

Spirit Poured Out: Dare to Dance Again

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Date: 23 May 2021

Preacher: Pastor Cathy Hall Stengel

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[27 : 59] Thank you.

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[30 : 29] Thank you.

God says, I am sending you.

I was surprised to know, Mark Twain, Mark Twain.

what about these? You can't put flesh on dry bones. And God said, Ezekiel, you know, basically ask. So Ezekiel asked and gradually the flesh, the muscles, everything were put on those bones and they became alive. Now the image of dry bones isn't meant to be a literal translation or a literal word to us. The dry bones are the dusty and worn out lives and spirits that we sometimes have. Now I pretty much don't know anyone who hasn't at some point or another over the past 15 months felt like they were sometimes a pile of dry bones.

Am I right? It's been an extremely challenging place to show love to one another, to worship together, to see each other's faces, to care for those who might feel lost and alone.

[35 : 11] And so when we hear these words, dance like nobody's watching, love like you've never been hurt, sing like nobody's listening, live like it's heaven on earth, that is the message of Pentecost.

You see, when Acts came, when the Holy Spirit came upon all the people there, they were all speaking and they all understood each other. Can you picture the day when any of us and all of us could say something and people would actually understand? Not understand the words, mind you, but understand us. Wouldn't that be the most wonderful experience that we could have?

Now I don't mean see into the deepest, darkest places of our lives. I mean understand us. To understand our worries, our warts, the things that we're afraid of, the things that we're so excited about, but maybe have no place to share. This picture, which was painted during a youth event for the Upper New York Conference, and it was painted while the person was preaching on 1 Thessalonians 5.19, which I put here because I, you know, I'm not as young as I used to. Don't suppress the spirit.

Don't suppress the spirit. Don't suppress the spirit. And you see this person down here in the midst of this flame. Now I want to share with you that one of the most visible signs sometimes of places where we don't welcome in the Holy Spirit are when we look at ourselves and we look at our balloons and I have mine and you have yours and look at the difference.

Can you hold yours up? This one's a little, oh wait, they might be representative of me, but it's a little shriveled. It's been around a while and the air has started to seep out of it somehow, however that works.

[37 : 30] We sometimes think of ourselves as less. We sometimes call the things that we have done failures.

We sometimes, out of our own hurt and frustration, rail at people, forgetting that they are those we love and that we are those they love.

We think less of ourselves. We think less of others. In the Holy Spirit, when we can have a sense of God made you, Jesus saved you, and the Holy Spirit came to encourage, support, direct, challenge, love, surround you.

You see, if we own those things, then how could we possibly believe that any one of us living in God's love would be a failure?

Do we make mistakes? Of course we make mistakes. I don't see anyone here who's not human. We make mistakes. But when we own those mistakes as part of our identity, and we continue to look at ourselves as the worn out, the less popular, the less welcome, the less loved, the less attractive, the less financially successful, then we are denying the power and the movement of the Holy Spirit within us.

[39 : 11] Because when God sent the Holy Spirit to light up the church and to light up the people of God, God sent this final gift, well, not final, but the final gift of the Trinity that's repeated over and over throughout the Scripture.

We often think, this is it. Acts 2, verses 1 through 17. That's Pentecost. And then we kind of like, okay, got it. But it's not true. We think about a story we heard recently about the eunuch who was converted and accepted Christ and was baptized.

We think about Paul's conversion. For those of you who don't know, Paul used to be Saul, and Saul killed Christians. Killed Christians. If somebody who killed Christians can be converted and brought into favor and teach and preach and baptized throughout the generations, then surely you and I can serve the Lord Almighty with what we've been given and not feel as though we are not enough.

And to not feel as though those around us are not enough. Because you know where that comes from? When people say this, when people point, when people judge, I'm just going to say that most of the time, that's because that's how they feel inside.

They feel helpless. They feel frustrated. They feel like nobody's listening to them, and it might make them kind of shrink and disappear and be sad, or it might make them act out and just push and shove at the world because nobody sees them.

[41 : 05] And they think God doesn't see them or measures them as inadequate. And if God made you and God saved you and the Holy Spirit came to encourage and comfort and guide and, yes, sometimes chastise because sometimes those of us who know the Holy Spirit, the word is, could you just like, could you just like, could you just like sit down and listen a minute?

Because sometimes God has a word to say to us. Sometimes God has a word to say to us.

But it's never going to be we are bad people. You are a bad person. You're not good enough. You're a failure. Business, finance, whatever it might be.

God's word may be. You seem a little lost. How about you come back over here? You seem really broken.

Could you just come closer and let the Spirit touch you? Could you possibly see differently when you look around at the people you know?

[42 : 27] Could you see them and recognize maybe all they're waiting for is for you to say, you know what's kept me going? My faith.

My faith, and I'll stand right up here and say it in front of God and everybody, my faith through this journey of COVID is stronger than it's ever been.

And why? Because I have had to rely on God, fully rely on God, if any of you remember the whole frog thing. Maybe I'm dating myself.

fully rely on God. Because the world could not give what the world used to give. The world could not show what the world used to show.

And sometimes we walk alone in that valley of dry bones. Or we think we walk alone.

[43 : 29] And one of the things that we rejoice about, and I hope that it sneaks in there with you this morning, is that the Holy Spirit came for you.

God didn't make you to abandon you or to leave you sidelined. Jesus didn't die on a cross for you to be feeling as though you don't measure up.

To be feeling as though everybody else is better. To be feeling as though maybe you'd just rather hide your face from now on because you don't want to be seen.

Jesus didn't die on the cross. For you to be lost. And the Holy Spirit did not come to a joyless people.

The enemy comes to steal joy. To steal our strength. To steal our intelligence. To steal our lives as we know them. But the Holy Spirit came that we might know who we are.

[44 : 39] That you, you, you, you, all of you and those listening might know who you are. Beloved children and grown-ups of God.

Saved by grace. You can't earn it on your own. And surrounded by the Holy Spirit. And you know, Pentecost Day isn't always the best day to remember this.

But what I say is you imagine your best, most favorite blanket and you wrap it around you and there you have the Holy Spirit. Maybe for some of you it's a weighted blanket.

Maybe for some of you it's a shirt or a sweater. I don't, it doesn't matter. Might be a stuffed animal that you had when you were small. And some of you, I know there are children who are grown-ups in my family who still have them.

They're stuffed animals. They hold them close. And it reminds them that feeling of being a baby and held and comforted and the world is going to be okay.

[45 : 55] My hope is, my trust is, that you might know that when the Holy Spirit came upon the people at Pentecost, that what I like to believe and know is the reason that people could be understood by everyone is because God had convinced them that they could dance like no one's watching, sing like no one's listening, and love like they've never been hurt.

That is the gift this day. And I pray that in our children and in our youth and all of you adults, that we may believe that until our dying day.

And when we forget, may the flames and the light of the Holy Spirit in all of you reach and get the people who have forgotten.

Reach and get the people who never knew in the first place. Reach and get the people who think they are not enough. I pray it may be so among us that we may be courageous, that we may be comforters, that we may be the church.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. One of the ways in which we get to show our love for God, one of the ways in which we get to experience that closeness is through participating in the sacrament of Holy Communion.

[47 : 48] So let's open our hearts as we prepare to receive God's great gift. Will you open yourselves to the grace of Jesus Christ that is always and already available here at this table?

If so, say, open us to your grace, Lord. Open us to your grace, Lord. Will you open yourselves again to the call of Jesus Christ?

If so, say, open us to your call, Lord. Open us to your call, Lord. Will you open yourselves to the possibility of transformation through Jesus Christ?

If so, say, transform us, O Lord. Transform us, O Lord. As we prepare to attend the heavenly feast, we pray especially for those who have no earthly table or no place at a table and so little daily bread.

We confess this day that we have been slow to join the dance that brings life to all, brings love to all, brings sustenance to all. in silence, let us offer our own prayers of confession to God.

[48 : 59] hear this good news, God has loved you from the very beginning.

The invitation of Christ is never ending because resurrection can happen at any moment. The Holy Spirit is transforming you even now.

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven. Glory to God. Amen. The risen Lord be with you.

Also be with you. So lift up your hearts and voices. We lift up the Lord. Let us give great thanks to the Lord, our God. We lift up our hearts and our hearts and our hearts.

Holy and living one, you transformed a whole lot of nothing into this amazing creation. You breathed life all around and called it good. You invited us to the wonder of it all, and when we could not face you, you turned us around.

[50 : 18] You keep bringing us around again and again, offering us the chance to join the freedom dance. And so, with the glorious chorus of saints past and present, singing a never-ending hymn of praise.

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest. Indeed, you are holy and blessed is your son, Jesus, the anointed one, the liberator, our dance partner, sibling, and friend.

Jesus sat at tables with those who had no place, and he offered fulfilling food for bodies and for souls. And on the night in which he would give all love for us, he sat at a table with the extended family, just as he hosts this table with this extended family.

He offered up the usual prayers, and then he disrupted the gathering with some unc customary words. He took the bread, bread, and then he said, take this bread and eat it, because this is my body which is given for you.

[51 : 50] Every time you sit around this table together, remember me. And then he would take the cup, and he would take and drink from this.

This is a sign of a new covenant. The darkness has given way to the light. The resurrection dance goes on. This is love poured out for all people.

Whenever you gather around the table together, remember me. And so, friends, we do remember and we believe that Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us now. Pour out your transforming presence on the gifts of this body, on the gifts of this bread, and the fruit of the vine.

May they be for us your life and love, uniting us as one body, Christ's body, for the sake of loving the world. And now, let us pray together the prayer that Jesus taught us to pray.

[53 : 01] Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen. This table extends beyond this physical space, into the space of the Spirit that unites us.

May this meal ready us to love, to trust, to hope, and to dance, to the beat of our God's heart. Now, I invite you to take your elements and open the side that has the bread.

Know that this is the body of Christ which is given for you. Take now and receive. Amen. Amen. Amen. And as you open the other side, know that this is the blood of Christ which was shed for you.

Take now and receive. Open your hearts and receive God's gift and know the blessing.

[54 : 36] Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. I invite you to respond to that wonderful gift that we've been given by standing if you're able and worshiping God with us.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. The river of God The river of God Fills our mouths with laughter And we rejoice For the river we sing The river of God Is teeming with life And all the joy Can be revived And no longer On this river shore

The pond that thirsty For more of the Lord The river of God Sets our feet and dance The river of God Fills our hearts to clear The river of God Fills our mouths with laughter And we rejoice For the river we sing Come to the mountain We love to go To find the presence Of the Lord Along the banks Of the river we run We dance with laughter We'll embrace the sun The river of God And we rejoice For the river we sing Amen

And we rejoice For the river we sing And we rejoice For the river we sing Amen And now as we go from this place Don't begin to believe That the Spirit stays here Because the Spirit goes with you The God who made you The Jesus who saved you And the Spirit who carries you Goes with you now and today And forevermore Amen Amen Amen

[58 : 51] Amen Amen