

Menifee United Church of Christ

Established in 1962 by God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit

SERMON FOR

August 16, 2015

“The Great Enabler”

Chuck Otto



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Live Life Fully Alive!

Mark 1:6-8

Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, 'The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'

Luke 1:30-35

The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.'

The Great Enabler

The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit! Wow, now that's a mouthful. We pray using this phrase, we sing songs (the Doxology) using these words, this phrase is ingrained in our doctrine. In our private relationship with our Lord, we commonly pray to God in Jesus' name but rarely, consciously invoke the Holy Spirit. And that is what I am going to discuss with you today, the Holy Spirit.

I think the first song I learned growing up in church was the doxology, so at that time, my definition of the Holy Spirit was nothing but a memorized word. Other than that, I just never thought about it. At church summer camp some years later, I found out that I was born with it, within me and placed there by God! All that had to happen for it to function for me was to accept Jesus. That was where I started on my search of understanding as to what this gift from God was all about. From then to now, today, what does it mean?

We all have a personal understanding within our hearts what we mean when we say God or Jesus. We can almost conjure a picture. If you go on the internet and Google either of those you get a myriad of pictures and paintings offered over time that mankind has given us to visualize their beliefs and concepts. But what does the Holy Spirit look like? How do you visualize it? I can't! I don't know what it looks like as I can't imagine what my soul looks like, but, I know in my heart that it is part of me and exists in all of us.

Referring to the two scriptures this morning, Mark 1:6-8 and Luke 1:30-35, these two excerpts tell me two things:

That the Holy Spirit has unlimited power as it comes from God, just as it came upon Mary. Does this mean that the Holy Spirit was not in Mary? By inference, that the Holy Spirit did not reside in each of us but was given by God to those that needed some form or ability to understand what God wanted of us. Maybe like with Abraham and his son Isaac. Through the millennia, God communicated his word via his chosen prophets, as with Moses and the Ten Commandments. The prophets teachings were then interpreted by the priests as they became the only ones allowed to presume God's word. So you believed what you were told with no personal understanding other than what you were taught. Anyone deviating from the priest's word was considered a blasphemer. Sound familiar?

The second thing these two scripture tell me is that John the Baptist told us it was going to happen as he stated at the river prior to baptizing Jesus. It was Jesus that actually gave all of us, individually, the Holy Spirit when he bestowed it upon the 12 Apostles in the upper room and explained that they now had the same abilities as He as did anyone that believed in Him. This act by Jesus started the ball rolling per se. It was this act that gave all of us and each of us this gift.

For me, although I didn't know it at the time, baptism was the start of my relationship with the Holy Spirit. Immediately, I gained the ability to converse directly with the Lord, no prophets, no priests and no barriers to my salvation, only that I accept Jesus as my savior. To me, this is what the Holy Spirit does; it enables

me to communicate directly with my Lord on my own terms and in my own way. I don't need anyone's permission to believe the way I do, nor do I presume to tell anyone else how to believe or what to believe. The Holy Spirit in me allows me to be free.

There is a little prayer that talks of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, it goes like this:

*Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
enlighten the mysteries of the universe in relation to eternity.*

*Spirit of right judgment and courage,
guide us and make us firm in our baptismal decision to follow
Jesus' way of love*

*Spirit of knowledge and reverence,
help us to see the lasting value of justice and mercy in our
everyday dealings with one another.
Fill our lives with wonder & awe in your presence which
penetrates all creation. Amen.*

What do you think? What freedom do you have? What is your conscience telling you? God is Listening, let Him know what you think and He will tell you what he things.

Try it. You'll like it.

Amen.

