



6/14/2020

“Be Filled and Moved by The Holy Spirit”

Scripture: Ephesians 3:14-19

Second Sunday after Pentecost

Festival of the Christian Home

“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be **strengthened in your inner being** with power through his Spirit, and **that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith**, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have **the power to comprehend**, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and **to know the love of Christ** that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be **filled with all the fullness of God.**” (NRSV)

Theme: As the apostle Paul prayed for believers in Ephesus, so my prayer is for all of our members and friends of Chesapeake City United Methodist Charge.

On this next to the last Sunday in worship with you as Pastor of CCUMC, I decided to use these verses from the letter of the apostle Paul to believers in Ephesus, because it expresses my sincerest desires and prayers for all of you as well.

Especially in these challenging days of pandemic and coming together once again, as well as continued expressions of grief, protest, discussions, and seeking to make our country and world a better place for all people, we may wonder where God is, and what God would have us do.

So, let’s take a closer look at what this prayer is, and why it is prayed, for certainly it was prayed in a most challenging time as well.

Paul begins by kneeling in prayer before God “the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name”, which I will discuss more in detail next week.

Suffice it to say this morning that Paul’s prayer and mine is that you are and will remain aware of who you are and who has made you. We are all children of God, though we wander away at some time or another, or may not be aware of it. God wants you more than anything else to remember and realize that you are part of God’s family. And God offers love and belonging as part of that family. God offers acceptance, support and guidance for your life.

† **“I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit . . .”**

First, this is a prayer which acknowledges and seeks blessing according to the riches of God’s



glory, not relying upon the limitations of personal or even worldly material resources and limited perspective and vision. As you may have heard me say before, God is far greater and able to supply us with all that we need; and much of what we need is not material or earthly.

Specifically, in this case, and often in our own, what is needed is strength – **strength in our inner being**. And that strength will come most effectively with the power of the Holy Spirit.

God placed his spirit within the prophets and other leaders of his people of the Old Testament.

Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit, so that he could fulfill his mission on earth. Jesus blessed the apostles and others with the Holy Spirit before sending them out to proclaim the good news of God’s kingdom with power; casting out evil spirits, healing, and even bringing life to the dead. And the apostles and all believers received the Holy Spirit as Jesus promised. The Holy Spirit, as Jesus said, is our Advocate, Comforter and Counselor from God.

The Holy Spirit not only advocates, comforts and counsels us, the Holy Spirit gives us strength to face trials, challenges, and temptations. The Holy Spirit “inspires” and “encourages” us in our walk of faith – so that the spirit and courage we need is within us. We are no longer powerless to face temptation or hardship. That power is not just fleeting or on the surface, but something that is placed deep within us and now a part of who we are, so that we may do what is right and just.

So, if you are facing trials, temptations, struggles from within or beyond you, call upon God to strengthen you by the Holy Spirit. Difficult as life is at times, I am thankful to see God’s spirit give strength to you when needed. **This is my prayer for all of you as well.**

† Further, I pray **“that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.”**

This prayer affirms my desire that all of us may have Jesus in our hearts, and that his presence comes from our faith and trust in him. Turning from our sins and failures, and asking God’s forgiveness in Jesus’ name, Christ will come into our hearts with mercy and love.

Then, as we continue in prayer, worship, reading and reflecting on God’s word, holy communion and fellowship with others in Christ, the seeds of our faith become well rooted in the good soil of our hearts and minds – with the love of God in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit.

Therese A. Hamilton of Indiana speaks of her **“Roots of Faith”** (UR, 6/18/01) . . .

My husband and I were drawn to our house because it is surrounded by 50-foot maples, elms, and sycamores. We look out from the kitchen and living room onto a sea of green leaves. Psalm 1:3 says that people who follow God are like trees that grow by streams of water and yield their fruit in its season. In our new home, I felt like a tree planted close to the living water.

Then our first child was stillborn. Soon after that terrible shock, my father-in-law died. Then my husband and I struggled through the disappointments of infertility. With one loss after another, I felt as if my faith were being chopped down like a tree, until nothing was left.

After many months of anger and depression, I began to experience God opening my eyes to



the richness and beauty of my life. Even though I had suffered losses, I had much for which to be thankful. Now when I look at our tall, majestic trees, I appreciate their roots more than their swaying branches or colorful foliage. And I pray for deeper roots in Christ, so that I can withstand whatever life may bring.

So, consider if Christ dwells in your heart, and how you are being rooted and grounded in God's love, as I have seen over these past four years.

† My prayer for you is also **“that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.”**

Paul prays, as I do, that you may have the power to comprehend with your mind the magnitude of God's love; the purpose, the power, and the plan for you and all of creation. Yes, I believe that God's ways are not our ways, and that the fullness of God is beyond our mortal comprehension. And yes, I believe that we don't always know or understand what God is doing or why. Yet, I also believe that with faith we may comprehend or grasp hold of the mystery of God's love in Christ – the how much, that surpasses fully knowing how or why.

More important than having the knowledge and understanding of life and all its mysteries, is the surpassing knowledge and mystery of Jesus and the gospel. The purpose of God's plan is **to know the love of Christ.** It is the fullness of God's love and plan for all of creation.

Our knowledge of Jesus Christ, and the love we receive from and through him, enable us to love others. When we know and experience God's forgiveness for ourselves, we are able to forgive. When we know and acknowledge our material blessings, we are able to offer and share them with others. When we have felt understood by Christ, we are better able to understand others. When we feel that peace of Christ which passes understanding, we are able to offer and share that peace with others.

So, consider first and foremost not what and how much you know about God, but if you really know the love of Christ for you and others and even all of God's creation.

† And finally, the purpose of my prayer, as Paul's, is this, **“so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”**

Now that certainly is a lot to expect or ask for in prayer. It may be as some believe that the fullness of God can only be had by us in part in this life (*The Interpreter's Bible*, Abingdon Press, 19 , p. 680). As *The Interpreter's Bible* says, “though God withholds nothing, we are able to receive only in the measure of our spiritual capacity.” (Ibid)

It is prayed so that we all should progress in all aspects of our lives into the person God has created us and ultimately intends us to be – **to be fully aware of God and complete or full of God's love, grace, righteousness and holiness.** As Jesus said, we should be perfect – or complete – as our heavenly Father is (Matthew 5:48).



All the fullness of God was pleased to dwell in Christ Jesus, Paul said in his letter to the Colossians (1:19). And again (2:9-10) he wrote, ***“For in him dwells the whole fullness of deity in bodily form, and you have come to fullness of life in him.”*** So “in principle this fullness is already granted to Christian believers”, says The Interpreter’s Bible, “in their union with Christ”.

Remember what Jesus said? . . . ***“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full!”*** or ***“abundantly!”*** NRSV (John 10:10)

“Yet the gift has still to be realized in experience through spiritual growth. . .” (Op Cit.) This is the process John Wesley called **“going on to perfection”**, which he believed was possible in this life.

Again as The Interpreter’s Bible puts it: “Thus the inward strength imparted through the Spirit, the abiding presence of Christ in our hearts, the rooting and grounding of our lives in love, and the deepening knowledge of the scope of God’s design in creation and in redemption are aspects of our progress toward the ultimate goal of our life – that we should be filled with all the fullness of God.”

So, what does that look like for us personally and collectively in this world? It looks like Jesus lived and taught.

Friends, in regard to personal piety, social justice, grace and mercy for all people, I believe and am thankful that our country has come far these past hundred years, even as I have witnessed or been a part of in my lifetime. Yet, I also believe it is obvious by the thoughts, words and actions of some that continued discrimination, prejudice and racism live on. We have further to go. As children of God, we must continue to pray and seek the living presence of the Holy Spirit to be **strengthened in our inner being, and in that of others, that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith**, always being rooted and grounded in love. And that being filled and led by the Holy Spirit, fed by the Water and the Word of life, we will continue to rise up as a tree of life that continues to bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

And so, as I hope you will further reflect on God’s promises today and through the week and weeks ahead, I ask you in Christ’s love. . . How is it with your soul? How full is your life with the Spirit of God?

I am prayerful for you and all those who seek to make changes for the betterment of all people, as well as for those serving in harm’s way to provide and keep peace, justice, healing, prosperity and hope for all.

Please join with me in prayer . . .