

WELLSPRING

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Sermon Series Devotional

5/23/21-6/13/21

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Holy Spirit. Some people exclusively think of the Holy Spirit associated with speaking in tongues (gibberish speech). Some people associate the Holy Spirit with an emotional high in a worship service. And yet others see the Holy Spirit like a heavenly vending machine that gives them what they want. But what if the Holy Spirit is a being that is so much more than any of those associations? It may be that we have trouble understanding the Holy Spirit because we can't pin it down with an iron-clad theology or control. This study is designed to help us discover the presence of God in our everyday life through Spirit.

Suggested Use

Our devotional is designed to be a resource for you and can be used in a variety of ways. Each week, you will be provided a series of questions, reflections, and prompts to engage with. You can complete them all in one setting or divide them up throughout the week. Whether you are using it in a group or for your own personal time, we suggest keeping a journal that can be used to respond to the questions each week and for prayers.

Week One -Pentecost...the Day the Church Was Born

For many, ideas of God's Spirit are mixed in with Star Wars references such as "may the Force be with you" or connected to the motivation to "keep your spirits up," as though there is little difference. But God's Spirit is so much more but often receives little attention. God's Spirit is a person, not just a force and you may be amazed at the role Spirit can play in our lives.

Read Ezekiel 36:23b-27

1. How does God's giving of Spirit change the way we view and value God? What does it allow God to do in our lives? What does that mean for you?
2. What do you think it means that Spirit will replace our heart of stone with a heart of flesh? Can you think of ways in which your heart may have turned to stone?
3. Why does the presence of Spirit in our lives move us to live within the commands of Christ? Is this out of "shoulds" or desire?

Read John 13:36-14:17

1. It has been said that this discussion is similar to children's questions when they see their parents getting ready to leave for the evening. "Where are you going? Can we come? How long will you be gone? Who will stay with us while you are gone?" Where are the places in the scripture where these questions were asked? What was Jesus's answer to these questions?
2. Given that the word "Comforter" essentially meant babysitter in the original language, how does that personalize Spirit as being more than a "force?"
3. What difference does it make to you knowing that God has provided Spirit as a presence with us and for us? How do you experience that presence?

Read Acts 2:1-21

1. This is the story of Pentecost, the birth of the Church. But it isn't the first time Spirit is given. Read John 20:21-23. How was Spirit given in that moment? How does that differ from the receiving of Spirit on Pentecost?
2. How many people were present in the upper room (see Acts 1:15)?
3. What did Spirit enable them to do afterward?
4. In what ways has Spirit enabled you in your life?

Week Two - People For His Name

For many, their faith has become a very private thing, something that seems “right” to them, meaning there may be people whose experience of God may be wrong. What if Spirit is a community experience more than just private? What if Spirit is manifested in different ways by different people? What if God’s family is a lot bigger than we can imagine that goes beyond our family, congregation, community and country?

Read Acts 2:5-21

1. Today we look at what happens to those in the upper room receiving Spirit. Who was gathered in Jerusalem at the time of Pentecost? When those gathered in the upper room went into the streets, what were they able to do?
2. How did this proliferation of the message bring unity?
3. When scripture says “native language” of the people, it is referring to street language that any of them would have been able to understand. What was the significance of them being able to communicate in this way? Was anyone excluded from the message?
4. What is the promise made in Acts 2:21? Does that make a difference to you and how you think about others?

Read Philippians 2:1-4

1. What do you think “participation in the Spirit” means? How is it linked to our experiences? What kind of unity is brought by allowing our lives to be driven by Spirit?
2. How does participation in Spirit along with the accompanying behavior help bring unity among people?
3. How does this scripture call you away from the temptation of being self-absorbed?

Read Galatians 3:23-4:7

1. In what ways do you hear the dividing walls between people being broken down in this scripture?
2. How big are the implications of vs 27-29?
3. How does the word “adoption” frame what Spirit has done for us?
4. The word “Abba” essentially means “Daddy.” What does it mean to you that you can call out to God in this way?

Week Three - Endurance Through the Spirit

In the movie Chariots of Fire, Eric Liddell is invited to preach just prior to the Olympics of his day. In the sermon he poses the question, "Where does the strength come from?" He answers his own question, "It comes from within." What is it that is within?

Read 1 Cor 10:13

1. We often hear people say, "God will not give you more than you can handle." They are probably thinking of this scripture. But what does it REALLY say?
2. What is the promise that is made? What role do you think Spirit plays in our ability to endure?

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-11

1. This scripture draws a link between Paul's suffering and those he was writing to. How did he describe it?
2. Paul, who was driven by Spirit, expressed his hopefulness. What is it based upon?
3. How did Paul's suffering in Asia move him to rely on God even more?
4. Have you ever been in a situation in which you had nothing left but to rely on God? What happened?

Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-18

1. How did Paul contrast his earthly experience with his reaction? How was he able to keep his hope?
2. What does it mean that "death is at work in us, but life in you?"
3. In vs.13 Paul said Spirit convinced him of something. What was it?
4. How does vs.16-18 contrast short term and long term thinking? Are your current troubles long term or temporary?

Read Romans 8:26-39

1. Have you ever felt like you didn't know what to pray? Here, Paul talks about how Spirit helps us. What happens? Can you have confidence that even though you don't know what to pray, Spirit has interceded for you? Is it possible that beyond being interpreted to God for us, Spirit also helps us understand?
2. What did Paul have confidence in when he writes this? (see vs. 28)
3. In the closing verses of this chapter it is almost like a soaring hymn of what we can claim and hold on to. What is it?

Week Four - Where Do We Go From Here?

People are sometimes tempted to think of the faith as a book that has a final chapter, events that have happened and been recorded that we just have to believe. But the story isn't over and we're still a part of it. Spirit continues to move in and amongst us giving us identity, strength, perseverance, and hope. Let's claim it.

Read Romans 8:14-25

1. There is a call in this text to not be looking in the rear-view mirror of our lives. What are we to look forward to?
2. How are our current sufferings compared to what lies ahead?
3. Paul says that isn't just us that have a reason to look ahead, but the whole creation. How does he describe it?
4. What if we are part of a larger continuing story and not just here in the moment?

Read Titus 3:3-8

1. Paul described our transformation by Spirit. From what to what? What do you think he meant by regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit? (vs. 5)
2. How does this give hope for our future?

Read 1 Corinthians 2

1. How does Paul contrast his message with sophisticated theology? (vs. 1,2)
2. Paul talks about imparting a secret (vs.11-16) that is understood even by common folks. But how does it happen?
3. What does it mean to you to know that you can receive God's Spirit and what it brings?

Read John 3:1-8

1. Nicodemus was a seeker, wondering how he could be "born anew." Jesus contrasted the ways people can be born. What are they?
2. He described our experience of being born of the Spirit. What did he compare it to? Is it static or constantly compelling forward?
3. If Spirit isn't something that is fixed, what hope does that give you about the direction your life can go?

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