

The Holy Spirit and Community

7.1.24

We are speaking about the Holy Spirit today which can sometimes be a difficult topic. How to do address the single person of a three person entity? Christians have been debating this for years, and I am not about to try and answer that, instead today we want to look at the aspects of the spirit as it mixes with one of our key convictions as a church: community.

The Holy Spirit has a very interesting role in the midst of the church. Maybe right now looks like community to you. A collection of believers gathered in one place. Church to me has always been interesting that way, where else will you find such a diverse group of people who would be willing to spend so much time together? It's not only our interests that unite us together to be in this place. Look around the room, women, men, young people, older people, Czechs, Americans, Ukrainians, Terry we are all from such different walks of life and experiences.

What's amazing is this is what Jesus wanted, he wanted us to be together in this way, he prayed for this exact thing to happen in John 17. This is his High Priestly Prayer where he asks specific things of the Father but also brings the Holy Spirit into the picture in order to make this happen.

“²⁰ My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—²³ I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. ¹”

When he is saying “us” he is including the Spirit in that work, because just a few passages earlier in John 16 he says this...

“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. ¹⁵ All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you.” ²”

So if Jesus desires that we are to be one, then it is through the Spirit, the Advocate that this is going to happen. But this image of what it is to actually be “One” to be in community, that is the question that we need to address.

¹ [The New International Version](#) (Jn 17:20–23). (2011). Zondervan.

² [The New International Version](#) (Jn 16:13–15). (2011). Zondervan.

Often when we think of what it is to be one, to be in community to be the church we go to a specific example, do you know where I'm going? Acts 2! Yes the early church, this is the example most often given and the example most often used of what it is to be the church.

In my younger church working days I would echo the statement of the frustrated church members and say, "If only we looked like the Acts 2 church everything would be great"

Acts 2:42 – they devoted themselves to the teachings, and fellowship, and breaking of bread and prayer.

Acts 4:32 – they shared everything they had, and if someone had a need they would sell their land and share it amongst the needy.

Has anyone sold a house recently? ☺

This picture is often set up in a way that describes this perfect image and "if ONLY" we could go back to that then our community would be perfect.

But I'm a big believer in context...and in time travel stories, so lets do a little time traveling for a second...and trust me this has a point.

Ok lets go back to that early church AD 37...the believers are all Jews, living around Jerusalem meeting in the temple, sacrificing animals the ritual way, and not doing anything on the Sabbath. Got it? Great that's the church.

Now jump with me to AD 340...the believers are no where near the temple, or Jerusalem, in fact sacrificing animals would be a pagan practice. They're now in the eastern Mediterranean regions and they're all speaking Greek...and that's the church.

Wait, keep going...lets see...uh..ok AD 600, now the believers are situated in Ireland and northern regions, cut off from the world with no possession of any kind, dressed in the most basic outfits and praying 24/7 with some of them living solitary lives and cut off from the rest of the world...and that's the church...

Ok we need a bigger jump, lets get back a little closer, say the 1400s? Jan Hus is preaching in the language of the people for the first time and telling them to deny the larger movements of the main church at the time, but we all know how that goes and the result leads to a massive protest = protestant movement that creates a whole new way of being believers and guess what...now this is the church!

But by the 1800's you have well established, wealthy, well-dressed people in England preaching in large congregations who feel that it is the churches responsibility not to disengage from the world but to engage it, and to spread the gospel and care for the needs of the less fortunate. In fact entire nations are deemed Christian, so much so it influences their politics and this is now the church.

And even still in the 1990's you have massive movements in Africa that are fueled by a religious fervor that is deemed charismatic and looks nothing like the people in England just a hundred years prior and THEY are also the church...

So Trojka let me ask you? Which of these is the THE church? Not so easy now is it?

But isn't it amazing to see how the Church has responded and moved throughout time to adjust to the needs and the situation it finds itself in. And how has it managed to do that?

Through the Holy Spirit! The guide and the helper that keeps us grounded to the needs of the times in front of us and to be the glue that keeps the church together. The Spirit keeps the church going, but through the people who make up the church.

His role is to transform you into the image of Christ, to understand what God truly wants. As Jesus says, The Spirit will speak only what he receives from the Father, he will guide us in all things. Paul says in Romans 8:5

Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.³

If you follow Jesus you have the Holy Spirit within you, guiding you, and you have the ability to chose as you go through your life to listen and follow his guiding, and often times we ask "how do we do that" it's simple, the Spirit is active within you, you know when he is moving in your heart, when the option to forgive is in front of you you know it. When there is a choice between caring and selfishness you know it! When the option to serve is there you know it!

Church remember we are part of a larger story, one that doesn't look just one specific way, because the spirit is alive and active throughout time and active even now!

Our goal as a community is to keep the Spirit at the center of who we are. Only then is our community going to be a true community.

³ [The New International Version](#) (Ro 8:5–6). (2011). Zondervan.