with simply being filled. God wants to pour out his spirit on each and every one of us. Why? So glad you asked! Because God gives the Holy Spirit to each and every one of us for two primary purposes. The first most critical one that we often forget is that God gives us the Holy Spirit to empower our witness for Jesus. Everything that the church is about, everything that the church is about is first and foremost for us to be witnesses to the world to Jesus, crucified and resurrected Lord. And when we forget that we remain content to stay a people who are filled with the Spirit. But God has poured out his Spirit on us so that there's clear DNA evidence being left all over the place wherever we go. And if we're not leaving traces of the Spirit's fruit wherever we go we're not living fully in the spirit of God. The second reason that God has given us the Holy Spirit is to equip, empower and encourage. Get all three of those words to equip, empower and encourage Jesus', followers

to live the Kingdom of God life- today. Why? Because the Kingdom of God life that we live is (see number one) bearing witness to the world about Jesus.

The Holy Spirit is given to followers of Jesus for two primary purposes:

- 1. To empower our witness for Jesus.**
- 2. To equip, empower, and encourage Jesus's followers to live the Kingdom life today.**

Why is this important for us? It's no secret that the church, whether the United Methodist Church or any church, that the church right now is in chaos and infighting. And I really believe that the enemy is really strongly at work. Where's my hope come from? From every believer who, through the power and participation of the Holy Spirit, who dares to ask for God to pour out His Spirit on us, that we are witnesses, will rise to a new day. How do I know that? Every single thing that we are experiencing in our world today is not new. Just read the book of Corinthians first and second in the New Testament. The same culture exists today, and it was in that culture that the Church of Jesus was born and grew to become the world movement that it has become. And it is time for God through the power of the Holy Spirit and in and through us even here at St Paul's in Elizabethtown to rise up to the new day, allowing the Holy Spirit to empower us to live differently than the world and to allow the DNA of the Spirit of God to bear witness to a Jesus who is not limited by what we think. Or what we want. You want new freedom? You want to celebrate true freedom today? He's got the pour out his Spirit anew. On you. On me. On us. What evidence do you have in your life that the Holy Spirit has been poured out? Maybe the starting point is that list. Maybe that's where we begin. I want to invite you to pray two prayers, they are very brief, the things that I try to do every day, I want to invite you to do this, I'm going to put it up on the screen. I'm going to read it out loud. And then I'm going to give you an opportunity to once you've heard it, to pray that out loud with me, there's two of them, very brief. This is the first one says:

Lord, let the fruit of Your Spirit be the evidence that You are Lord of my life.

I'm going to let that hang there for a moment. I'm not going to ask you to pray for anything that you're not able to own for yourself. But if you're able to pray that, would you join with me in praying it out loud? Lord, let the fruit of your spirit be the evidence that you are Lord of my life. Second prayer:

Holy Spirit, empower me to live a life that testifies to the goodness of God.

I'm going to let that sit there for a second. And if you feel the need to join with me, let's pray this out loud. Holy Spirit. Empower me to live a life that testifies to the goodness of God. Friends, the Holy Spirit was gifted to the church, you, and me, even today. Gifted to the church. So that we may be a witness to Jesus. Not a witness to us. Not a witness to the church. A witness to Jesus. Crucified and resurrected and fully alive today. What's the DNA evidence in your life?

Will you pray with me? God, we thank you for the gift of your Spirit. But we are nothing, our witness is nothing, unless you empower us. Pour out your Holy Spirit on each of us, Lord, as we gather in your name, pour out your Holy Spirit on your church, not only here at St Paul's, but your church throughout the world, for the church needs to rise up to a new day. Let the witness of your church point people to Jesus. We pray this in His name, and all God's people said: "Amen"