

Group Notes 29 May 2011

The Promise of the Spirit

Welcome - Ice Breaker

Have you ever had to share your home with a strange or unusual person? Tell us what happened – no names though!

Word - Sermon Summary: John 14:15-21

We are continuing through Jesus' teaching to his disciples at the Last Supper. Jesus is talking about going away from them – "I will not leave you as orphans (v.18)... the world will not see me any more (v.19)." This refers to the fact that His work on earth is about to come to an end. He will die, then be raised from the dead and then after 40 days return to the Father.

This will bring to completion the work of redemption that Jesus had come to do. The story goes like this:

- God is love and He created us in His image to share in His love forever
- We fell away from God and now live in a state of conflict, insecurity and anxiety that is far removed from His love. All our efforts to reach Him, through religion and other means, fall short of His perfection and only emphasise our separation from Him.
- Because God loves us He wants us back! So he sent Jesus on a rescue mission. He came to earth as one of us, made peace for us on the cross and returned to heaven to reconcile us to His Father.
- This creates a bridge between us and God – Jesus the God/man is the bridge by which we can get back to God. We might cross the bridge by such means as repentance, prayer, and taking communion: these are to help us learn to live our daily lives for God.
- But a bridge is two-way: not only can we get back to God, He can also cross over the bridge and come to us. God does this by sending His Holy Spirit to live inside us

That is why Jesus promises the Holy Spirit at the Last Supper. He will go to the Cross and then back to heaven shortly, to build that bridge. Then the Holy Spirit will cross over the bridge and come to live in the disciples' hearts. The Spirit has been *with* them, but now He will be *in* them, v.17. And when the Spirit comes, God Himself comes to live in us, v.20.

This then is a fundamental part of the Gospel. The other aspects of our redemption – the Incarnation, the Cross, the Resurrection – are not completed until God has come to live in our hearts by His Spirit. This is why God has redeemed us – so He can come and pour His love in its fullness into our lives.

If we are disappointed with our Christian lives – if it sometimes seems dry, if the Bible and fellowship with other Christians seem meaningless, if God seems far away, if the promises of God's love poured into our hearts (Romans 5:5) and the fruit of the Spirit growing in us (Galatians 5:22) don't seem to materialise, if the excitement that was there in the Gospels and the Book of Acts just isn't there for us - it may well be that it is in this area that we should look for the problem. It is the Spirit's role to bring all these things alive as He brings the presence of the God of love Himself into our hearts. Have we really let the Spirit in?

If the Christian life is like a car, it is not meant to run on empty!

Word 2 - Discussion Questions:-

- So have you ever found yourself running on empty?
 - What made you feel that such and such was a dry, wilderness time in your life?
- Does anyone have a testimony of how God brought them out of a dry time? What happened?
 - Does anyone have a testimony of how the Holy Spirit came into their life? What happened?
- Do you feel there is two-way traffic between you and God?
 - Are you making all the running, constantly asking God for this and that or doing this and that for Him – while He doesn't seem to do that much in response? Why might this be?
 - Or are you letting God do all the work, grateful that you are saved of course, but perhaps taking a bit of a back seat? What do you think God might want to say about that?
 - Is there a balance in this two-way flow? What would it look like in practice?
- Do you think some Christians try to get by in life without the help of the Holy Spirit?
 - Why do you think someone would do that? What could tempt someone to try to follow Jesus without being filled with the Spirit?
- Can we go on asking God to fill us with the Spirit?
 - Does anyone feel this would be presumptuous (i.e. that we should leave it to God to decide what to do in our lives and not be pushy with Him?)

Worship Ideas

I really think the best thing here would be to have a prayer ministry time to be filled afresh with the Spirit by just praying for each other and asking God to move in each of us.

But if your group is not ready for this yet, or if you need something to get you started, print off some of the following promises of the Spirit and give them one each to the group. Ask each person to read out their promise and say with each scripture a prayer of thanks for the promised gift of the Spirit – you could prepare a simple response such as "Thank you Lord for the promise of your Spirit" or "Come and live in our hearts."

Joel 2:28

Joel 2:29

Ezekiel 36:26-27

John 7:38-39

Acts 2:38

Acts 2:39

Romans 5:5

Romans 8:2

Romans 8:15

2 Corinthians 3:17

Galatians 5:22

Ephesians 1:13

Works / Witness

[Alpha preparation meeting this Wednesday 7.30pm at the Rectory](#)

Alpha has been such a blessing to St Matthew's, bringing new people to faith and new Christians into discipleship! It's great to start planning another Alpha for this autumn and we are getting the ball rolling this Wednesday with a preparatory meeting.

Thank you all the groups that have decided to send a rep to this meeting. It would be wonderful if all the groups could participate in one way or another, whether in prayer (vitaly important!), catering, leading discussions, promotion, setting up and organising, or inviting friends along. If you haven't organised a rep please could you give it some thought.