

Being Filled with the Spirit

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning, St. Marks. Well, as we look to opening up over the next month or so, and slowly but surely getting back into what we were used to before lockdown, normal church routine, it is important for us, and this is why we're doing this series of the birth of the church, it's important for us to get back into touch with what God put the church on earth to do and what God wants us to be doing as His church, as His people.

And what we discover as we read through Acts is that central, central to everything we're going to read and look at over the next few weeks is the place of God's Holy Spirit in it all.

So right at the beginning, Acts 1, which we read earlier, Jesus told His disciples, don't even think of doing anything until the Holy Spirit comes.

And that's why this morning, before we embark on the great adventures of the early church over the next few weeks, we're just going to spend this morning thinking about the Holy Spirit and His role in the church and in our own lives and what our response to understanding the Spirit and His place in our lives should be.

Because another thing we learn in Acts as we read on is not only was the presence of the Spirit needed in His church, but people were needed in the church who were filled with the Holy Spirit.

[1 : 2 8] Not just had the Holy Spirit, but were filled with the Holy Spirit. And those are two different things that we need to realize. So in the first deacons that were chosen for the church in Acts chapter 6, we read, Brothers and sisters, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit.

They couldn't just be anyone. And they had to be people who were full of the Spirit. It was vital that they were filled with the Spirit. And as we read on, we realize that the people who made a real difference in the church that God used were people like Stephen and Barnabas, who we're told specifically were full of the Holy Spirit.

But then we read on in the New Testament, and what we discover is that this idea of being filled with the Spirit is not something that is reserved just for missionaries and church planters and church leaders.

It is actually something that all Christians are to want and to pursue in their lives. Not just to have God's Spirit, but to be filled with the Spirit.

Paul says in Ephesians that we are all to be filled with the Spirit. And so we learn a very important truth that I want us to think about this morning. That it is possible to have the Spirit, but not to be filled by the Spirit.

[2 : 4 6] It is possible, and we read in Scripture, that you can be regenerated, you can be saved, you can have received the Holy Spirit, you can be a new person and experience the new birth, and yet you can still live a life that is not filled with the Spirit.

And I think we know that. I think there are many days we can look back in our lives and say, yeah, I wasn't very filled with the Spirit then. There's a difference between having the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit.

One writer puts it like this. He says, Many Christians are like caterpillars, who have undergone an amazing metamorphosis into butterflies, and still haven't realized that they can fly.

They're still crawling around in the dirt, living not very different lives to what they did before they received the Holy Spirit. Well, this morning I want to tell you that we are meant to fly.

We've been made to live Spirit-filled lives, and if we want to be an effective church, anything near the church of the first century that we're going to read about, we need to learn how to fly.

[3 : 51] We need to learn how to be filled with the Holy Spirit. And so this morning I just want to preach by answering three questions from Scripture. Firstly, who is the Holy Spirit?

Maybe that's something that's still unclear in your mind, and we need to understand who the Holy Spirit is if we're going to understand how to be filled with Him. Second question is, what exactly does He do in our lives and in this world?

And the third question is, how can we be filled with Him? So let's look at each of those in turn. So who is the Holy Spirit? What is the Holy Spirit? Well, the Holy Spirit is two things. The Holy Spirit is holy and Spirit.

I know that sounds a bit obvious, but it's important to consider each of those aspects if we're going to understand who the Holy Spirit really is. So firstly, He's holy.

What does that mean? Well, it means that He is God. He is divine. Holiness is an attribute of God Himself. And what we discover in Scripture is that the Holy Spirit is a person of the Trinity.

[4 : 51] He is a person. So He is a He, not an It. He's not just a force floating around. He's an actual person with feelings, with a will, with a personality.

And yet He is distinct from the Father and the Son. And yet He is God. Now, I know this is difficult to understand, this idea of the Trinity. And I don't think we'll ever fully understand it.

I thought I got the Trinity when I was in Bible college until I realized a little bit more about God and I realized I totally didn't get the Trinity anymore. And I really think it's something we can never fully grasp.

And as creatures made by God, to think we can fully grasp the nature of God Himself is a little bit arrogant. It is beyond us. And there's nothing on earth that is quite like the Trinity.

God in one essence and yet three persons with a relationship with each other who is still one God. It boggles the mind. But we don't have to fully understand it in order to believe it.

[5 : 55] And in the Bible it's quite clear that God the Father is God. God the Son is God. And God the Holy Spirit is God. And they have relationships with each other. And they are distinct persons.

And the Holy Spirit is one of them. And so just like Jesus is God in the flesh, on earth, and the Father is God in heaven, ruling and initiating things, so the Holy Spirit is God in people.

Think about that for a second. Because it's quite a shocking thought. God exists not just in heaven and not just 2,000 years ago in Israel, but God exists in people as well.

And that is the Holy Spirit, God in people. And it's a scary thought because it means that God is much closer than we tend to think. So that's the first thing. The Holy Spirit is God in us.

Second thing is the Holy Spirit is spirit. And that's also an important aspect of Him because spirit is something that doesn't take up space or doesn't have weight. It's not corporeal.

- [7 : 03] It's not material. And that's important. So material things are things that we can see and touch and measure. But spirit is something that we can't see and touch and measure.
- And yet it has very real effects in the material world. It's just as real as material things. And that's something I think as materialist Westerners in the culture that we've been brought up in, we forget that there is a spiritual aspect to creation.
- There are things and there are beings that we can't see. And yet they are just as real. And the important thing about spirit, as opposed to matter, is that spirit penetrates matter.
- Spirit can get in matter and do things in matter that other matter can't. So I guess one way of thinking about it is it's like radiation. You know radiation?
- So if you know what happened at Chernobyl or some other nuclear disasters, there was a lot of radiation that had some very disastrous effects on people when they were exposed to it.
- [8 : 12] But radiation wasn't something you could see. Radiation wasn't something that they knew was there unless they had special instruments. But despite not being able to see it, it penetrated into matter and it got down deep and it had very impactful results on the cellular level.
- And in a similar way, spirit is something that penetrates matter deeply and has real effects. The Holy Spirit of God has real effects on the way people think and the way people act and on personalities far beyond what matter can actually do.
- So spirit is penetrative. Spirit has real impacts in the material world. And that then leads us to the next question we've got to answer this morning is what exactly is the Holy Spirit doing then?
- If the Spirit of God is in us and is able to change matter, what is it doing? What is He doing? What is the Holy Spirit of God doing on earth?
- Well, there's a lot of things that the Holy Spirit does that the Bible tells us about. But I guess the essential way to understand the work of the Holy Spirit because we can't cover everything in a single sermon.
- [9 : 32] Maybe in our growth group in the week we can talk a little bit more about the specific work of the Holy Spirit. But to understand what He does at its very foundation is that He does what He's always been doing.
- He does what He did in Genesis in creation and He's still doing that. What did He do in Genesis? We saw in that video earlier. He hovered over the darkness and the chaos of the pre-created world and He brought life and order into dead and disordered matter.
- He penetrated matter to make it alive. If we read about the first human made Adam what we read is that God turned him from this lump of lifeless flesh into a living being by breathing His Spirit into him.
- And so that's what the Spirit does. The Spirit brings life and order into death and darkness and disorder. But as we look in Scripture we discover even after the fall even after we sinned against God and turned our backs on God and thought we could live lives better without God and it turned out that we definitely couldn't because sin and chaos came back into the world once we cut ourselves off from God and death came back into the world even then the Spirit was still hovering and the Spirit is still hovering today and He always has been to work to bring order and life back into disorder and death that sin brings.
- Ultimately He does that because God's end game is to bring about a new creation to recreate the world to bring us back to a state out of curse and into blessing again.

[11 : 16] We saw this when we looked at the book of Genesis last year but that is what the Spirit is busy doing and we see Him doing that bit by bit for example through the history of Israel working in particular people inspiring them to do things that continue God's plan for this world but that wasn't the limit of the Spirit because in fact we read the prophets and we discover God's plan was much bigger than just influencing one or two or three people with His Spirit to do new creation things.

God's plan was to actually fill multitudes of people with His Spirit as a beginning of His new creation. So in the book of Joel He says that He is planning to pour out His Spirit all over the world on all humanity.

In Ezekiel that we read earlier He promises to put His Spirit within us within all of us all of His people and when we get to the Gospels we discover that is exactly what He sent Jesus to make possible for us and this is quite an important reminder we need He didn't just send Jesus to save us from our sins so that we could be resurrected one day.

He sent Jesus in order for us to receive His Holy Spirit. That was the goal. That was the purpose of the Gospel. That was the purpose of Jesus dying and rising again.

Read with me Galatians 3 from verse 13. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us because it is written cursed as everyone who is hung on a tree.

[12 : 59] Now look at this. The purpose was that the blessing of Abraham would come to the Gentiles by Christ Jesus so that we could receive the promised Spirit through faith.

So that we could receive the Spirit. Jesus died so that we could be filled with God's Spirit. We could receive God's Spirit and through us God can start to bring about His ultimate plans for the world.

That is what the Spirit is doing. He is bringing new life and new order into what is dark and dead and disordered in our world and He is doing it through His people and so Christians start to experience new creation life now when they receive the Spirit which they do when they repent and believe.

And so what that looks like? Well the Bible tells us in the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5 it tells us that there is now love and mercy and grace where before there was discord and jealousy and conflict.

It tells us that there is joy and peace where there was anxiety and disorder in our lives. It tells us that there is self-control where there was once lust and impulsiveness.

[14 : 11] Galatians 5 listen to the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

See the fruit of the Spirit these things is new creation order into old creation disorder and it's through the Spirit God in people that He is bringing about this new creation life even now.

And the fact is the more you are filled with the Spirit the more you can experience this new creation life in you. Paul goes on after listing the fruit of the Spirit to say if we live by the Spirit let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

So if we have the Spirit then we must make sure we are actually lined up our lives with the Spirit. I think that's the same as being filled with the Spirit as we read in Acts those people who were filled with the Spirit what Paul tells us to be.

It's keeping in step with the Spirit in our lives. It's being filled with the Holy Spirit and the more we are with the more we do that and it implies that we're not always doing that we need to be told to do that.

[15 : 23] Paul wouldn't have told us to keep in step with the Spirit and be filled with the Spirit if we were always automatically in step with the Spirit and filled with the Spirit. And so it's something we need to do and the more we are filled with the Spirit the more we experience this new creation life in us to allow us to move away from the old life the old creation life and look forward to the world that God has planned for us to live.

Okay, so the more you are filled with the Spirit the more you experience this new creation life in fact in Ephesians 5 Paul compares being filled with the Spirit to being filled with alcohol.

Seriously he uses the same concept he says don't get drunk with wine which leads to reckless living disordered old creation living right but be filled by the Spirit and so in the same way that alcohol and we all too often see this and know this too much alcohol and drunkenness causes old creation living to come out and possesses our personality and has real effects on our words and our thoughts so the Spirit penetrating us and us being filled with the Spirit leads to new creation thoughts and new creation orientations and new creation speaking and thinking and priorities and it affects our personality that's literally what the Holy Spirit does he changes our personality from old creation personality to new creation personality you can put it like that okay so if this is what the Holy Spirit does and he is doing all this he is working in people to bring about new creation living then you would think it will be noticeable in our lives right you would think that if we are supernaturally possessed by God's Spirit to live a new way that would be obvious the people who have the Holy Spirit and are filled with the Holy Spirit but maybe you're looking at your life maybe you're looking at your past week and you're going oh I don't know how obvious it is that the Holy Spirit is in me well if that's the case then it doesn't mean that you don't have the Spirit it doesn't necessarily mean that you're not saved from your sins it might mean that you don't have the Holy Spirit in which case you must receive the Holy Spirit and you do that through repenting trusting in Jesus and being baptized but just because you're not exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit outwardly in a way that stands out from the world around you doesn't mean you don't have the Spirit but what it means is more than likely you're not filled with the Spirit and maybe you don't even know that you need to be filled with the Spirit maybe you didn't know up until now that that's a thing that you need to do but you do need to be filled with the Spirit

Ephesians 5.18 Paul says but be filled with the Spirit it is an imperative it is something you must do it's something you must respond to in fact in the original language it's what's called a present imperative which is better translated keep being filled with the Spirit it's an ongoing thing it's not a one-sort it's something it's a way that you must live every day to keep being filled with the Spirit and so the next and final question we need to answer this morning is how to do that how are we filled with the Spirit and well the first thing that's vital if we want to be filled with the Spirit from reading Scripture and discovering what being filled with the Spirit is all about the first thing we need to do is want to be filled with the Spirit because all too often we actually don't want to be many times people who are not filled with the Spirit Christians who are not filled with the Spirit are not because deep down they don't want to be possessed by a Spirit that is not their own

I mean it is quite a big thing isn't it to willingly want another person to enter you and to change you we don't always want that we want control of our lives as a default we hesitate to have ourselves altered in any way we don't necessarily want our personality changed we don't want to be challenged and change the way we currently live and that we know if we're Christians we know that's what the Holy Spirit is going to do and so often we hesitate and so that's the first step if you don't want to be filled you won't be filled with the Holy Spirit the next thing we must do then is not only evaluate whether we really want to be filled with the Holy Spirit it's to ask to be filled with the Holy Spirit listen to Luke 11 from verse 11 what father among you if a son asks for a fish will give him a snake instead of a fish or if he asks for an egg will give him a scorpion if then you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children how much more will the heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him what does this teach us well it tells us that the Holy Spirit is the best thing for us in our lives to have the Holy Spirit change us out of old creation living to new creation living is the best thing for us it's what God wants us to want and it's what he wants us to ask for and if we want it and if we ask for it he is more than willing to give us the Holy Spirit and fill us with his Holy Spirit there's no real complication to it you don't have to go on special courses or jump through hoops to be filled with the Spirit all you've got to do is ask God and in order to ask God you first got to realize

[21 : 18] God wants you God knows that the best thing for you is to be filled with the Spirit and you've got to want that too do you? well if you do then ask for the Holy Spirit and be ready then thirdly to present your body to the Holy Spirit for him to fill and for him to possess and take over and use and change present your body and your personality and your mind and your words and your way of life to him Romans 12 1 says present your body to God as a living sacrifice in view of everything he's done in view of the gospel in view of what he's done to enable you to receive his Spirit and eternal life and salvation and live a new creation life now your response is to present yourself as a living sacrifice saying okay yeah yeah you can have me and to receive his Spirit 1 Corinthians 6 says don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you whom you have from God you are not your own for you are bought at a price so glorify God with your body present your body to God for him to dwell in by his Holy Spirit it's kind of like if you're the driver of someone else's fancy car you're the chauffeur say of the owner of the car now

I know this from knowing people who have had that job when the owner of the car when their boss is not in the car they like to drive it around and maybe take their friends out to parties and stuff with this fancy car and do what they want with it but when the owner gets in when they've actually got a job to go pick up their owner and take him somewhere and the owner is in that car and they know the owner is in that car they change the way they drive they're very careful of how they drive they will drive differently to when the owner is not in that car and in the same way we will use our bodies differently when we realize God is in them we will use ourselves and our time and our resources and the way we use our bodies will be different if we know that we are temples of the Holy Spirit that the Holy Spirit dwells in us and when we are filled with him and so present your body to be used by the Holy Spirit if you want to be filled by the Holy Spirit and then fourthly listen to the Holy Spirit in you listen to him because it is a relationship between you and God who is in you and so there needs to be open communication if you are to continue being filled with the Spirit keep being filled with the Spirit you need to listen to the Spirit and you do that through the Bible you see because this is

Ephesians 6 tells us the sword of the Spirit that is what the Bible is it's his instrument to do work in this world and in your life and so if you keep the Bible closed and you don't take sermons and Bible studies seriously then you are going to be limiting your ability to be filled with the Spirit you are going to be limiting the Spirit's work in your life it's how the Spirit works in the Word it's how he speaks to you it's how he does his work in your life and what that means is firstly that he doesn't work apart from the Word he inspired the Word and this is what he has chosen to use to work on you but it also means that sermons and Bible studies like this are a means to being filled by the Spirit and being used by the Spirit they're not an end in themselves they're not just a way to get a boost for the day or to increase your knowledge in a particular topic what we do here when we sit under sermons when we study the Bible together it is creating opportunities for the Spirit to be working in us it's a means to an end it's not an end in itself just like eating food might be nice you might do it because of how you feel immediately because it tastes nice but generally the main reason we eat food is to nourish our bodies for it to do work in our bodies after we've eaten it well in the same way reading the Bible sitting under sermons they might be nice at the time they might be interesting and give us a boost and an encouragement for the day but the main reason we do those things should be to nourish our spirits with the work of the Holy Spirit in us we should see sermons and Bible studies every time that we have the opportunity to listen to a sermon or study the Bible with other Christians we should see them as new opportunities for the Spirit to do work in our lives and for us to be filled again with the Holy Spirit and therefore not neglect those times and those opportunities and so in closing we've spent this morning just looking at the Holy Spirit and I think it's vital that we do because as we start coming back to church and as we embark on this series and studying the birth of the church my deepest desire is to see us to have us be a church of people who are truly filled with the Spirit and I want us to see exploits and God's power at work like the early church in Acts saw

I want us to be used by God don't you? don't you want to be part of a church which is going places in which God is using powerfully well if that's to be the case we need to make sure each of us are filled with His Spirit and I want us to be people who are bursting with new creation life that is noticeable to the people around us don't you?

you know we've gone through an amazing regeneration in the gospel if we believe in Christ if we are saved if we have the hope of eternal life and we know Christ and we have a relationship with God we've gone through an amazing metamorphosis so let's start flying with the wings we've been given with the spiritual abilities that we have and let's let's not keep crawling around ineffective anymore and so I'm going to be praying over the next few weeks for God to fill me with His Spirit each and every day will you do the same and let's look forward and anticipate what God's going to be doing in the months to come let's pray Lord we do thank you for your Holy Spirit Holy Spirit we thank you for being right here in us in your people and we pray Lord that you would fill us with yourself fill us with your Spirit we ask Lord that you would help us to want to be filled with your Holy Spirit and Lord help us to ask each and every day to be filled with your Holy Spirit so that we would live new creation lives and not old creation lives anymore we pray that we would take this message on board that we would realize that even though we have the Spirit we need to keep being filled with the Spirit and we pray Lord that you would make us such Spirit filled people that we would do exploits for you that this church would stand out in a dark world and that through us and through others like us you would bring new creation life and salvation into this broken world and we pray this all in Jesus name

[28 : 53] Amen Amen