



▶ DAILY DEVOTIONAL.

Saturday/Sunday, 6/16-17/18

HOLY SPIRIT -- “Words for New People”

Acts 10:34-48 New International Version (NIV)

Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached — how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

“We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen — by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.

Then Peter said, “Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

Family Activity: This week we are talking about inviting and welcoming new people in our faith community. As a family go somewhere new this week (park, pool, restaurant, etc.). What was your experience being new?

Discuss:

- What does it mean to be welcoming or hospitable to someone who is new?
- How can we be ready for new people in our faith community?
- Where do we go where we meet new people?
- Who could we invite?

Monday, 6/18/18
“The Spirit of Truth”
John 14:16 (NIV)

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever — the Spirit of truth.

The focus of this sermon series is on hearing an old story (the gospel) with new ears. This may mean we hear an old story and apply it to our lives in a new way. It also raises the question, *What do we do with the old story when our lives are hit with a tragedy.*

Sunday, June 10 was a tragic day for our community when a family connected with our church became victims of murder and suicide: Sharmalee Pauling and her husband Carl DeRuyscher, Maggie Girard and Doug Pauling. Maggie’s daughter, Bella, survived. What are we to do with such news?

You may have felt a sense of shock, as though you were losing your balance. Tears may have run down your face. You may have forgotten to eat, to stop at the store, or to put away the milk. These are normal reactions, and some of the first signs of grief, of experiencing a loss.

In the gospel according to John, Jesus promises that after his death and resurrection he will send the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth. This means God is always present, even in death and tragedy. It does not mean the Spirit of truth comes with answers.

- What is the truth the Holy Spirit brings?
- How do you experience the Holy Spirit in the midst of tragedy?

Prayer: O God, who gave us birth, you are more ready to hear than we are to pray. When we are at a loss for words, we trust you know our needs before we ask. Give to us now your grace, that as we shrink before the mystery of death, we may see the light of eternity. Speak to us once more your message of life and of death. Help us to live as those who are prepared to die. And when our days here are accomplished, enable us to die as those who go forth to live, so that living or dying, our life may be in you, and that nothing in life or in death will be able to separate us from your great love in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen. (UM Hymnal, pg. 869)

Tuesday, 6/19/18
“The Advocate”
Acts 10:44

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message.

Two thoughts come to mind: First, the Holy Spirit has already come, but comes again and all the listeners experience the Spirit. Second, the Holy Spirit comes while people are listening to Peter speak about Jesus.

In the gospel according to John, Jesus promises that after his death and resurrection he will send the Holy Spirit. In the Greek, advocate means to encourage and comfort; literally to walk alongside as in a courtroom. As Peter is preaching, the Spirit comes to him and those listening. The Holy Spirit is experienced in community. The Holy Spirit is experienced when we participate in worship, connect with other people, and engage in Christian community.

Dr. Alan Wolfelt has a model for caregiving called “companioning” (more about that later). He has 11 tenets of companioning the bereaved. Here are three of them. (Please let me know if you want all 11, and I will get them to you.)

- 1: Companioning is about being present to another person’s pain; it is not taking away the pain.
- 2: Companioning is about listening with the heart; it is not about analyzing with the head.
- 3: Companioning is about walking alongside; it is not about leading.

When we companion someone who is hurting, we are instruments of encouragement and comfort. We are advocates. We are vessels for the Holy Spirit, the Advocate of God’s presence.

- How has someone companioned you in a tough time? Take a moment, and give thanks to God.
- How might you reach out and companion someone?

Prayer: Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask you to stay close by me forever, and love me, I pray; bless all the dear children in thy tender care, and fit us for heaven to live with you there. (UM Hymnal, no. 217, verse 3)

Wednesday, 6/20/18

Re-read Acts 10:34-48 above, perhaps in a different version

The main point of this sermon series is: “The Holy Spirit empowers the missionary work of the Gospel to new people and effects new hearings of the story.” The goal is to reintroduce us to the Holy Spirit to introduce new people to the good news of God’s unconditional, merciful and forgiving love.

Just like in early Christian times, there are people who we may decide are separated from God’s love. We may label them by race, gender, social status or behavior.

As we recall the recent shootings in our community, we wonder how anyone could shoot and kill members of their own family. It isn’t too difficult to label the shooter or make excuses for him. When we look into our hearts, we will discover those labels come from us, not the shooter. Everyone has a story; most of us don’t know the depth of each other’s stories.

The scripture today challenges us to reorient and turn our thoughts and feelings toward the Holy Spirit. This will change us. This will move us toward impartiality toward all people. When we turn toward the Spirit, we gain a new perspective toward all God’s children.

Recently, one of Trump’s advisors stated “there’s a special place in hell” for ... I believe the Holy Spirit can move us toward a new way of thinking – perhaps “there’s a special place in heaven for those who are hurt, broken and suffering.

- Pray for yourself and the one(s) you need to see with eyes of the Holy Spirit.
- Pray that you may make God’s love story your story – a story to be shared.

Thursday, 6/21/18

“Companioning”

Acts 10:41

He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen — by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

Eating and drinking together is a common theme in the Bible. For Christians, sharing in Holy Communion is a way of gathering together to share in a common meal where Christ is present with us.

Wolfelt puts it this way: ... *the word “companion,” when broken down into its original Latin roots, means “messmate”: com for “with” and pan for “bread.” Someone you would share a meal with, a friend, an equal.* Wolfelt takes liberties with the noun “companion” and makes it into the verb “companioning” because it so well captures the type of helping relationship he supports and advocates. (Understanding Your Grief, pg. 7)

- Who do you eat and drink with, i.e., who is welcome at your table? Who is left out?

Prayer: As Christ breaks bread and bids us share, each proud division ends. The love that made us makes us one, and strangers now are friends, and strangers now are friends. (UM Hymnal no. 617, vs. 3)

Dear God, send your Holy Spirit to land on us again. Make us to see like the Spirit, hear like the Spirit, and love like the Spirit. Renew us and turn us towards you. It is by your Spirit that we have life. Amen.

Friday, 6/22/18

“The Service of Death and Resurrection”

Acts 10:39-41

They killed him by hanging him on a cross, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen — by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

On June 22 we gathered to celebrate the life of Maggie Girard and to mourn her death. She died tragically, and leaves two daughters, 28 and 14. What does one say to a 28-year-old, a 14-year-old, or anyone who has experienced a loss? Sometimes we don't say anything because we don't know what to say.

Here are some things to say: I am sorry for the loss of (name or relationship). I'll give you a call next week to bring dinner over. I will be thinking of you. I'm here for you. As well-meaning as people are, here are some phrases to avoid: This is God's will. You'll get over this. (You won't.) Time will heal. God must have needed her.

We celebrate Maggie's life, and we mourn her death (crying allowed). We hear words of hope that even in the mystery of death, God is present. My prayer is that through all of us Jesus' love will be seen, so that even those we do not know will experience the power of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit, come.
Re-introduce yourself to me.
Come, Holy Spirit, come.
Fill me with a love
that pours freely
and never runs dry.

Come, Holy Spirit, come.
Let me feel your presence.
Turn me towards strangers
to listen to their stories.
Make room for me at your table
to share your love with new friends.

Come, Holy Spirit, come.
Fill the church
with a new heart,
a new hope,
and a new life,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

***This week's devotional was written by Pastor Nancy Liston
(nliston@plattewoodschurch.org).***