

Spirit People

BPentecost - 2024

Acts 2:1-11; Psalm 104:25-32; I Corinthians 12:4-13; John 20:19-23

May 19, 2024

In the movie version of the Music Man
the “rush of a mighty wind” opens the school doors
and the fearful imposter “Professor Harold Hill”
and the rather pathetic River City boys band receive power.
The quality of their music surprises everyone.
A mother, hearing the voice of her son’s trumpet and cries out,
“That’s my Barney!”

Originally a harvest festival.
Greek speaking Jews gave it the name Pentecost
because it was celebrated 50 days after Passover.
It was day of solemn joy and thanksgiving
during which work was to cease
and the community presented itself before the Lord.

It was at this ‘Pentecostal’ gathering in Jerusalem that the Spirit of God,
as we hear in Acts, filled devout Jews from every nation.

Pentecost for Christians celebrates the climax of the Gospel
and we celebrate it 50 days after the Day of Resurrection.
On this day all the benefits of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
rush into our lives and into the Church through the gift of the Holy Spirit.
The Spirit carries on Jesus’ work
and makes known his continuing presence in the world.

Describe Spirit:

We may look *back* upon all that our Creator has brought forth.
And we may look *back* and remember each week the Lord’s Supper and Jesus’ self-emptying
on the cross, his resurrection appearances.
We look *forward* to an elusive ever-stretching-into-the future time
when God’s world is restored.
The Spirit is God with us, at work in us and in the world RIGHT NOW.

The early Church, Paul, and people today
experience these qualities of the Spirit:

Helper

Voice of Truth

Uncovers/Reveals things as they are,
as God would have us see and understand things

Enters into our deepest longings,
and intercedes for us and for the whole of creation.

Comforts, hovers, shields.

Empowers us to manifest God's perfect love over our own emotions.

The Spirit is unifying, drawing disparate people to form as one body.
The multitude of people who speak many different languages
are made one in their understanding.

The Spirit is also intimate,
working in the mind and heart of each individual person,
as represented by each understanding in their own language.

It would be like going to an Italian opera and understanding every word as if it were all in
English – without having your cell phone's translator app turned on.

God's Spirit is universal.
It pulses throughout all creation.
It is the spark of all life.
We don't have to ask for it because it is part of the gift of being alive.
We can't put out God's divine spark.
We can't command it at will.
There are times in life when it carries us, urges us, on an inspired path.
There are times when the Spirit holds back, causing us to wait and wonder.

There are two people who, to me, have been a joy to know,
and who have inspired me; whom I see as people of the Spirit.
They are a gift because the divine spark in their lives is a steady presence,
a lighthouse whose lamp is always shining brightly.
They will tell you that it is because in coming to know Jesus,
That they have received the gift of knowing
they are a beloved son or daughter of God,
that they are never alone.
They pattern their lives after Jesus, in that,
they mean for nothing to separate them from God, even death itself.

Ida:

For two years I rode in a commuter van from Tallahassee FL to Chattahoochee FL where the massive old state psychiatric hospital was.

We were merry band of mostly social workers, rehab therapists, and psychologists who spent two hours five days a week together – going to and coming from work.

Several of us were recently graduated from FSU and this was our first “real” job.

Ida was a black woman. She seemed quite mature to us.

She was probably all of 40 years old!

She was a social worker, and we called her Sparky because she would joyfully say she was filled with the power of the Spirit.

We might have razed her about her particular flavor of Christianity, but the truth was, in every crevice of her life, God was #1.

God was her sight line, her plumb line, her compass.

I fussed one day about having to hang my clothes out to dry because the place I rented only had a washer.

Ida laughed at me and said,

“Girl, you gotta learn the art of hanging clothes on a line.

Some days I arrange them by color, sometimes by size, and when I’m finished I stand back and admire my artistic self.

And, every time I fasten a piece on that line with a clothespin, I lift up the name of someone in prayer.

Sometimes God surprises me as to who he wants me to pray for!”

Ida has sanctified clotheslines for me and I think of her every time I see one.

Earl:

Is a member of the church I served in Wilmington.

Earl had been once a hot shot hairstylist to the rich and famous in Los Angeles.

When we met, he was living in subsidized housing,

And very active in NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness).

He was 55 years old, very verbal, and would volunteer this about himself:

I’m not all that LGBTQRS stuff.

I’m a crazy queer man who lives with bipolar disorder, depression, and chronic neuropathy in my legs.

No drugs, no alcohol. Clean as a whistle.

When I said yes to God, that was it.

My biological father didn’t like me and was mean as hell

but my heavenly father delights in me

and his steadfast love is new every morning.

I’ve lost everything in this world

but I’ve gained everything in Jesus

because every day he shows me the way to the Father.

Earl dressed to the nines every Sunday for church.

He would arrive thirty minutes early every Sunday
and sit in his pew to hear the choir rehearse.
He said he did this because “the music fills my soul and gets me ready for worship.
And, I can’t afford to go to concerts, so I get a free concert every week!”
Many in the congregation were drawn to him
and made sure his way was paid to the annual parish retreat.
To have Earl in the room was to have the Spirit in the room!

Now, Ida and Earl come to my mind because they are dear to me
And because of their colorful personalities, they are a delight to describe.
The Spirit that shines through them is in every kind of person, no matter their personality or
their style of piety.

A person who lives for God, follows Jesus, and is in the Spirit has these qualities:

They have joy in their lives.

They are real, authentic – no veneer.

They have the capacity to be loving to everyone they meet,

They lack the tendency toward self-consciousness and self-preservation.

This world doesn’t have a hold on them.

They have the trust and grace to live responsively to God

in the NOW of each moment, which means they are wonderfully flexible.

They are aware that whatever happens –

from the smallest detail to the huge crises around the globe –

Their stand is with the prophet Micah –

to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly^[a] with our God.

to love God, follow Jesus, and to let the Spirit guide them in everything.

The Church and Christianity don’t have a copyright on the Holy Spirit.

God’s Spirit swept over the vast chaos as God began to create.

Long before any religions were formed.

Jurgen Moltmann says:

Church is NOT a restrictive religious community.

Church is NOT a fellowship of like-minded people.

Church IS the earthly form of new life in Christ lived through the Holy Spirit.

One time Ben, a psychologist in our commuter van,
asked Ida why she went to church.

She said, I know we don’t get it right all the time,
and some of us don’t even get along very well,
but we are one in the Spirit!

We show up and we stand side by side together

and we sing praises and we pray for so many needs

and we encourage one another to go wherever the Spirit leads us!

