

## **The Transformational Power of the Holy Spirit**

May 24, 2026

Acts 2:1-32

Back in 2016 a group of us went on a mission trip to the city of New Orleans. The city was still rebuilding after Hurricane Katrina and Rita devastated the area in 2005.

On one of our side trips while there, we went to the National World War II Museum. It was an amazing place filled with stories of heroism and bravery. I thought of it the other day. As we celebrate Memorial Day this year, we are reminded of the legacy that the brave men and women of the military have left us with. Many of them gave their lives for the cause of freedom. Men like Lieutenant Isacks who died when a mortar shell hit his foxhole on the beach near Iwo Jima. Or Private George Watson who died when his ship was bombed and destroyed while on patrol in the Pacific theater. These men and others like them died while fighting for the cause of freedom. That's the definition of noble.

On the not so noble front is Charles Millar.

In 1926, Charles Vance Millar, a wealthy Toronto lawyer died, leaving behind him a will that caused quite a ruckus. Because he had no close heirs, he decided to leave his fortune to "the Toronto woman who gave birth to the most children in the ten years after his death." Imagine the stir that caused. The country was entering the Great Depression. As people struggled to meet their needs, the prospect of an enormous windfall was quite alluring. Newspaper reporters scoured the public records to find likely contenders for what became known as **The Great Stork Derby**.

In 1936, four mothers, proud producers of nine children apiece in that ten year span, divided up the Charles Millar's bequest, each receiving what was a staggering sum in those days - \$125,000. This was his final legacy.

If you ask me, it was nothing to be proud of and it is just a foolish footnote in history. If you want to talk about impact, then think about the mark that Jesus left as he died to set us free from the bondage of sin. Following Jesus' crucifixion, where he took our place, brought forgiveness and new life to all who believe.

That sacrifice did something that nothing else could do. It unleashed a power that would transform the world. In the immediate aftermath of Jesus' death, his disciples were devastated. They had abandoned him in the Garden of Gethsemane. But after they met the resurrected Christ, they were radically changed. Once the Holy Spirit was released, they began to step out in power.

For centuries, Christians have stood as examples of the standards of truth and love established by Jesus. Historian Philip Schaff said,

“This Jesus of Nazareth, without money and arms, conquered more millions than Alexander, Caesar, Mohammed and Napoleon; he shed more light on things human and divine than all the philosophers and scholars combined and produced themes for more sermons, orations, discussions, learned volumes, works of art, and songs of praise than the whole army of great people of ancient and modern times.”

This is the legacy of Jesus and his church. It all began in earnest, on the Day of Pentecost, the birthday of the church. Jesus had promised the disciples that when he went away, he would send the Holy Spirit to continue his work in them... To imbue them with power and boldness to do the work he did. That happened right on cue on that day we read about in the book of Acts.

The great preacher and theologian, Charles Spurgeon wrote,

"Without the Spirit of God, we can do nothing. We are as ships without wind. We are useless."

Acts 2:1-4 reads,

"When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them."

This passage marks a pivotal moment in the early church, a moment that transformed a group of ordinary men and women into a force that would change the world.

You have to remember that the disciples weren't supermen. They were fishermen, tax collectors, and zealots. But when they received the Holy Spirit, they became extraordinary. They preached with boldness, performed miracles, and spread the gospel to the ends of the earth. This is the power that was promised to them through the gift of the Holy Spirit, and to us, as well. It was not given for personal gain or glory, but for the advancement of God's kingdom. It was given so that the disciples could be witnesses, so that they could spread the good news of Jesus Christ. This is the power that enables us today to live the Christian life, to stand firm in our faith, to love as Christ loved us.

The Holy Spirit is a gift. We receive it when we believe in Jesus, when we repent and confess our sins and accept Him as our Lord and Savior. From that point on the Holy Spirit is with us, in us, working through us. He is our comforter, our helper, our guide. He leads us into truth, and empowers us to live for God.

And the Holy Spirit is our source of spiritual gifts. He gives us abilities and talents to serve God and others. He equips us for ministry, enables us to build up the body of Christ, and empowers us to fulfill our calling.

This past week we came upon a verse that many of us struggle with. Jesus says, "Be holy as I am Holy." Well the truth is that we can't be like Jesus in that respect, on our own. It is through the power of the Holy Spirit that we can become holy. The Spirit is the one who transforms us into the image of Christ, who produces the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. The Holy Spirit is the one who helps us to die to sin and live to righteousness.

That's what we are witnessing in the disciples on that day we read about this morning. The spirit came over them and entered them with an explosive power. It says that they saw tongues of fire come over them. In that moment they were transformed into the men whom God had seen in them from the very beginning. Like a caterpillar who through an amazing metamorphosis is transformed into a butterfly. Those disciples took on a new nature that was equipped to share the gospel with power and force. It says they each spoke in a different language in such a way that each man present heard the gospel in their own native tongue.

Let's be honest: A lot of us are afraid to witness to someone else. There's lots of reasons for it but let me say this: If you pray before you say a word, the Holy Spirit will take over. Jesus said

that we shouldn't worry about what to say. Just talk and the Spirit will lead the way and give us words that the person we are speaking to will understand. Just as it happened on the day of Pentecost, will allow you to communicate the wonders of God in ways you cannot do on your own. The same presence, the same power that they had is available to us today. It is not a story we enjoy telling from the past. It is a present reality, a promise to be claimed, a power to be experienced.

The day of Pentecost forever changed the trajectory of the church and the world. The church, the body of Christ, was born in that moment, born in a display of divine power and inclusivity.

In the words of the Christian writer, A.W. Tozer,

"The Church is not a religious club. It is not a place where we gather to have religious feelings. The Church is the Body of Christ, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, on earth to continue and complete the work Jesus started."

This quote captures the essence of the church. It is a God instituted body, filled with the Holy Spirit, that is commissioned with continuing the work of Jesus. We are the heirs to that promise and power. The Holy Spirit came to empower us to live out our faith, boldly and confidently, to stand firm in the face of opposition, and to proclaim the gospel without fear.

You see, the disciples did not keep the good news to themselves, they shared it with the crowd. They spoke so that everyone could understand the message. Today, the Holy Spirit enables us to

share the gospel, to communicate the love of God in a way that others can understand and receive.

The Holy Spirit, is not a distant, abstract concept, but a present, active person in our lives. The same Spirit that filled the disciples on the day of Pentecost, that empowered them to speak in other tongues, to heal the sick, to raise the dead, that same Spirit is alive in us today.

And isn't that just like our God? To not only save us, but to empower us, to equip us, to walk alongside us every step of the way. He didn't leave us to figure this out on our own. No, He gave us His Spirit, His very presence dwelling within us.

So, as we go from here, let's not forget that. Let's not forget the power we carry within us. Let's not forget the love that was so great, it couldn't be contained in heaven, but had to be poured out on us. And let's not forget our purpose, to share that love, that power, with the world.

Amen.

And now, may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing His will, and may He work in us what is pleasing to Him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.