**Journeying with God’s Spirit. Acts 2; John 14**

When I was in my very early twenties my closest friend was suddenly bereaved. Her oldest sibling died in a car accident. It was a horribly traumatic time for her family, and I was her closest friend outside her family members. We spent an enormous amount of time together, most of it just sitting. Sometimes I would be listening, but often just sitting quietly, sometimes I would offer a response and sometimes that seemed to be helpful, but at other times I should have just sat with her rather than seeking to respond. Knowing that someone is there beside us in traumatic or challenging situations can be incredibly powerful. It has an amazing capacity to give us strength.

The gospel reading we have heard is part of the farewell discourse in John’s gospel, just before Jesus was arrested and crucified. Jesus was keen to reassure his disciples, that they need not fear, they would not be abandoned, they would not be alone. They would have the presence of the Holy Spirit.

**God’s Spirit will be their closest companion**

Jesus spoke of the Spirit being with them and that this same Spirit will be in them. One of the major themes of this whole discourse is the union shared between Jesus and God the Father, and this passage stresses this same union with the Holy Spirit. Jesus also speaks about his followers sharing in union with the Godhead, this union will enable them to experience the presence of the Holy Spirit in them, not just with them.

After Jesus crucifixion his followers could easily feel abandoned, but Jesus promises here that they will not be abandoned, they will not be alone rather they will be filled with the Holy Spirit. We noticed last week that the Spirit was active in opening Lydia’s heart to the message of Jesus,[[1]](#footnote-1) and throughout the book of Acts and throughout the epistles we see evidence

of God’s Spirit preparing people to receive and respond to the message of Jesus.[[2]](#footnote-2) After Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost there was an openness amongst many who listened, and so they opened their hearts to the message of Jesus.[[3]](#footnote-3) Later in John’s gospel we read about the work of the Spirit in bringing people to understand their separation from God, their need of God’s forgiveness and transformation.[[4]](#footnote-4)Lloyd Ogilvy has said, “The Lord is never nearer than when he excavates a sense of emptiness in us. The Holy Spirit can fill only empty hearts.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

The Holy Spirit takes empty lives and fills them to overflowing. The presence of God’s Spirit brings fullness of life, and a depth of joy in the midst of life.[[6]](#footnote-6)

The early Christian community grew out of their shared experiences of the work of God’s Spirit filling and transforming their lives, and enabling them to share the message of Jesus with others. The gift of the Holy Spirit enabled the followers of Jesus to carry out God’s purposes.[[7]](#footnote-7) The power of God’s Spirit enabled a measure of transformation which would be impossible in human strength alone. The Spirit transformed their lives, equipped them to share the message of Jesus with others and enabled others to come to faith in Jesus.[[8]](#footnote-8)

The empowering of God’s Spirit “transcends human ability and transforms human inability.”[[9]](#footnote-9)

**God’s Spirit will reveal Jesus to them**

The indwelling Spirit of God will enable them to know Jesus, they would not be seeing Jesus now, but through the Spirit they could continue to grow in their knowledge of Jesus. Though Jesus’ physical presence will not be with them His work will continue in even greater measure. Some things will be understood more fully. They will perceive things differently, the confusion of the past will be resolved, they will really understand why Jesus did the things which baffled them and what he meant as he taught them. The Spirit will be with them to help them interpret Jesus’ teachings in each situation which they face. The Holy Spirit would be able to enable them to make sense of the devastating events which were about to unfold, and how they fitted into God’s great plans. The Holy Spirit will fulfil the role of continuing to reveal Jesus to the community. The Spirit of Truth will continue to reveal the truth of God to Jesus followers. The Spirit will remind them of all that Jesus taught them. They will need reminding, the world in general will not be focused on Jesus, and it would be easy for them to get side-tracked, but the Spirit will remind them of who God has called them to be and of all that Jesus is and will continue to be for them. “The disciples and the world will see and perceive things differently. They will know and see what the world cannot.”[[10]](#footnote-10) The Spirit will help them to obey Jesus, particularly Jesus’ command to love one another.

**God’s Spirit will enable them to share Jesus with others**

The Holy Spirit testified to Jesus followers about Jesus. These followers likewise were called to testify to others about Jesus.[[11]](#footnote-11) After Pentecost their lives were transformed from timid confused followers to bold, enthusiastic leaders in the mission of sharing the great news about Jesus to anyone who would listen.

The gift of other languages given to Jesus followers on the day of Pentecost was designed to effectively communicate the “great things of God” to the diverse native language groups represented there at that time. It points to the breadth of their commission to go and share Jesus everywhere.

As they shared this message some responded with openness and embraced the message, but some misinterpreted what they were doing. The work of God’s Spirit will not be universally acknowledged for what it really is – a work of God.[[12]](#footnote-12) They will be ridiculed and even excluded from the synagogues for the message they have to share.[[13]](#footnote-13)

However amongst the early Christian church, we are told that a great sense of awe came upon everyone. They stayed together, shared with each other in practical ways and shared the teachings of Jesus. They praised and worshipped God, had glad and generous hearts, experienced the good will of the wider community, and they grew in number as more people responded to the message of Jesus.

**God’s Spirit offers us a choice**

Throughout the history of God’s dealings with humanity we have always been offered choices. The children of Israel made some bad choices on various occasions and their journey with God became long, traumatic and convoluted. God does not force God’s self upon us, therefore the work of the Holy Spirit upon us and through us will not be forced upon us. We have a choice. Sadly, sometimes people have been anxious about what the Holy Spirit might do with or to them, usually this seems to emanate from unusual stories in the media or passed down through various people. We should always remember that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, One who points to God, One who continues here and now what Jesus began, One who shares the same nature as Jesus and as God the source of all being. Some years ago, I became aware of a hesitancy on my part towards what God’s Spirit may do with or to me. I’m ever so glad that another Christian friend was there to help me to realise what I was doing, and I am so thankful that I made that choice to seek to always be open to the Spirit of God.

May God bless and encourage us all as we journey with God’s Spirit as the people of God in this place at this time.

1. Acts 16:14 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Acts 14:27; 2 Cor 2:12; Colossians 4:3; 1 Corinthians 16:9-10 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Acts 2:37-38, 41 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. John 16:8 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Lloyd G. Ogilvy, *Acts of the Holy Spirit: God’s Power for Living,* (Wheaton, Illinois: Harold Shaw Publishing, 1999) 29 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Acts 13:52 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. N. T. Wright, *Acts for Everyone, Part One* (London: Westminster John Knox Publishing, 2004) 21 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles,* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm B, Eerdmans Publishing, 1996) 11-12 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles,* 12 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Michael. J. Ramsay, *The Gospel of John,* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2010) 786 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Acts 15:26-27 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Acts 2:13 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Acts 16:1-2 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)