

You Have the Spirit

It was a Friday night football game and arch rivals the Anoka Tornadoes (where I went to school) were playing the Coon Rapids Cardinals (where my dad taught school). The Coon Rapids cheerleaders and fans went first. They said, "We have the spirit, yes, we do. We have the spirit, how about you?"

Of course, the Anoka cheerleaders and fans returned the chant, "We have the spirit, yes, we do. We have the spirit, how about you?" The chant went back and forth a number of times until both sides started chanting, as loud as they could, "We have more! We have more! We have more!"

What both sides meant, of course, was that our school has more school spirit than your school. Two side notes: First, I don't remember who won the game that particular night. And second, even though my dad and I were rooting for opposite teams, we actually got along very well! Right dad?

Now, on a more serious note let me say, this fun competition among high school rivals at a football game has no place in the church. What I mean is this: While it is ok for opposing schools to argue about who has more school spirit, I do not believe it is ok for Christian people to argue about whom has the Holy Spirit.

Today on the Day of Pentecost, the day where Christian churches celebrate that God, that the Lord Jesus Christ, have given us the Holy Spirit, I would like to speak with you about God's Holy Spirit, and about how God's Holy Spirit is involved with and connected to you and your life.

Before I begin, however, let me give you several introductory thoughts. These three thoughts are not my sermon today, but they are things you may want to write down, remember, and reflect on later. They are also important to say before I begin with my main thoughts.

1. The Holy Spirit is the holy and awesome presence of God in the world. It comes into the world live with and in people, to guide our lives, and to give us gifts. The question is, do we recognize the Spirit is with us?
2. No one Christian person or one Christian denomination can claim special access to the Holy Spirit, because no person or denomination possesses the Holy Spirit. As a matter of fact, the Holy Spirit that possesses us.
3. The Holy Spirit comes to people in different ways. Sometimes it comes loudly with people speaking in tongues, and sometimes it comes quietly to a little baby who is baptized with three handfuls of water in a church.

Now the rest of the sermon.

First, you have the Spirit. Yes, it is true. You have the Holy Spirit with and in you. If you can hear me now listen to the Scripture:

Jesus says this about the Holy Spirit in John 14:17, "You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you."

And the Apostle Paul says this about the Holy Spirit in I Corinthians 6:19, "Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God?"

In other words, you have the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God lives with and in you! The disciples learned this in John 20:22, when Jesus breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit". It was at that point the disciples had the very presence of God and the very life of Jesus in them. Wow, what a day!

So think about the breath you have in you now. Breathe in and out and think from where that breath comes. Every one of your breaths come from God. Now take a deeper, longer breath, and hear Jesus say to you, today, "Receive the Holy Spirit". Go ahead, breathe, and receive the Holy Spirit.

You can do this today. You can do it any day. Indeed, you can do it, and you should do it every day. Jesus says in John 3:8 that the Spirit comes and goes where it chooses, and I proclaim that the Spirit chooses to come and go with you. Yes, you have the Spirit, God's Holy Spirit with and in you.

I remember when I was as young as 5, 6, 7 years old, the tug of the Holy Spirit. I did not know what it was. I would sit in church and feel noticed by someone and something that I could not see or put my finger on at the time. I would get goose bumps because I felt kind of holy and special, but I didn't know why.

You may not have had this exact same experience in your life, but I call on you to recognize the Holy Spirit in your life too. The Spirit notices you also. Like, me, you may not be able to put your finger on it, but believe it anyway. You too are holy and special, not just by yourself, but because the Holy Spirit is with you.

The Church speaks about the Holy Spirit coming to us in Holy Baptism. Indeed, baptism is one of the first places we encounter and receive the Holy Spirit. For the baptized, they have received the Holy Spirit. But baptism is not the only time or the only way we receive the Holy Spirit. But it is one way.

You have the Holy Spirit! Wow, what a day this is for you!

Second, the Spirit comes to guide your life, to guide your life.

Jesus says this about the Spirit in John 16:13, "When the Spirit comes, he will guide you into all the truth."

So the Holy Spirit does not come just to sit around in your life. The Spirit comes to guide your life. The disciples in John 20:19 were sitting scared in locked room after the death of Jesus. They did not know he was alive yet, so they felt they were without a leader. They felt that they had lost their guide in life.

Then Jesus appeared in the room without using the door. Amazingly and miraculously, Jesus showed up among them and said, "Peace be with you," and he said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." Jesus gave them "peace" and the "Spirit" when they were scared and without a guide. Now he was there guide their life.

The Holy Spirit will work the same in your life. Jesus has sent you the Spirit, you have the Spirit. This Holy Spirit of God will show up in your life the way Jesus showed up in that locked room with those disciples. Amazing and miraculously the Spirit will show up, give you God's peace, and guide your life.

Maybe you are sitting here right now wondering about your future. What will college, or the tech, or my job be like? What if I don't even know if I want to go to college or what job I want to do? What if there are all kinds of decisions in my life, my job, my family that I have to make?

These are scary questions. There are other scary questions too. What if my friends want me to do things I know I should not do? What if I am addicted to something that I know is bad for me? What if I have committed some bad sin and have a hard time admitting it to myself, God, or any other person?

Whatever decision you have to make, whatever troubles you and scares you today or about your future, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you. That's what the Holy Spirit does. He is your guide and will take you by the hand and lead you to what is good and what is truthful in this life, and in your life.

When Jesus came to the scared disciples, he gave them his peace and he gave them the Holy Spirit, "Receive the Holy Spirit," he said, and then the Spirit came to them and led them out of that locked room back into life again. And in that life the Spirit guided them in their work, ministry, and in everything.

All you need to do is trust the Spirit and ask for him to guide you. He is your guide. Pray to the Spirit now. Pray to the Spirit tomorrow. Pray to the Spirit every single day. Ask the Holy Spirit who lives with and in you, to be your guide through all the scary and wonderful things in your life.

Third, the Spirit has given you gifts for your life. Yes, the Holy Spirit has given you gifts, abilities, talents for your life.

In Acts 2:4, the disciples received the Holy Spirit and they "began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them ability".

In John 20:23, after Jesus had given the disciples the Holy Spirit, he gave them the gift of forgiving and retaining sins. This is the gift of restoring any broken relationships. Now to retain a sin does not mean we are unforgiving people. It means there is a time to forgive, and a time to wait to forgive later.

In I Corinthians 12:7, the Apostle Paul says, "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." In other words, Paul says, we all get gifts from the Holy Spirit for the good of the world.

Yes, my friends in Christ, the Holy Spirit has given you gifts. Some gifts are very wonderful and powerful. I remember the whole world watching a very young Russian girl, Olga Korbut, do amazing things in gymnastics in the Olympics in 1972. Other gifts are quieter and maybe hardly noticed at all by others.

We had a funeral for Ardis Embury here on Thursday. She had a Spirit-given gift to cook for large groups. She was the house mother and cook at the Delta Tau Delta fraternity at UND. 50 plus boys came to her funeral and told us about her gifts for cooking, teaching them about life, and for sharing faith in God.

You may have gifts for sports or music or you may be good at math or talking to people. Or you may not even know yet what your gifts are. When I was a high school senior, I had no idea that the Holy Spirit would lead me and give me gifts to be a pastor and preacher in a congregation.

The point is that whether you know it or not, the Holy Spirit who lives with you and in you comes with gifts. The Spirit gives you abilities and talents to serve God, neighbor, and the world well. Some of these gifts are meant to share faith with people, and some of these gifts are meant to serve the common good.

Look for these gifts in your life. Use them not just to make money in our American economy, but to serve God, to serve the church, to serve people here in Grand Forks, overseas, or wherever you live. You can use your gifts in whatever job or whatever profession the Holy Spirit leads you to in your life.

Yes, my friends in Christ, you have the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is with you and in you, the Spirit guides your life, the Spirit gives you gifts. Now are you ready for my corny ending? Ready or not, here it comes: You have the Spirit, yes, you do. You have the Spirit, how blessed the Lord are you! Amen.