

Spirit Powered: 4. And You Will Know

John 14:26-27; 16:12-14

May 23, 2021

Pastor Tami Luckhardt

Have you ever had the wind knocked out of you? When I was in the first grade, my next-door neighbor, Ben Bird, and I were playing in his backyard and we decided to push the picnic table close to their clothesline. Our plan was to jump off the table, grab the crossbar of the clothesline and then hurl ourselves into the air like Batman and Robin. In my mind, this was going to be epic! I was the first to go. I launched myself off the table, grabbed the crossbar, only to discover that it was still damp from the morning dew. My hands slipped off and I landed flat on my back! Whoosh! The wind was knocked out of me. I vividly remember looking up at the blue sky and the panicked feeling of not being able to breath in or out. Yet somehow, I managed to run home and into the garage where my dad was working. By the time I got there, with his reassurance, I was able to slowly catch my breath.

But having the breath knocked out of you is not just a physical experience. This past August, one Saturday afternoon, I was working at home from my kitchen table, when my daughter's father-in-law called my cell phone. When I saw Scott's name on my phone, I knew something was up. He told me that Lizzy had just called his wife to tell her that she, Josh and the boys had just been in a bad car accident. Keri was off to get the boys from the scene of the accident but that is all that Scott knew. Eventually we learned that the car was totaled but everyone, including the other driver, would recover. But in the minutes after the call, we didn't know. It was as if we had had the wind knocked out of us.

Do you know how that is? An unexpected diagnosis, the sudden realization that the relationship is over, or someone you love dies, or your employer tells you that you are no longer needed anymore. There's shock and there's panic. And there are moments without breath, or hours or days or weeks or months. I have been with people who have not caught their breath, their God-given breath, for years. A couple of weeks ago, we heard the words of Teilhard de Chardin, *"We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience."* And in the Genesis creation story when God breathed into man the breath of life, that breath brought to life something far greater than his physical life. And for many, that's what's missing. Maybe you've never had it, or you had it once but now something has happened to knock the breath out of you. So, now what?

That's what this series on the Holy Spirit has really been about, life. The Hebrew word for spirit, ruah, means "wind". The Greek word for spirit, pneuma, means "breath". Come, Holy Spirit, come. Weary. Broken. Tired. Empty... Breathe in. Breathe in. Come, Holy Spirit, come.

The scriptures we heard read today from the Gospel of John are some of Jesus' last words to his disciples when he knew the end of his life was near. He was preparing them for his imminent departure and teaching in great detail about the coming of the Holy Spirit. A few verses earlier Jesus says, *"It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you."* (John 16:7) Can you imagine how odd these words must have sounded to his disciples? How afraid they must have been? For three years, they had left everything, jobs, possessions, family, and they trusted Him with their lives, traveling with him wherever he went. And now he is telling them that He is leaving them? Whoosh! The wind, the air, their breath is gone.

The Greek word here for what Jesus said is “paraclete”, which means the “one who comforts or helps.” Some translations use the English word “advocate”. But the King James version translates this word, “Comforter”. Have you noticed how when someone is deeply distressed, after a death or tragedy, just having other people with them, hugging them, being alongside them, sometimes just sitting with them, gives them strength for the next moment, then the one after that and the one after that? Outwardly, nothing has changed. The tragedy is still a tragedy. The dead person won’t be coming back. But something has changed. Our ability to cope has changed. We have an inner strength and power that we did not have before. The Comforter is this kind of extra power.

How does this happen? We have a God-designed spiritual DNA, but we lack power. We may be filled with a lot of stuff, just not the Holy Spirit. For the past few weeks in the news, we have heard about, and maybe even experienced, a gas shortage due to a hacking of an oil line’s website. Have you seen the pictures of people hoarding gasoline in garbage bags? So if the tank on your car was running low and you couldn’t get any gas, what if you decided to fill your tank with what you did have? You have a lot of water - and it is available, and it is cheap. So you fill the tank with water and then you turn the key. The engine on your car will do exactly what it is designed to do. It will start up but then it will quit because it doesn’t have the fuel that it needs to function as it was designed.

And we are unable to function as designed without the Holy Spirit, without the Comforter that allows us to do what the Apostle Paul meant when he wrote, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”, because Jesus sends the Comforter. Jesus could only be **with** us, but the Holy Spirit allows Jesus to be **in** us. And the power is released when I am filled. And like the tank in my car, I’ve got to take the cap off and surrender the space. The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, cannot fill the space if we’ve not surrendered the space. Do you remember the Exclusion Principle from high school physics class? No two objects can occupy the same space at the same time. If you’ve ever had pneumonia, you know you can’t catch your full breath because your lungs are filled with something else. And only when that stuff, that fluid is surrendered, can you breathe again.

Is there something today that is preoccupying your mind, taking up space, so you’re missing God? Maybe you are hardly listening to this message because there is something else on your mind. Maybe it’s something huge or maybe it is something quite small. Maybe it kept you awake last night robbing you of your breath. Can you let it go? For a little while, can you let it go (or even just let a little bit of it go) so the Holy Spirit can come inside and occupy that space? Can you say with me, “Fill me.” Say it again like you really want it, “Fill me.” Breathe in. Come, Holy Spirit, come.

“He will not speak on his own, he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.” (John 16:13) The Comforter bears witness to what he hears. From where? From God. About what? Your future. The Holy Spirit speaks what is heard from God about your future.

The truth is I can go through some tough stuff in my life, if I can hear the Comforter saying to me, *“I know what you are going through but I just left the Throne Room of God and I want you to know that I’ve seen tomorrow and you are going to make it through this.”* I can go through this. I can go through this pain. I can get through crying about it if I hear the Comforter saying to me, *“I’ve seen that you are crying, I know where you are, but I have just come from the Throne Room of God and I’ve seen your tomorrow and there will be JOY in the morning on that day!”* The Comforter comes and testifies to your future. The Holy Spirit knows your battle. You might even lose the battle, but you will win the war - because it is not your fight. You will get through this. You can stand where you are, even if you’re weak and weary and worn out because we

know the Comforter has come. You want power? The Comforter says, "I am the power." You want hope? The Comforter says, "I am the hope." You want strength, "The Comforter says, "I am the strength." You want a tomorrow? *"Well, I have come from the Throne Room of God and I have seen your tomorrow and you will get through this."* We cannot live, we cannot breathe without the Comforter. So, stop trying. The comfort that comes from the Comforter is greater than whatever it is that you are trying to hang on to.

Two weeks ago, we heard these words from the second chapter of Acts written by the great historian gospel writer, Luke, *"When the day of Pentecost came..."* Pentecost. Today, May 23, is the Day of Pentecost. Penta means 50. Today is 50 days after Easter, the resurrection of Jesus. And it was on that first day of Pentecost in the year 33 AD, that the gift of the Holy Spirit, (the Comforter that Jesus spoke of to his disciples in his final words) descended on his disciples with blowing of a great wind, flames dancing upon their heads and everyone speaking in tongues that the Church of Jesus Christ was born. Acts 1:8, we find the gift of which Jesus spoke. *"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* You have a purpose. You are filled with power for a purpose.

If you can make room in your life in the midst of the pain, grief the Comforter can be at work in your life. But it is only when we surrender and trust God fully that we will start being spirit-powered and able to live into our life's purpose. We will know we have Power. We see the way through. We hear the Holy Spirit coming from the House of God saying, *"I have seen your tomorrow and you will get through this. There will be joy in the morning."*

Can you breathe in with me this morning because I know that some of you are empty today. Something has happened to you. Life happened, the pandemic has hit you hard, or you got mad, or someone hurt you and the breath got knocked out of you. Whoosh! Now you are empty or your capacity is at just 50% and it's hard to breathe. Maybe you've never surrendered your stuff and you're hanging on to what you want to hang onto, pain, anger, disappointment, resentment. But God wants to fill you completely. You could have it all. It's not too late. God has pin-pointed what you need most and once you give permission, you will breathe again. You will live again. Breathe in. Come, Holy Spirit, come.

Let's pray: Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me. Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me. Melt me. Mold me. Fill me. Use me. Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me. Amen.

Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of May 23, 2021

Weekly Prayer: Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets hidden; cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Monday, May 24

Scripture: John 16:7,12-13; Acts 1:3-5

I assure you that it is better for you that I go away. If I don't go away, the Companion won't come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

I have much more to say to you, but you can't handle it now. However, when the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you in all truth. He won't speak on his own, but will say whatever he hears and will proclaim to you what is to come.

After his suffering, he showed them that he was alive with many convincing proofs. He appeared to them over a period of forty days, speaking to them about God's kingdom. While they were eating together, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for what the Father had promised. He said, "This is what you heard from me: John baptized with water, but in only a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

Observation: The power to produce a life lived for Christ can't be self-made, self-taught or self-inspired. It's when we surrender "self" to the Holy Spirit, the One who comforts, that our own lives are transformed and we are fully empowered to serve as Jesus' witnesses - even to the ends of the Earth.

Application: Jesus referred to the Spirit as advocate and comforter and in John 16 promises to send this comforter to his followers. In fact, Jesus says that his leaving and the comforter coming is a very good thing, both for you and the world. How have you truly experienced the Spirit in your life? When have you been comforted by God in a time of distress or need?

Prayer: Dear Jesus, I thank you that the Holy Spirit is not a substitute for you but is your very presence with me. I ask you to teach me now to live with, and value, the mysteries that go with you being God. Amen.

Tuesday, May 25

Scripture: Acts 1:8, 2:4

Rather, 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 end of the earth.

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them to speak.

Observation: There is something comforting about receiving power to live your life for God's purposes. But the Spirit also promises to give you strength to keep going when the road gets rough, when your strength is gone, or even when all things look hopeless. However, you can only receive this power when you surrender your life to God and God fills you up. Even as a follower of Jesus, your spirit can be filled with many other things like fear, jealousy, anger or low self esteem. And like trying to fly a kite without wind, you live your life without the Spirit's power.

Application: Have you ever tried to serve God but under your own strength literally burned out? Since the Holy Spirit brings power to life, where do you need some power right now?

Prayer: Mighty God, I surrender my life to you, I give you all power and control. Strengthen me and guide me. Amen.

Wednesday, May 26

Scripture: John 16:13; Acts 2:1-3

However, when the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you in all truth. He won't speak on his own but will say whatever he hears and will proclaim to you what is to come.

When Pentecost Day arrived, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound from heaven like the howling of a fierce wind filled the entire house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be individual flames of fire alighting on each one of them.

Observation: Another comforting characteristic of the Holy Spirit is that the Spirit provides you with truth about your life, your future, your salvation, and your ultimate destiny with God. But words of assurance aren't the only thing; the Holy Spirit also proves this testimony is true with demonstrations of power evidenced in totally changed lives, peace that passes all understanding, people loving their enemies, mended relationships and supernatural restoration of bodies, minds and spirits.

Application: Where is there evidence of the Holy Spirit's work in your life? God is providing promise in your life right now. Do you stand on those promises or forget them?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, guide me by your Spirit each day. I ask for a teachable spirit to know more about you and your will for me. Thank you for being patient with me again. Amen.

Thursday, May 27

Scripture: Acts 1:8, 2:4

Rather, 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 end of the earth.

They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them to speak.

Observation: The comforter also sends you to be a witness to world about the grace and love of Jesus Christ. Now that you have been comforted and empowered by the Holy Spirit, God sends you out to share this relationship with those around you who are still trapped in fear, sin, and ultimately do not experience the life and breath of God. Just as the first disciples were able to share the message of Jesus to many people of different nations, God will speak through you to those who are sent your way.

Application: What have you seen or experienced from God that you can now begin sharing to others in need? What do you need to take out of your life's cup in order for the Holy Spirit to fill you more?

Prayer: Lord, I offer my life to you. Help me to walk in your way. Make me the person you want me to be. Lead me in your path so that others may come to know your grace, power and love. Amen.

Friday, May 28

Scripture: Ezekiel 1:28-2:2; 2 Corinthians 3:17

Just as a rainbow lights up a cloud on a rainy day, so its brightness shone all around. This was how the form of the LORD's glory appeared. When I saw it, I fell on my face. I heard the sound of someone speaking.

The voice said to me: Human one, stand on your feet, and I'll speak to you. As he spoke to me, a wind came to me and stood me on my feet, and I heard someone addressing me.

The Lord is the Spirit, and where the Lord's Spirit is, there is freedom.

Observation: If you think life has been a bit rough on you these past 15 months, it was worse for Ezekiel and the whole Israelite community. Having been defeated, uprooted, and enslaved, the Israelites in Ezekiel's day were living in extremely difficult times. But this is also the time that God stepped up to show God's power to Ezekiel and give them hope for the future. But before God did anything, God filled Ezekiel with the Holy Spirit so that he could not only stand up against his trials but begin to see the future through the eyes and power of God.

Application: You too are filled with the Holy Spirit if you are a Christ believer, but it's in digging into and internalizing God's word that you will be strengthened to see what God is about to do in and through your life. Read Ezekiel 3:1-2.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, it's a new day and again today I bear your name into a world that urgently needs to know you. Fill me with your Spirit, that I may show others your goodness and glory. Amen.

Saturday, May 29

Scripture: Ezekiel 37:4-10

He said to me, "Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, Dry bones, hear the LORD's word! The LORD God proclaims to these bones: I am about to put breath in you, and you will live again. I will put sinews on you, place flesh on you, and cover you with skin. When I put breath in you, and you come to life, you will know that I am the LORD." I prophesied just as I was commanded. There was a great noise as I was prophesying, then a great quaking, and the bones came together, bone by bone. When I looked, suddenly there were sinews on them. The flesh appeared, and then they were covered over with skin. But there was still no breath in them. He said to me, "Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, human one! Say to the breath, The LORD God proclaims: Come from the four winds, breath! Breathe into these dead bodies and let them live." I prophesied just as he commanded me. When the breath entered them, they came to life and stood on their feet, an extraordinarily large company.

Observation: Just as God instructed Ezekiel to speak life into the bones, God will have you speak life into your circumstances once you've yielded to God's Spirit and will. There is nothing too big or too difficult for God to handle. And God will start to bring all the pieces together for you and once again breathe life into those situations and people around you that desperately need God's help.

Application: Where do you need you begin to yield to God in your life? What will you do to give it to God? Into what 'dry bone' will you begin to speak God's life and Spirit?

Prayer: Holy Spirit, you are the air that I breathe. Help me to grow more aware of the spiritual strength and vitality you offer me as I make you the "oxygen" of my life. Amen.