

Presence Series Study Guide
Weeks 1-4
Spring 2013

the Holy Spirit
Presence
Acts 1-5

SOUTHSIDE
COMMUNITY CHURCH
In and for the neighbourhood



Presence: Life in the Power of the Holy Spirit

*The Spirit of the LORD God is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me;
God has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the broken hearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners
(Isaiah 61; also read by Jesus in Luke 4)
Then afterward I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;
your sons and daughters shall prophesy,
your old people shall dream dreams,
and your young people shall see visions.
Even on the male and female slaves,
in those days, I will pour out my Spirit.
(Joel 2:27ff)*

“Even the early experiences of God’s Spirit [in the Old Testament] are experiences of how a new beginning is made toward restoring the community of God’s people. They are experiences of the forgiveness of sins, of the raising up of the ‘crushed and oppressed,’ and of the renewal of the forces of life” (From *God the Spirit* by Michael Welker, pg. 65).

Last year at our sunrise service on Burnaby Mountain, we gathered at dawn on a clear and cold morning. There were several other church groups gathered in the parking lot, so we moved a hundred meters or so south of Horizon’s parking lot and settled in to the song and liturgy that Craig brought.



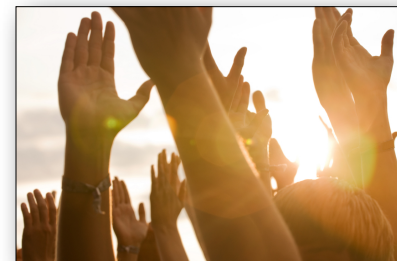
Perhaps we did not move far enough.

Suddenly, our prayers of praise and thanksgiving were interrupted by the **blat** of a poorly played trumpet and shouts of joy/urgency/proclamation. We looked over to the other church group to observe hands frantically waving and pointing, bodies jumping, trumpets *blatting*. It was great. Right on Burnaby Mountain the *diversity* of Christian practice was on full display. We were behaving differently. We were probably praying different things over the city. We probably even disagree over some points of theology and

yet we are united in our faith in Jesus Christ, who was crucified, raised to life, and who will come again.

There are lots of ways we can look at this diversity. We might be scandalized by it and scold these raucous Christians. Or, we might bring trumpets next year - but maybe take trumpet lessons as well! We might insist that any group that believes and behaves different from us is a false expression. However, these options miss the importance of what we observed last year: in that moment, we observed the glory and work of the promised Holy Spirit.

In the shouting and praying, we observed a *charismatic* expression of the Christian faith. Baptists have not always known what to do with charismatics. Some Baptists will find ways to misconstrue Scripture in order to dismiss the parts of the charismatic movement that makes them uncomfortable (such as speaking in tongues and words of prophecy). Most Baptists simply tolerate the charismatic movement, but assume that it is not for them (full disclosure: I tend to fall into this camp even though I know it is insufficient). We cannot or should not ignore it. The Old Testament anticipates a final era of human history when God will pour out his Spirit on all people and the result will be surprising and uncontrollable. It will overturn the social order and create a new community of God’s people. As Joel says - *even the slaves will receive the Spirit!*



Our more charismatic brothers and sisters remind us that the Holy Spirit is a present and real person at work among us and through us. Something more fundamental than a charismatic challenge was on display on Burnaby Mountain as well. The *unity - in - diversity* that we saw Easter morning is the true glory, power and evidence of the Holy Spirit. As Michael Welker says, the Holy Spirit throughout the Scriptures is the power of God at work in creating a new beginning for the sake of “restoring the community of God’s people.” In the New Testament, it is the Spirit that unites Jew and Gentile into a single community of faith and who unites and organizes people with diverse gifts into a single body under the headship of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 12-13). As we will see in the book of Acts, it is the Holy

Spirit who disrupts and *sends out* the disciples from Jerusalem across cultural and linguistic boundaries to share the gospel. It is the Spirit who draws out and equips the church for mission and so it is the Holy Spirit that turns a homogenous Jewish sect into a global and diverse “people on the Way.” Easter morning displayed a modern outcome of this global and diverse movement (even though it would have been better had we worshipped *together!*).

The next eight weeks, we will explore the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts.

This comes after our previous two series on God the Father as a *sending* and missio-n-ary God and our Lenten series on the *humanity* of the Son.

Because God is a “missioning” God who “so loves” the world, God the Son takes on human flesh and so becomes, as theologian Catherine

LaCugna says, *God for us*. In the life and work of the Son, God rescues and redeems our broken humanity. Life *in* Jesus is a life that makes us more fully human. And yet, God gives us even more than the example and work of the Son. God pours out his Holy Spirit on us for the sake of living the *fully human life* that Jesus displays. We often miss this - we struggle to talk about the Holy Spirit apart from charismatic gifts. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit is such a significant biblical promise and New Testament theme, that Jesus himself says that, “it is to your *advantage* that I go away...if I go, I will *send him* [the Holy Spirit] to you” (John 16:7).

As the Messiah, Jesus is known as “the one upon whom the Spirit rests.” In his baptism, the Spirit descends and rests upon him. This is not because Jesus is the Son, but rather because Jesus is the truly human one. We, too, are meant to be ones who reflect or image God to all creation. The truly human life is one lived in the power of the Spirit, the *very presence* of God *for us*. Let’s pray, hope and live with this expectation.

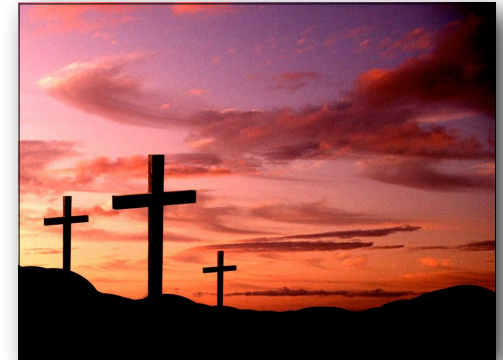
Presence.

the Holy Spirit
Presence
A series in the book of Acts 1-5

Presence Week 1

Luke 4:14-29

(Scott) Last week, we were reading the crucifixion and resurrection account to our kids. Isabelle turned thoughtful and asked if the people who wrote the gospels were *actually there* to see what they were writing about. I think the question came because we had emphasized the way in which all of Jesus’ followers except the women



abandoned him on the cross. I love these questions! I probably jumped into ‘teaching’ mode too quickly, but I began telling Isabelle the ‘back stories’ behind the four gospels, the fact that Matthew and John were likely disciples - or written by people who were very close to the actual disciples, that Mark was not a disciple but who followed Jesus at a distance and who probably got some of the ‘inside stories’ from Peter himself (I pointed Isabelle to the mysterious man in Mark who flees out of the Garden of Gethsemane naked and suggested that this might be Mark telling about himself - which led to some giggling), and then that Luke was not a disciple and not a follower of Jesus during Jesus’ life. My girls grew concerned: can we trust Luke?

Luke stands alone among the gospels for a number of reasons. For one, Luke was probably not a Jew but rather a Gentile convert to Jesus. Second, Luke’s is the only gospel that begins by “clearing his throat” to tell us that he has done his own research and “investigated everything” so that he can write an “orderly account” of Jesus for a (now unknown) audience named “Theophilus” (look at Luke 1:1-4, it is pretty fascinating in what it says and doesn’t say). And third, Luke is the only gospel that has a sequel. In our Bibles, Luke and Acts are separated by the book of John and so we often miss the fact that Luke *and* Acts are written by the same person and are meant to be read together. Because we learn in the book of Acts that Luke becomes one of Paul’s missionary traveling companions (see Acts 16:11, suddenly the author is not just describing Paul’s journey, but says, “we set sail...”), the Luke-Acts story is a way of connecting the story of the early

church to the life and teachings of Jesus. In particular, Luke is concerned to show the way that the life and teachings of Jesus necessitate both the *gift of the Holy Spirit* and *mission to the Gentiles*.

This week, we will look at Jesus' teaching in Nazareth in the book of Luke where he identifies himself as the one upon whom the Spirit rests. This passage tells us how Jesus understood his own ministry and it also gives a good introduction or entry-point into understanding the person and work of the Holy Spirit in Scripture.



Some basic questions that will guide this week: (1) How is the Holy Spirit represented in the Old Testament?; (2) What does it mean that, "the Spirit of the Lord" is upon Jesus?; (3) What does this have to do with us?

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A series in the book of Acts 1-5

Daily Shared Practices - Heart



Morning Prayer (Adapted from St. Augustine)

Breathe into me, Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.
Move in me, Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.
Attract my heart, Holy Spirit, that I may love only what is holy.
Strengthen me, Holy Spirit, that I may defend all that is holy.
Live in me, Holy Spirit, that my life may be holy.

Evening Prayer: (Psalm 19, translation by Robert Alter)

Give thanks for the day, and give praise to God

The heavens tell God's glory and His handiwork sky declares.
Day to day breathes utterance and night to night pronounces knowledge.
There is no utterance and there are no words, their voice is never heard.
Through all the earth their voice goes out, to the world's edge, their words.
For the sun He set up a tent in them - and he like a groom from his canopy comes, exalts like a warrior running his course.
From the ends of the heavens his going out and his circuit to their ends and nothing can hide from his heat.

Give thanks for God's leading and direction today

The Lord's teaching is perfect, restoring to life.
The Lord's pact is steadfast, it makes the fool wise.
The Lord's precepts are upright, delighting the heart.
The Lord's command unblemished, giving light to the eyes.

Confess your sins

The Lord's fear is pure, outlasting all time.
The Lord's judgments are truth, all of them just.
More desired than gold, than abundant fine gold and sweeter than honey, quintessence of bees.
Your servant, too, takes care with them. In keeping them - great reward.
Unwitting sings who can grasp? Of unknown actions clear me.
From willful men preserve your servant, let them not rule over me.
Then shall I be blameless and clear of great crime.

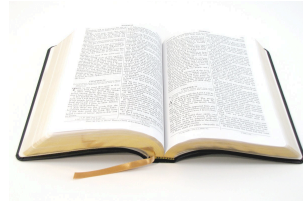
Commit yourself to God

Let my mouth's utterances be pleasing and my heart's stirring before you,
Lord, my rock and redeemer.

Daily Reading - Mind

Thursday

Overview of the Text



Read Luke 4:14-29

1. What stands out to you in this text? What do you think Jesus is claiming?
2. In the Isaiah 61 passage, what does the Spirit of the Lord enable Jesus to do? Can you think of examples in the life of Jesus where he did these things? List a few.
3. Why do you think Jesus is rejected by the crowd?

Friday

The Creator Spirit

Read Genesis 1:1-5; Psalm 104:27-33; Acts 17:24-28

1. In Genesis, the Spirit hovers over chaos and disorder. What does the Creator Spirit do in the midst of chaos and disorder?
2. In Psalm 104 (it would be helpful to scan the rest of the Psalm), the Spirit has a role in the order of the world. What is it that the Spirit does? How is this also an act of creation?

3. Paul refers in Acts to “God in whom we live and move and have our being,” what does this mean? How is this a kind of summary of the previous two passages? Give thanks to God for his *creative* and *sustaining* work.

Saturday

The Renewing Spirit

Read Isaiah 11:1-10; 61:1-7; Ezekiel 37:1-14

1. All three of these passages are about the Spirit resting on a person. They are written while Israel is suffering in exile and feeling abandoned by God. List 4 or 5 consequences of the presence of the Spirit in these verses? What is the hope that is expressed?
2. How are these passages about Jesus? What parts of Jesus' life can you think of that bring about some of the things in these passages?
3. Write a couple sentences about the shape of the Spirit's *renewing work* in the Scriptures.

Monday

Review

Read Luke 4:14-29

1. Given the sermon and our reading from last week, what do you think it means that the Spirit rests upon Jesus? How does the work of the Spirit help explain the renewing and creative work of Jesus?
2. What evidence of the *creator* and *renewing* Spirit is in your life? In the life of our church?

Tuesday

The Creative and Renewing Resurrection Spirit

Read Luke 24:13-24

1. How is the Spirit present in these texts?
2. What is the “power from on high” that Jesus promises? Why do you think this comes after Jesus’ resurrection?
3. Where do you see hints in this passage that the work of the Spirit will send the disciples out into the whole world (that the resurrection sends the church into the world)?

Wednesday

Review

Read Psalm 104

1. Where have you seen the work of the Holy Spirit this week?
2. How is it that Jesus shows us what it looks like to live in the Spirit?

Weekly Shared Practices



Strength

Since the Spirit is a creating and renewing presence, find a way this week to serve in your neighbourhood by picking up trash or making something beautiful. Involve neighbours, friends and your family where you can.

Neighbour

Listen for the prompting of the Holy Spirit this week with regard to hospitality. Who is God asking you to host or get together with?

One Another

Find a way to bless someone who is not in your Mission Group this week.

Sermon Notes

Presence Week 1

Purpose

Presence Week 2

Acts 1:1-11

(Cam) When I was 17, we moved to England. My folks became involved in a “charismatic” expression of faith and my dad had become the pastor at Millmead Baptist Church in Guildford, England. We began to adjust to life in a very different culture.

During that year, I worked in London and engaged in church life. The people were kind and welcoming, but different than in Canada. They were more expectant of God’s work in their lives. I was impressed by their zeal, their passion and their experience of the Spirit. I heard people speaking in tongues, having prophetic words, seeing visions of what God wanted and praying for God to come in power to bring about healing, gifts and transformation. Much of this was new to me.



Some seemed to let such zeal get the better of them. They believed the evidence of the presence of the Spirit of God was the speaking in other tongues. Tongues became a badge of “arrival.” If one had not spoken in tongues then he or she lacked faith. It seemed to me that Jesus promised His Spirit to His followers. The promise had no conditions. This two-tier approach to Christianity disturbed me deeply. I was not as familiar with the role of the Spirit as I wanted to be so I decided to study.

During the next year, I read and studied, talked to others and read some more. I had never spoken in tongues, but I knew that I wanted to be “full of God.” I wrestled within myself and debated with others in an effort to discover both a deeper relationship with Christ and to be empowered by the Spirit to *really* live. I longed for understanding the purpose of the Holy Spirit coming upon the people of God. Was it simply so people could speak in tongues?

When I studied in seminary a number of years later I became aware that I was not the only one wrestling with the purpose of the Holy Spirit. In fact, many students and faculty almost denied the existence of the Holy Spirit. They lived as though the Holy Spirit had only been around shortly after the

days of Jesus. We were now on our own to accomplish the work of Christ. Once again, I wrestled with the presence and the purpose of the Holy Spirit.

The planting of Southside changed this for me. We had no idea what we were doing in those early days, but we knew we needed God to work in and through us. We even articulated the desire to be empowered by the Holy Spirit so that we would be a people where others who did not know Jesus would see Christ in us. Our desire was to be empowered for the purpose of seeing others introduced to Jesus. There was no question that we were on the right track, for this is the purpose of the Holy Spirit. This is why the Spirit empowers His people. It is not just about speaking in tongues or seeing visions, but so that we each may be witnesses to the reality of the presence of God in our lives and in our neighbourhoods to bring about transformation in people and places.

It is our desire this week to reflect upon the present reality of the kingdom of God, the presence of the Spirit of God dwelling in His people so as they will bear witness to the reality of God at work to redeem all things. Have you been baptized with the Holy Spirit?



Daily Shared Practices - Heart

Morning Prayer

Begin the day speaking to God about His purpose.



Father. It has been your purpose since creation to draw all people to yourself. You are a seeking and sending God that all may come to know you.

Jesus. We worship you – the “sent one.” Becoming like us you came to teach us to live, then to die and be raised to life offering us the reality of a new Kingdom.

Spirit. You have been sent by the Father and the Son, to empower us for the purpose of becoming sent ones, that all may be redeemed.

God. Help us to see you in all we do today and to listen for your voice of instruction.

Walk through your day in your mind, asking God to empower you by His Presence.

Evening Prayer:

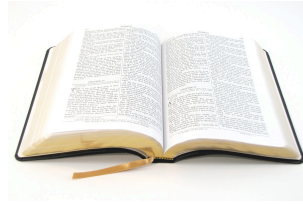
Where did you see God throughout the day? When did you hear Him speak?

Father, Son, Spirit. We bless you for your presence today and for the places where we have seen you and the times we have heard you. Give us rest tonight that we may begin tomorrow with a desire to experience you even more deeply.

Daily Reading - Mind

Thursday

Preview



Read Acts 1:1-11

1. In the first several verses, we see a number of facts that help set the scene for the rest of the Book of Acts. What facts are revealed?
2. In verse 3, Jesus “acts.” What does He do? Make a list of His actions.
3. Skim through the Gospel of Luke, paying attention to whenever Luke references the Kingdom of God. What do you hear God saying to you? Risk it. Write it down. Keep it for another day.

Friday

Discovery

Read Acts 1:1-11

1. There is much to discover in these 11 verses. As you read through the text the first time, make note of those “facts” that are drawn to your attention.
2. Read the text again and make note of the instructions the disciples are given.
3. Now read it for a third time making note this time of what implications there are for us or what God might be saying to you.

Saturday

Practice

Read Acts 1:1-11

1. As you prepare to gather with God’s people on Sunday, reflect on what it means for us to be witnesses. Witnesses of whom? How? Think of a time when you have been a witness to something.
2. Where have you seen Jesus this week?

Monday

Review

Read: Acts 1:1-11

1. What did you hear God saying to you through the gathering yesterday?
2. What did you learn from the sermon about:
 - The Kingdom
 - Baptism of the Spirit
 - The Power of the Spirit
 - Witnesses of the King and Kingdom
3. What do you need to do as a result of what you learned?
4. Go for a walk through your neighbourhood today. Where do you see evidence of a clash of the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of God?

Tuesday

HIStory

Read Genesis 18:1-15, Isaiah 6:1-6, John 1:6-14, Revelation 4 and 5

1. Read through the verses above and make note of these examples of people seeing Christ throughout the pages of the scripture. Can you think of other scriptures like these?
2. Recall some of the times in your life when you had an encounter with Jesus. List some of the key spiritual moments in your life. Practice telling these stories to one or two people you know today.

Wednesday

Review

Read Acts 2:1-11

1. What is God saying to us as a church? What do you recommend that we do based upon our time in this text?
2. Have you been baptized with the Holy Spirit? Be prepared to share your understanding and experience with your group.
3. What does it mean to be a witness? Witnesses? How might we put this into practice in the weeks ahead?

Weekly Shared Practices



Strength

Make plans to celebrate the Sabbath by hosting a party for Southsiders and neighbours on Saturday night to celebrate God at work during the week. Make sure to have some come who cannot return the favour.

Neighbour

How have you seen God at work in your neighbour (or non-Christian friend) in the last week? What is God saying to you about your involvement in His work in their lives for the next week?

One Another

How will you bless another Southsider this week?

Sermon Notes

Presence Week 2

Pentecost

Presence Week 3

Acts 2:1-13

(Scott) We have spent the last two weeks exploring the activity and promise of the Holy Spirit. We might say that the Spirit is the power of God at work in the world. It is the “breath” or *ruah* of God that brings order out of chaos in Genesis and which sustains the whole of creation in Psalm 104. The Spirit is the power of God that creates and sustains us, this God “in whom we live and move and have our being.”

We have also noted the way in which the Spirit is God’s *renewing* presence in creation as well. When God created humanity, he *breathed* life into Adam and Eve (see Genesis 2) and they walked in the garden with him. There is a link between the Holy Spirit and dwelling in the presence of God. Because we sin and are in sin, we avoid the presence of God and reject the gift of the Holy Spirit. So the prophets anticipate a day when God’s Spirit will again rest upon humanity and that this renewed humanity would renew all the earth.



This promise of the Holy Spirit comes to a focus in Jesus. He is this promised one upon whom the Spirit comes in power. Jesus heals the blind, binds up the brokenhearted and gives us liberation from sin and fear. In Jesus we see the power of the Holy Spirit to create and renew the world. Then Jesus tells his disciples that it is time for him to ascend to heaven. Surely, this must have been confusing. Right before Jesus departs, he adds or clarifies the promise of Scripture in relationship to the Holy Spirit. He instructs the disciples to stay in Jerusalem and to wait, for they will receive power and will then go out into all the world to proclaim the Kingdom of God. Jesus will *ascend* to heaven and then *send* the Holy Spirit to his disciples.

Pentecost - fifty days after Easter Sunday - marks the fulfillment of the promised Holy Spirit. The Spirit of Jesus comes upon the disciples in a sudden and surprising moment as a *wind* and they begin to testify to the resurrection in the tongues of the nations. The diversity we saw on Burnaby Mountain begins here.

Daily Shared Practices - Heart



Morning Prayer (Adapted from St. Augustine)

Breathe into me, Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy.
Move in me, Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy.
Attract my heart, Holy Spirit, that I may love only what is holy.
Strengthen me, Holy Spirit, that I may defend all that is holy.
Live in me, Holy Spirit, that my life may be holy.

Evening Prayer (Psalm 19, translation by Robert Alter)

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The heavens tell God's glory and His handiwork sky declares.
Day to day breathes utterance and night to night pronounces knowledge.
There is no utterance and there are no words, their voice is never heard.
Through all the earth their voice goes out, to the world's edge, their words.
For the sun He set up a tent in them - and he like a groom from his canopy comes, exalts like a warrior running his course.
From the ends of the heavens his going out and his circuit to their ends, and nothing can hide from his heat.

Give thanks for God's leading and direction today
The Lord's teaching is perfect, restoring to life.
The Lord's pact is steadfast, it makes the fool wise.
The Lord's precepts are upright, delighting the heart.
The Lord's command unblemished, giving light to the eyes.

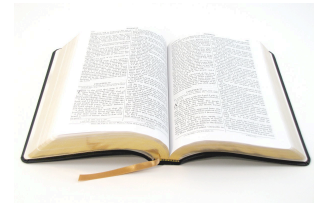
Confess your sins
The Lord's fear is pure, outlasting all time.
The Lord's judgments are truth, all of them just.
More desired than gold, than abundant fine gold,
and sweeter than honey, quintessence of bees.
Your servant, too, takes care with them.
In keeping them - great reward.
Unwitting sings who can grasp? Of unknown actions clear me.
From willful men preserve your servant, let them not rule over me.
Then shall I be blameless and clear of great crime.

Commit yourself to God
Let my mouth's utterances be pleasing and my heart's stirring before you,
Lord, my rock and redeemer.

Daily Reading - Mind

Thursday

Spirit in Community



Read Acts 2:1-13; Ezekiel 39:25-29

1. What stands out to you in this text? What questions emerge?
2. The Spirit came when the disciples were all together in one place. The Spirit is the Spirit of community, it creates a *people*. Read the promise given to a scattered and Exiled people in Ezekiel 39. In what ways is this a promise for *community* and *gathering*?
3. When have you encountered the *gathering* and community-creating work of the Spirit?

Friday

Spirit of Surprise

Read Acts 2:1-13; Luke 2:25-35, 4:1-2; John 3:5-8;

1. The Spirit is said to have come "like a violent wind." What do you think that means?
2. Read Luke 2 and 4 and John 3. What picture of the Spirit do you see there? How might these verses clarify what Acts 2 means by "violent wind"?
3. The power of the Spirit is not something we own or control. It comes from outside us, beyond us and we receive it as a gift. It also might surprise us. How has the Spirit surprised you?

Saturday

Spirit in Exile

Read Acts 2:1-13; Jeremiah 29: 4-7; Isaiah 11:1-12

1. Luke is careful to describe *where* these people are coming from that the disciples talk to. Google some of the names and see where they show up on the map. How far away are people coming from? What do you think the significance of this is?
2. Jeremiah 29 is written to those that are about to go into exile. This is the beginning of the Jewish *diaspora* (scattering). What instructions does God give here? How might this explain the regions named by Luke in Acts 2?
3. The Jews had hoped to be brought back together. What is the promise made at the end of the Isaiah passage? In what ways does the pouring out of the Spirit here among the *diaspora* fulfill this hope? How does it not?

Monday

Spirit in Mission

Read Acts 2:1-13; Isaiah 49: 5-6

1. The Old Testament hope for God's people is not just that those scattered would be brought back together, but that God's salvation would include the whole world. What do you think "light to the gentiles" means in Isaiah?
2. How is the pouring out of the Spirit good news for the world?

Tuesday

Spirit in Mission

Read Luke 2:25-35; Acts 13:42-48; Acts 26:19-23; Acts 28:28

1. Trace the "light for the gentiles" phrase from Isaiah 49 in all of these texts. Who is the light to the gentiles in each of these texts?
2. What do you think the significance of the shift from the servant (Is. 49) to Jesus (Luke 2) and then to Paul is? Can we now make the shift to *us*? Are we also a "light to the nations"? How?
3. Based on what we have learned about the Holy Spirit, how is being a light to the nations just part of the work of the Spirit?

Weekly Shared Practices

One Another

The Spirit came upon the disciples when "they were all together in one place." The Scriptures encourage us to "not forsake meeting together." Something happens when we meet together! In our "one another" practice, we commit to both gathering and blessing one another. How well do you prepare for our gatherings? What is your attitude as you come?

Strength

The Spirit enables the disciples to do something they were previously unable to do. Even though this was done in the power of the Spirit, they still had to risk standing up and speaking. When have you had an experience of the power of the Spirit? What did you risk? What risk is the Spirit inviting you into this week?

Neighbour

Host a neighbour this week.



Sermon Notes

Presence Week 3

The People of the Spirit

Presence Week 4

Acts 2:14-41

(Cam) What brings you joy? Deep and abiding joy that moves from laughter to tears to a profound cry of the soul that says, “It is well.”

Perhaps it is easier to start with, “What causes frustration?” Or, “What steals your joy?” When I was 19, I was on a soccer tour in the Philippines and a missionary to that country helped to organize our soccer tour. His encouragement to me on a daily basis was: “Never let the devil steal your joy away.”

In my travels and work with many churches at present, there is something that causes me a certain level of frustration or attempts to steal my joy. It is the fact that so many churches see or describe church as that which happens on a Sunday morning. I hear it in the things they say and see it in the values they espouse. It is in comments such “going to church,” or in the time and energy they put in attracting people to attend their “service.”



It is discouraging to me at times. I must admit that my joy feels like it is draining away as I meet person after person after person who tells me how frustrated they are with their “church.” By this they often mean their Sunday morning service. They tell me that they wish they could scrap “going to church,” and just hang out with friends and neighbours in that place. I meet people that tell me that the only form of evangelism we need is to make sure that others hear “the gospel.” By this they mean that people need to verbally hear a static set of beliefs in order to give their intellectual assent. By doing so, they will be ensured a place in heaven.

This form of evangelism and understanding of “the church” is short-sighted. It is not consistent with the story in Acts 2.

I am amazed at the boldness of Peter to stand before the crowd and to say the things he does. He was always someone who opened his mouth and spoke, but there is clearly something different in this event. His words are measured, strong and persuasive. First, he declares a present reality. This is the way things are – not just how they seem. Second, he reinterprets history – their story – through the lens of Jesus. The Old Testament had always been pointing to a Messiah and therefore it is not a law, but rather a story of God at work. Third, he declares definitively that Jesus is who they had been waiting for. Last, he is clear in how they should act. Clear, concise and brilliant in the light of their history. Not just a set of beliefs, but a deeper understanding of God at work in their midst.



This deeper understanding of God reveals a number of things that bring joy. God has always been about forming a people – a community of His people who join Him on mission. Jesus came to not only pay the penalty of sin, but to teach His people about how to live in this reality of God with His people. It also reveals that joining this people or community is not dependent upon intellectual assent to a certain set of beliefs, but rather to the recognition that God invites us to become a part of His story by surrendering (repent and be baptized) and engaging in God's transforming work and purpose (you will receive the Holy Spirit) which He makes possible through the gift of the Spirit.

That is joy. Coming to see the story of God and our inclusion in it through the gift of His Son Jesus. Restored relationship with God and with His people.

Joy abounds when we experience the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in His people for the transformation of people in particular places.

Daily Shared Practices - Heart



Morning Prayer

Begin the day thanking God for being a part of His people.

Recall one time in which you have experienced God's presence by part of His people. Thank God for this moment in time when you saw God at work. Pray expectantly through your day believing that God wants to speak to you and to invite you to join him at work.

Evening Prayer

Where have you seen God throughout the day? When have you heard Him speak?

Use David's prayer to close the day.

"I saw the Lord always before me.
Because he is at my right hand,
I will not be shaken.
Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will rest in hope,
because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,
you will not let your holy one see decay.
You have made known to me the paths of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence."

Give thanks to the Lord. His love endures forever.

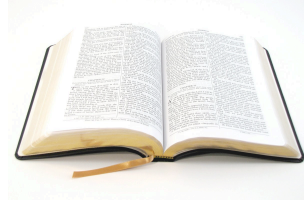
Daily Reading - Mind

Thursday

Preview

Read Psalm 136

1. After reading Psalm 136, jot down several of the lines in the Psalm that catch your attention about the way in which God has worked among His people. Go to the text that tells you more about that particular story and discover what God was doing.
2. Write a second section of the Psalm which lists up to ten more lines that tell the story of God and His people at Southside. Remember to add, *"His love endures forever."*



Friday

Discovery

Read Acts 2:14-41

1. After reading the text in Acts 2 for the week, jot down a number of places where the text peaked your interest. Why did that catch your attention?
2. What occurrence gives opportunity for Peter to speak to the crowd? Does that remind you of a similar situation in your own life?
3. What is the framework of the speech that Peter gives in this chapter? What tools of persuasion do you notice in the text?
4. Compare this approach of evangelism with some you have heard or learned before. What differences are there?

Saturday

Practice

Read Acts 2:14-41

1. As you prepare for our gathering time tomorrow, spend a few minutes walking the neighbourhood and thanking God for the other churches that are a part of God's mission in that place.
2. How might we as a church bless them?
3. Think through whether you might pray for the church in our gathering tomorrow.

Monday

Review

Read Acts 2:14-41, Joel 2:28-32, Psalm 16:8-11

1. What did God say to you yesterday in the gathering? In the sermon?
- 2.
2. What have you learned so far through your reading and study this week?
3. After reading the passage in Joel, would you say that you have experienced this reality in your life/our life as a church? If no, why not?
4. After reading Psalm 16:8-11, how have David's words been your experience?

Tuesday

Boldness

Read Acts 2:29-36

1. There are occasions when we need to speak with boldness and clarity. How does Peter do this in today's passage?
2. Read Acts 4:8-14. What does Peter say in this text? To whom? By what authority or power? Could you speak like this?

3. What is Peter actually saying to the Jews in Acts 2:36? Play this out to understand the full extent of his words. How bold is this?
4. When was the last time you needed to speak boldly about your faith? How did you do? How could your group encourage you in this area?

Wednesday

Action

Read Acts 2:38-41

1. There were several instructions in the text in these verses. List the specific things Peter encouraged the people to take action on.
2. Which of Peter's instructions have you followed through on? Which are not part of your experience? What do you need to follow up on?
3. What is the promise of the passage? Have you experienced this promise?
4. What results happened among the people? How did this happen? Is this our experience at Southside? If no, why not?

Weekly Shared Practices



Strength

Loving God with all of our strength has everything to do with trusting God to provide for our needs, and recognizing that all we have is his.

In light of that statement, are you trusting God with the money he has entrusted you with? When was the last time you discussed at length your financial situation with the Lord, and perhaps another follower of Jesus for the sake of ensuring a deep trust in God.

Neighbour

We need to learn to articulate what it means to be a Christian. Find a quiet time this week to sit with a warm beverage and write out (point form is okay) what a Christian is in light of the text this week. How would you describe being a Christian to a friend who asks? Be prepared to share this with your group this week.

One Another

“A new command I give you: Love one another. By this all men will know you are my disciples.”

How have you witnessed to the reality of the risen Jesus through loving people in your Mission Group this week? Bless another.

Sermon Notes

Presence Week 4