

Scripture: Luke 11:5-13.

Theme: To Receive the Holy Spirit

Text: "... the heavenly father give(s) the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him."

Proposition: God may not satisfy a person's every whim or need, but he never refuses a sincere request for the presence of the Holy Spirit

Dates written: May 14-16, 1959.

Places and dates preached:

Shenandoah, Wyo., 9:30 + 11:00 a.m., May 17, 1959
 Montrose, Colo., Oct. 5, 1962 - Evening Evangelistic
 Boulder & Aurora, Colo., May 29, 1966 - service

May 29

2
Introduction:

1. The 10-year-old daughter of a minister named Hastings was caught sampling a cake which she had been told to leave alone. For punishment she was sent to bed without supper.

Her father was away visiting church members ~~in the country~~, and did not return until late in the evening.

"Momma, I want to see Dadd," said the girl from upstairs as soon as she heard her father come in.

There was no response from below.

"Please let Daddy bring me a drink of water."

When that failed a small girl in a white nightie stood at the head of the stairs and said with dignity: "Mrs. Hastings, I am a very sick woman, and I must see the minister at once."

That brought Daddy up the stairs.
(from The Public Speakers Treasure Chest,
Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1948, #216).

2. A parable of the message of today's Scripture is in this incident. The Scripture tells of a persistent person who is seeking help from a friend in feeding an unexpected guest. The unusual part of the attempt to borrow is that it is at midnight. Naturally, the one on whom is being put "the touch" does not want to get up, but because of the importunity or persistence, he gets up and helps supply that needed to feed the late-arriving and unexpected guests.

From this point onward this Scriptures message is in both Matthew and Luke, but the two accounts end up a bit differently in their wording. Both use wording like this: "Ask, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." Minor parables are recorded in both, of a father who will not give a serpent or a

scorpion to his child who asks for a fish or an egg. These are summarized by words beginning, "If you, then, who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children." Then ~~the~~ sentence ends in different wording in Matthew and Luke. Matthew says "how much more will the heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him?" Luke evidently could not quite accept "good things" as that which God gives just for asking, but he knew of one very important gift from God free just for the asking, so he says, "how much more will the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him."

3. Luke's wording is especially worth noting today, the traditional day of Pentecost. Pentecost was ~~the~~ day following the disappearance or ascension of Christ, when the disciples were gathered in an Upper Room for prayer, wondering what to do, now that Christ was not with them. As told in Acts, suddenly the Holy Spirit was with them, and from that time they were able effectively to preach and to win people to the Christian way.

4. Ever since Pentecost the Holy Spirit has been considered the most important single aspect of being a Christian. In Methodist theology we have declared this Spirit the mark of a Christian.

5. That we might understand this idea of the Holy Spirit better, and might know that it is indeed ours for the asking, is our purpose today. To begin our answering of the query, "What is the Holy Spirit," we turn to

I. Some Old Testament ideas about the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament the words in both Hebrew and Greek which we translate into "spirit" originally meant "breath." In the act of breathing, probably, all primitive peoples have found the seat of life. When

4.
death comes, it is breathing which first seems to stop, and in the last breath the soul departs from the body. Therefore most languages have used the same word, both for the breath or the wind, and for the mysterious self or seat of life. The Hebrews, from whom come our Old Testament, applied this term, breath or spirit, to God Himself, and thus gave it a place of supreme importance in religion.

1. Thus, they taught of Jehovah as ruling over the powers of the natural world, over wind, fire, rain, sun, health, etc..

2. Much more numerous are sayings which describe man's life as due to the power of the Spirit of Jehovah. In this view, the life of man is more than a mere side-effect of the Spirit of God. Man's life is the Spirit in a special form and manifestation. The individual life was thus pictured as a work of the Spirit of God which, when life ceased, returned, not as a human soul, but as the product or creation of the Spirit of God to Him who gave it.

3. A further step is taken in the Old Testament ideas, where the Spirit is associated with special feats of strength, valor, or skill done by man in the service of God. Thus the Spirit helped win a battle, helped Samson be a strong man, and so on. As long as the heroes obeyed and served God it was indicated in a few places that the Spirit was with them.

4. This idea of the Spirit working directly in men attains ~~xxx~~ a new and most characteristic form when it is connected with the work of the prophets. Other religions had their prophets too, but prophecy in Israel possesses features which, according to Old Testament writers, can be accounted for only by the selective will and purpose of God. No other people attributed their prophetic actions to the Spirit of God. This was peculiar to

5. Israel, and was one of the vital elements in the development of their whole view of God, and his relation to men. At first this feature of God working through prophets was in crude beginnings. Prophecy appeared in connection with abnormal excitation, and states of frenzy and ecstasy were taken as proofs of the Spirit's presence and power. At times it was said that Jehovah even sent a "lying spirit," (I Kings 22:21f). But gradually this view gave way to a higher one, according to which the Spirit of Jehovah possessed the mind and heart of men, who were not the subjects of physical convulsions, but who were in living communion with God. This was accompanied by the growth of the conception that the Holy Spirit controlled the history of Israel as a whole, and above all was guiding it toward the Messianic age, the age of the Saviour, in which the Spirit would come upon all God's people.

5. There are also passages in the Old Testament which view the Holy Spirit as connected with the inner experience of the individual, but these are rare and brought to more perfect expression in the New Testament.

Throughout the Old Testament we do not find any attempt to define the words "Holy Spirit," or "Spirit of Jehovah." The Spirit is God at work on earth, seems to be the idea. There is no attempt to recognize distinctions in the nature of God. This came later, in

II. The New Testament ideas of the Holy Spirit.
When we enter the New Testament we find the doctrine of the Spirit marvellously enriched, the main idea involved being still that of power. The New Testament is filled with the fact that the Messianic age has arrived, the Saviour has come, the Christ is here, and the ancient promise that the Holy Spirit would be poured out on "all flesh" is now made good.

1. This new age was heralded by the revival of prophesy by John the Baptist, though he did not claim the Holy Spirit for himself.

2. The Messiah Himself, Jesus of Nazareth, stood in relations to the Spirit of God which were all His own.

a. In the Apostolic times explanations of His self and nature arose, some tracing Christ's work to the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit.

b. All 4 of the Gospels tell of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him at His baptism.

c. Jesus asserted that the hope for a Messiah, foretold by Hebrew prophets, was fulfilled in His person. The Gospels lead us to believe that He was indeed Spirit-filled.

3. In the Gospel of John our Lord is represented with his disciples at their last gathering as speaking at great length regarding the Spirit. These discourses glow with references to the coming of the Spirit as the supreme gift of God and the supreme experiences of man.

a. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, the comforter, without whom even the person and the work of Christ in their hearts would not be complete.

b. The Spirit will open up to them the truth in its fulness as Jesus taught it and as it concerned their destiny.

c. There will be no additional, new revelation beyond Jesus, but the Spirit will unfold to their hearts and minds the whole meaning and power of Jesus Himself.

d. This Holy Spirit is sent by the Father in Christ's name; He is also sent by Christ.

4. Judging by the relatively slight number of Jesus' references to the Holy Spirit, we ~~would~~ be quite unprepared for the great importance in the rest of the New Testament given to the presence and power of the Spirit.

a. In Acts we find events which remind us of the Old Testament. The entrance upon the new age is marked by excitements which affect even the physical life. Unusual things occur frequently to Jews, Samaritans, and

7
Gentiles which are attributed to the Holy Spirit. Among the more striking things were the strange gift of tongues, the working of miracles, and prophecy.

b. **In** Paul's letters we find abundant references to the Holy Spirit. According to Paul, the inner power of the Spirit is found in becoming conscious of sonship toward God, through understanding and accepting God's love and mercy. This Spirit is the means of our approach to God; the enlightener of our minds; the source of our power as individual Christians and as preachers; the seal of our acceptance with God; the evidence of our immortal life; the stimulator of acts of worship; the bond of Christian Communion; and the life of the Church. The Church is founded, according to Paul, on the confession of Jesus as the Messiah. This belief and confession of it is due to the Holy Spirit; the one who confesses passes under "the law of the Spirit of life," his whole ethical and religious life flows from this Spirit, and his possession of the Spirit means the possession of all the finest virtues and joys. Paul's teachings on the effect of the Spirit in human life marks an epoch-making change of emphasis from evidence of the Spirit as being abnormal expressions to the sign of the Spirit being Christian character; from it being occasional and intermittent to the presence of the Spirit as permanent and ethical.

In the New Testament the Holy Spirit is constantly connected with the person and work of Christ. The Spirit without the historical Christ has no grip on intelligent faith. The Spirit is "of Christ," as well as "of God," **for** in Him was the Spirit of holiness, and it was even said, "the Lord is the Spirit." The Gospels and Paul's writings alike teach that the Holy Spirit is both distinguished from and identified with both Christ and God. No theological explanation is attempted.

60 (Bulk of the material of Points I & II above came from pages 358-359, Funk and Wagnalls New Standard Bible Dictionary, 3rd Revised edition, 1936. Some rewording and idea-shifting of my own is included, however).

III. The Holy Spirit is available for all who want it and will receive it.

1. Our Scripture is the only proof-text or reference we refer to here. A detailed reading of the New Testament will bear out this statement further, however.

2. This truth, that the Holy Spirit is given to all who ask for it with sincerity, can be borne out in illustrations galore from daily life. With the inner assurance of the Spirit, people have resisted life's biggest temptations. With the inner assurance they have been guided in the use of their wealth in the service of their fellow men. With this assurance people have died rather than renounce their faith. With the Spirit they can forgive those who misuse, mistreat and falsely accuse them. With the Spirit they can keep smiling when passing through the worst life has to offer them. With the Spirit you can remain humble in times which tend to arouse undue pride.

Conclusion:

L. Clarence Macartney, late Presbyterian minister of outstanding fame, told of a trip on a river ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ in a very small boat. One night as he and his companion on the journey floated along they looked unsuccessfully for a house where they could spend the night, or a place along the steep bank where they could pitch a tent. At last, wet and cold and exhausted, they drew their boat up on a sand bar. There, groping in the darkness, they gathered together a few pieces of driftwood, and, after several ineffectual attempts, succeeded in lighting a fire. How carefully

9
they tended that fire, brooding over it until they were certain it was going to burn; and when at length it began to burn briskly and brightly, illuminating their dismal surroundings and warming their cold and wery bodies, they realized as never before what a friend fire is to man. (Macartney's Illustrations, Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1945, p.167.)

2. The greatest friend man can know is the Holy Spirit, warming, illuminating and guiding the inner, real person, all the way. God may not satisfy a person's every whim or need, but he never refuses a sincere request for the presence of the Holy Spirit. As our text, Luke 11:13, says, "...the~~x~~ heavenly father give(s) the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him." These are words of Jesus.

Ask for ~~it~~, with humil~~ity~~ty and faith, grasp it with eagerness and keep it with determined obedience to its dictates.

