

THE PROMISE OF PENTECOST: LORD, DO IT AGAIN!**ACTS 2:1-13**

The founder of the Salvation Army was a man by the name of William Booth – one of the truly great Christian leaders of all time. God did some amazing things through him in the late 1800s. I've read about one Salvation Army officer – that's how the Salvation Army refers to its pastors and leaders – who was visiting the English church where William Booth first gave his heart and life to Jesus. He knelt down in front of a tablet that commemorated that great event. As he knelt there, he could be heard praying very earnestly, "O Lord, do it again! O Lord, do it again!"

That Salvation Army officer underlined something probably all of us have experienced: the loss of spiritual momentum. It happens to Christian organizations. God raises up a dynamic leader and a movement is birthed. Then the leader dies and often over time the organization he or she created begins to lose its spiritual vitality. Those who were around at the beginning might begin to pray, "Lord, do it again!" Loss of spiritual momentum happens to local churches. Churches go through seasons when they seem to be firing on all cylinders: people are being saved, attendance is up, giving is strong, and the surrounding community is being reached. Then, for whatever reason, spiritual momentum isn't sustained. Church members who have been around for a while and remember those earlier days might pray, "Lord, do it again!" Loss of spiritual momentum happens to individual followers of Jesus, too. We go through periods when we're really on fire for Jesus. But then we can also go through times when our interest in the things of God isn't strong at all. You might long to get back to an earlier time in your personal walk with God when it just seemed Jesus was more real to you. Maybe you've felt disconnected and you say in effect, "Lord, do it again in me."

Today, all over the world, Christians are celebrating the Day of Pentecost – one of the most important dates on the Christian calendar right up there with Christmas Day and Easter Day. Fifty days after Jesus rose from the dead (that's what the word "Pentecost" means literally – fiftieth), the Holy Spirit came to this **w****READ, p. 1078**. On the Day of Pentecost, the Church of Jesus Christ – that spiritual group of people past, present, and future who have put their faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord – was born. Pentecost is the birthday of the Church. Happy Birthday, Church of Jesus Christ! What happened on that first Day of Pentecost sounded a bit like an invasion. We're in the midst of a message series on the Holy Spirit we're calling, "Invasion From Above: Why the Holy Spirit Matters." When the Holy Spirit comes into a person, a church, or an organization, it can be like an invasion, because an invasion is something that comes from outside of us. When the Holy Spirit invades, He changes everything. But after that initial invasion – for example, when you put your trust in Jesus to be your Savior – you and I need periodic "re-invasions." God is always eager to do something new, fresh, and vital in us spiritually. It's you and me that get too easily satisfied by the routine, the boring, and the predictable. Sometimes that prayer, "Lord, do it again" can set the stage for God to do something new in a church or in an individual's life. Consider with me, first of all...

THE MARKS OF A PERSONAL INVASION

Throughout the Old Testament, God used fire as a symbol of Himself. God spoke to Moses out of a burning bush. God revealed Himself in fire and smoke at Mt. Sinai when He gave the Law to Moses. A fiery kind of dense cloud hanging in the sky – called the Shekinah - hovered over the Tabernacle, the place where the Jewish people worshiped God. The fiery Shekinah was a symbol of God’s actual presence. By following it, the people of Israel were led out of Egypt and into the Promised Land.

It’s no accident tongues of flame hovered over those the Holy Spirit invaded in Acts 2. God, who had appeared to the Jewish people through the symbol of fire throughout their long history, was at it again. When those tongues of flame came to rest upon the heads of those first Christians, it was a sign God had moved from the exterior to the interior of their lives. The Shekinah that used to hover over the Tabernacle was now hovering over and in them. He was now indwelling them. They’d just been personally and eternally invaded by God through the Holy Spirit.

Right there is the story of the Bible. God always wanted to live in, to live through, and to live with His people forever. The relationship was lost and broken because of sin. Jesus came into the world in order to pay the penalty for our sin through His death and resurrection making it possible for that relationship to be restored. When a person puts his or her trust in Jesus, God Himself invades that person through the Holy Spirit and a relationship is restored. God lives in, lives through, and lives with us again.

When you get invaded by the Holy Spirit, a whole lot changes! For example, your spirit is made alive. Every person relates to God through his or her inner spirit. The Bible says the human spirit starts out being essentially dead to God. But when the Holy Spirit invades you, your spirit is made alive. The Bible says, “Since Christ lives within you, . . . your spirit is alive because you have been made right with God.” (Rom. 8:10 NLT) You can observe the dramatic effects the Holy Spirit’s invasion made upon those first followers of Jesus in the book of Acts. Their sins were forgiven. Their relationship with God was restored. They had a new joy and enthusiasm. They were given God’s compassionate heart for other people. All of that still happens today. Your sins get forgiven. Your relationship with God is restored. Your inner spirit gets a new joy and enthusiasm it never had before. Other people start to matter to you in ways they never did before. When the Holy Spirit invades you, your spirit is made alive.

Second, when the Holy Spirit invades you, your mind is transformed. This world has many intellectually gifted people who are, nevertheless, dead to God. Evil people like an Adolph Hitler or an Osama bin Laden can be both brilliant intellectually but dead spiritually. There’s nothing more beneficial than a brilliant mind aglow with God’s love and the Holy Spirit’s power. The Christian leader, Paul, was such a man with such a transformed mind. But even those of us with normal intelligence get in on the benefit of the Holy Spirit’s invasion. The Bible says, “Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.” (Rom.

12:2 NLT) When the Holy Spirit invades you, He will indeed “mess with your mind” – but in a completely good, wonderful way. Your mind is and will be transformed.

Third, when the Holy Spirit invades you, your purpose in life is given a new focus. The biggest problem for your heart and mine is a life purpose that’s lost its proper focus - God and God alone. It’s sort of like what would happen if planet Earth just broke loose from its orbit around the sun and tried to orbit around the moon instead. Chaos and destruction would be the inevitable result. When the devil said, “I want to be like God,” he lost the proper focus. Ever since the devil’s been trying to get human beings to break away from God and orbit their lives around him or around self. We see the tragic result every day: personal and social chaos and destruction. You were made for God and life only works well when you orbit around Him. When the Holy Spirit invades your life, He restores the proper purpose of your life – a focus on God rather than on self. The Bible says, “And we know he lives in us because the Spirit he gave us lives in us.” (1 Jo. 3:24 NLT) Getting and keeping that new focus take time and patience, but the Holy Spirit is relentless in bringing you and me into the proper orbit around God Himself. When the Holy Spirit invades you, your purpose in life gets aligned with God’s will.

Here’s another outcome. When the Holy Spirit invades you, your emotions get healed. We live in a world of people with severely damaged emotions: folk who are dominated and controlled by fear, anger, hatred, resentment, or anxiety just to name a few. Did you know God is an emotional Being? It’s true, and He’s very emotional about you and me. The Bible says, “For the LORD your God is living among you. He is a mighty savior. He will take delight in you with gladness. With his love, he will calm all your fears. He will rejoice over you with joyful songs.” (Zeph. 3:17 NLT) Emotions are one evidence you’re made in God’s image. God wants to heal the broken emotions in your life and mine. He wants to remove all the emotional garbage that has clogged up our lives so that His joy, His peace, and His grace can flow freely again.

For two decades, 49 year old Wayne Messmer had been a public address announcer and national anthem singer for sports teams Chicago. After singing the “Star Spangled Banner” at a Chicago Blackhawks game in 1994, however, Messmer was shot at point-blank range by two teenage boys. Because the bullet passed through the singer’s throat, the doctors were unsure if he’d ever sing again. Amazingly, six months later (still bearing evidence of his ten hour surgery) Messmer returned to the microphone. Physical healing was one thing. Emotional release of the hatred and resentment he felt toward those two young men was another.

Because of his personal faith in Jesus Christ, Messmer was convinced that his emotional healing was linked to his ability to forgive his young assailants. Although one of the boys had been released on a plea bargain, the other, James Hampton, remained incarcerated. To prove to himself that he truly had forgiven his would-be killers, Messmer drove to the prison where Hampton was serving his sentence. Although several years had passed, and Hampton had grown from a teenager into a young adult, Messmer found the strength and grace to say, “James, I’m here to see how you are doing.” After a two hour, emotional visit, Messmer turned to leave. Reaching out and

touching Hampton's forearm, he offered a benediction that revealed the freedom of his heart. "James, I bid you peace." When the Holy Spirit invades you, your damaged emotions get healed and made well.

Finally, when the Holy Spirit invades you, your behavior and attitudes become godly. Your actions, your attitudes, your lifestyle, and how you treat others all change for the better. It's no mistake the Spirit of God is called the HOLY Spirit. Because He is God, He is absolutely and forever pure. No evil in any form can exist in God. We've already thought some about what it means to be filled with the Spirit in this message series. It means being under the influence of the Holy Spirit 24/7. It means personal, daily surrender to Jesus as my 24/7 Boss. It means being enabled and empowered to do God's will 24/7. It means avoiding anything in our lives that either grieves the Holy Spirit who loves us or quenches Him – puts out His fire in our lives. The Bible says, "He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them." (2 Cor. 5:15 NLT) Right there is a simple definition of what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit invades you, you behavior and attitudes become godly. Those are just some of the marks of a personal invasion by the Holy Spirit. But I also want to say something about what happens when the Holy Spirit invades or "re-invades" this or any local church.

THE MARKS OF A CHURCH INVASION

The late A.W. Tozer, an author and pastor, wrote, "If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the Church today, 95% of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament Church, 95% of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference." Here are some changes that happen when the Holy Spirit invades or "re-invades" a local church.

First, the Holy Spirit is the reason for the Church's existence. In Acts 2, a prayer meeting became a birthday party! We're here today because of what took place in that little upper room on some side street in the city of Jerusalem 50 days after Jesus rose from the dead. Who made up this first group of 120 Christians? Were any of them wealthy, influential, or powerful people? Certainly not. What was their message? Something about a wandering Jewish rabbi from Galilee who had been recently crucified by the Romans as a criminal and who they said was alive again. Right.... In human terms, the prospect of this motley group amounting to anything and influencing anyone was ridiculous. But within 30 years of that first Day of Pentecost, the message of Jesus had reached the central city of Rome and far beyond. Several hundred thousand people confessed Jesus as Lord and Savior. Into this world had come new spiritual life and power. A new community had been birthed. Ordinary people were now living extraordinary lives. The coming of the Holy Spirit set into motion a force that couldn't be turned aside. Today, every nation of the world has a visible manifestation of the Church. The sun never sets on the cross of Jesus. How did it happen? The Holy Spirit invaded. And He continues to show up and when He does local churches are

born. That's what happened here in Columbus some 113 years ago now. The only reason Karl Road Baptist Church exists and survives is because of the Holy Spirit.

Second, the Holy Spirit determines the Church's message. He enables this or any other local church to live out the good news of Jesus. It's a very certain message in a culture that offers no certainty whatsoever. It's a message that says God Himself entered space and time in the person of Jesus to save and call a people to Himself. It's a message that proclaims there's only one way to the Father: Jesus alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. It's a message that speaks the truth about how to live, that has the courage to call sin sin and evil evil. And yet it's a message that always offers grace and forgiveness to those who humbly come to God to be changed. It's a message that above all offers a Person as our Savior, not a list of beliefs or rules to follow. And this message is for everyone in the whole, wide world. When the Holy Spirit invaded those 120 people, they were given the miraculous, supernatural ability to speak other human languages they'd never learned. Fellow Jews from every corner of the then known world who were visiting Jerusalem began to hear the good news about Jesus in their own language. It was such an amazing, crazy scene that observers thought the whole group was stone cold drunk! In a way, the accusation was accurate. They were intoxicated with the Holy Spirit of God! The Holy Spirit determines the message of the Church yesterday, today, and forever.

Third, the Holy Spirit inspires the Church's worship. God has put in the human heart a yearning for a vital, real connection with God. It's ultimately a hunger for God Himself. On this side of Heaven that hunger should be partially satisfied in the act of worship with other believers. The Spirit of God is always seeking to come in and revitalize, re-energize, and re-ignite our worship of God. Why? Because we tend so easily toward the routine, the dull, the predictable, the tame, and the safe.

I heard about a church that was having air conditioning installed in the sanctuary. The pastor was meeting with the contractor to go over the plans. He asked the pastor a number of questions – seating capacity, square footage, usual attendance – all the while taking notes. Then, he suddenly crumpled up the paper he'd been working on and started over. "What's wrong?" asked the pastor. "I was figuring for a theater instead of a church," the contractor replied. "What's the difference?" asked the pastor. "Wouldn't it be the same calculations?" The contractor explained, "No, not really. You see, in a theater with all that's going on up on the screen, there are certain biological changes that take place. Heart rates get elevated. Blood pressure increases. Body temperatures can begin to climb. In other words, in a theater there's a greater need for cooling because people get excited. On the other hand, in a church...." Wouldn't it be wonderful to have to crank up the air conditioning in here in the summer and lower the heat in the winter because of the energy and enthusiasm we generate when we worship God? Imagine that! When the Holy Spirit invades a church, there's a spirit of expectation when we gather to worship God, there's an excitement about being in the very presence of God, and there's a power and vitality that sets people free.

When the Holy Spirit invades, He creates genuine connectedness with others in the Church. The first Christians earned deep respect from non-Christians because they clearly loved each other. We live in a very lonely, isolating world. Breakdowns in relationships abound everywhere we look – husbands and wives, parents and kids, employers and employees. When the Holy Spirit is active in a local church, it becomes an oasis from the desert of loneliness out there. A woman named Maude loved to go to the post office because the employees there were so friendly. One day she went to buy stamps. The lines were long that day because it was near Christmas. As she waited patiently in line, a friend came by and said, ‘Maude, how many stamps do you need?’ She replied, ‘Only two.’ Her friend asked, ‘Why not use the stamp machine in the lobby then? There’s no line out there.’ Maude replied, ‘I’d rather wait here. The machine won’t ask me about my arthritis.’ The church ought to be a place where you get asked about your arthritis, yes, and a whole lot more! The church is a place to experience God’s care. Don’t you find conflicts and hurt feelings at church, too? Sure. But you can also find forgiveness and reconciliation. Jesus said, ‘Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.’” (Jo. 13:35 NLT)

Finally, the Holy Spirit empowers the Church’s growth and development. Maybe the most important phrase in the Bible passage we read today is the very last one there in v. 4 – “... as the Spirit enabled them.” (Acts 2:4 NIV) That might well be a great banner to hang above our platform as a constant reminder – “as the Spirit enabled them.” God has a plan and a purpose for His Church all over the world and He has a plan and a purpose for KRBC, too. What will that look like in the days ahead? If there’s one thing I’ve learned in life and ministry it’s the simple fact God doesn’t always reveal what you need to know until you really need to know it. He likes to call forth faith from His people. In addition, the Holy Spirit is like the wind – He goes where He wants when He wants and does what He wants. But here is what I do know. The Holy Spirit is very bit as powerful today as He was back in Acts 2. He still creates churches. He still invades, re-invades, revitalizes, and re-energizes churches. Lord, do it again!

In 1935, Blasio Kugosi, a schoolteacher in Rwanda, Central Africa, was deeply discouraged by the lack of life in the church and the powerlessness of his own experience. He followed the example of the first Christians and closed himself in for a week of prayer and fasting in his little cottage. He emerged a changed man. He confessed his sins to those he had wronged, including his wife and children. He proclaimed the gospel in the school where he taught, and revival broke out there, resulting in students and teachers being saved. They were called “abaka”, meaning “people on fire.” Shortly after that, Blasio was invited to Uganda to share with the Anglican Church there. As he called the leaders to repentance, the fire of the Spirit descended again on the place, with similar results as in Rwanda. Several days later, Blasio died of fever. His ministry lasted only a few weeks, but the revival fires sparked through his ministry swept throughout East Africa and continue to the present. Hundreds of thousands of lives have been transformed over the decades through this mighty East African revival. It all began with one discouraged Christian who made himself fully available to the Holy Spirit.

Speaking of Africa, I came across a written prayer which was posted on the wall in the home of a young African pastor. I don't know his name or if he was the author of the prayer, but I love the prayer. This is what happens when the Holy Spirit invades your life. I'd like you to read this prayer with me out loud and make it your personal prayer today. It's a request for the Holy Spirit on this Pentecost Sunday to do His work in each of us as individuals and as a church.

Gracious Heavenly Father,

I'm part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I have Holy Spirit power. The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I'm a disciple of His. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still. My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, my future is secure.

I'm finished and done with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, mundane talking, cheap living, and dwarfed goals. I no longer need pre-eminence, prosperity, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I don't have to be right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded.

I now live by faith, lean on His presence, walk by patience, live by prayer, and labor by power. My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is Heaven, my road is narrow, my way rough, my companions few, my Guide reliable, my mission clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded, or delayed.

I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of the adversary, negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity. I won't give up, shut up, or let up until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up, paid up, and preached up for the cause of Christ.

I am a disciple of Jesus. I must go till He comes, give till I drop, preach till all know, and work till He stops me. And when He comes for His own, He will have no problems recognizing me – my banner will be clear.

O Lord, do it again! Send Your Holy Spirit! Do it again in me. Do it again in our church! In Jesus' Name, Amen.