

17 November 2019 Sermon Summary

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Many of you are aware that our toilets here have been out of commission for a while. In case you are wondering, we are just delaying completing them until next year, because we have blown our maintenance budget. However, the reason we had to dig up the pipes was that they had become blocked. They tried blasting water down. They tried rods. They sent cameras down. But it would not unblock. The pipes were old clay pipes and they start to collapse. Then nappies and paper get put down and it snags on the jagged edges. There was a really weird pipe layout as well that did not help. Slowly the water was being restricted. The pipes had water in them. It just could not flow as it was meant to. Until eventually, the water stopped flowing altogether.

The same thing can happen without blood. A few years ago, Ros started getting chest pains, and becoming breathless. What they discovered was that her main artery going to her heart was blocked. So they put a stent in. I understand it to be a like a little bit of pipe in that forces the artery open so blood can start to flow again. What causes it to block? Well, in Ros case, a bad gene pool. :) It is hereditary. However, issues of eating, lifestyle, age are contributing factors. It is not that there is not blood. The issue is that it is restricted. If it stays restricted, then you die.

I think you can see a common thread in those two stories. I want you to keep those stories in mind as we come to the sixth in our series on Core Beliefs. Core beliefs of Christianity. What are the beliefs that if you took any one of them away, you no longer have Christianity?

1. God, 2. Jesus 3. People. 4. Church 5. Scripture. Number six is the Holy Spirit.

Of the seven core beliefs, this one and next week's one are the two that have caused the most debate. You might even say "are you sure they are core." However, rest assured, belief in the Holy Spirit is central to the Christian faith.

We believe the Holy Spirit is divine, and part of the Godhead Matthew 28:19, John 14:15-24, 2 Cor 13:14 etc.

The Holy Spirit is not an abstract force. The Holy Spirit is a person, is God, and is part of the mysterious concept we call the trinity. Father Son and Spirit working intimately together and in perfect harmony

We believe the Holy Spirit draws us to union with Christ (John 3:1-8)

We believe the Holy Spirit Lives within all believers (Acts 1:5, 1 Cor 12:3) to guide,(John 16:13-15) assure (Romans 8:16) and renew (2 Thess 2:13, Gal 5:22) and empower us (1 Cor 12, Acts 1:8)

Two very minor issues that have caused great division.

Are all the gifts for today, or just some but not the supernatural ones. Some churches deny gifts like healing and tongues are for today and claim they stopped at the writing of the Bible. We talked about this extensively earlier in the year. (1 Corinthians series) We believe that all the gifts are for today. However, Christianity at its core believes the Holy Spirit empowers believers and there is no debate about this

Some teach that believers need a Baptism of the Holy Spirit i.e. A second experience of the Spirit that follows conversion—a pouring out of the Spirit who releases the gifts of the Spirit on a person. Many people can attest to such an experience. This has caused division and confusion. Those who have not had such an experience feel second rate. Those who have become proud. Both camps agree that

1. When we become a Christian we are filled with the Holy Spirit.
2. All Christians are to be full of the Spirit. Walk in the Spirit. Exhibit fruit of the Spirit.

So the only debate is how one gets to that point. Is there a second experience. An overflowing of the Spirit?

I think the pipes and arteries illustration I started with is a better way to see this, rather than the idea of God dropping the Holy Spirit on us from above. At times that unblocking of the pipes can come in a rush, like when the plumber uses high pressure water to unblock the pipes. There is a sudden unblocking and this results in a powerful experience. Believers often experientially feel a great joy, an overwhelming, a warmth, a deep desire to worship and speaking in tongues. Maybe that has been your experience. 5 10 20 years ago. The key question is. Are you full of the Holy Spirit today? Now.

Maybe that is not been your experience. That is fine. You are not less than a person who has had such an experience. The same question applies. Are you full of the Holy Spirit today. Is the Spirit flowing through every part of your life? Alternatively, have you restricted the Holy Spirit?

Three things that restrict the Holy Spirit in our lives

Unbelief. Maybe for us God is distant. We do not believe that God lives in us or that God is present. Maybe because of false teaching you have come to fear the Holy Spirit. Somehow, you think the Holy Spirit will make us do weird things. We might find God as Father a bit distant. Jesus we feel comfortable with, he is gentle and kind. However, the Holy Spirit we feel fearful of and seems spooky. We are not sure about the Holy Spirit. Maybe we have seen people say or do weird things claiming to be led by the Spirit. Maybe you have been pushed over when someone has prayed for you, and claimed you were slain in the Spirit when you were not. (please hear me correctly. I am not denying that we can be physically overwhelmed by the presence of God. It has happened to me. But I have also been pushed. Maybe we struggle to experience God. Maybe we are just not convinced that God by his Spirit is present here and now. The Holy Spirit is God can be gentle and can be powerful. All the characteristics of God are true for the Spirit of God. Jesus promised we would not be alone in a world He would not leave us as orphans and was sending his Spirit to be with us. Maybe for whatever reason unbelief has come into your life. , you have allowed the Holy Spirit to become restricted in your life. That Unbelief has come out of pain, suffering, trauma or bad experiences. If this is you, you need to confess that this morning. Ask for God's forgiveness.

Busyness The Spirit is not rushed or hurried. We can choose to walk as it were with the Holy Spirit, or we can choose to rush on without him, The Holy Spirit does not adjust his pace for ours. We have to adjust our pace for him, we cannot rush the Spirit of God. The question is. Are we going to slow down to keep in step with the Spirit? Ros and I go walking regularly. I walk faster than Ros, and so continually end up out front and have to keep adjusting my step. It takes deliberate effort to cultivate an awareness of the Spirit of God. The Spirit's voice is a quiet whisper not a loud shout. It is very easy to miss the nudges often Spirit. It takes time being still. The biggest hindrance to us being aware of the Holy Spirit is our life style. Many people today have no stillness or quietness in there lives. They have not space that is not unplugged where there is no cell phones or music or TV.

I realize it is very easy to create guilt over this issue. You might be a young mum with 3 kids. The only quiet time you get is when on toilet, or when collapse into bed exhausted every night. What are the rhythms that you need to build into your life at this season. They will be different in different seasons. By rhythms, I mean patterns, routines, practices that you deliberately create to be more aware of the presence of God.

It might be turning off cell phone hour, it might be 5 minutes sitting quiet and still listening to your breathing and being aware of God's presence. It might be you set your phone midday and Say the Lord's Prayer slowly or meditate on one verse. It might be pencilling out a block of time in the weekend where you explore God's creation, conscious of God as you do. I do a short fitness program when I get up. 11-minute high intensity workout. I confess it is hard to do even though it is only 11 minutes. I can think up lots of excuses not to do it. I say to myself, I went for a walk last night, it is too cold this morning, I have got a headache or I need to get an early start. Sometimes I miss a few weeks. Then I think I can just jump back to the same level I was and then I am so stiff afterwards. It does not work to do it occasionally. However, when I do do it regularly, I feel better, focus better and play tennis is better. So why is it so difficult to do? Maybe you Can any of identify with this.

These are not legalistic rules that we feel guilty about if we miss. These are things we build into our lives so that we can give space for the Holy Spirit to move and that we become more conscious of God with us and in us.

We are in a spiritual battle. Last thing the enemy wants you to do is to spend time with God. Be still and be conscious of the presence of God. Our humanity is weak. Part of the problem too is that we can do this stuff and think. Nothing happens. I did not get fuzzy feeling of God's presence. I did not get any great revelation from reading the Word. My day did not go any better. I did not hear God speak. We are so used to instant experiences. However, this does not work when it comes to God. God is not a consumer experience. God does not work to our pace and on our agenda. We have to wait on God as it were. Why do we have to wait? We tend to think: I have many things to do right now. I cannot wait on God. If he does not turn up now, then I have too much to do to hang around anymore. We demand God work to our timetable. God is not required to fit into our lifestyle. We are called to fit into God's lifestyle. He is God, we are created. What are the practices and rhythms that will help you keep in step with presence of God at this season of your life. Start slowly. Get someone to be accountable to. Don't expect instant results

Sin. We all have sin in our lives. However, when we continue to do what we know is wrong, that slowly begins to restrict the Spirit flow. Bible calls it the hardening of our hearts. It is exactly what happens to our arteries. They become hard and blocked. Is there something in your life that you know now is not right. God is calling you to deal with. Maybe it is an idol that you are worshipping, a person or activity that has taken over your life. Or a bitterness, unforgiveness towards someone that has hurt you. Or a sexual behaviour Or a failure to be generous with money and being greedy, keeping to yourself and not giving it back to God. Are there areas of your life not prepared to submit to God? Confess it before God. Maybe confess it to someone else. Ask them to pray for you. Also, have to be a repentance i.e. a turning away. You cannot just confess and keep doing the same thing. What are we going to do differently?

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- ◆ How much teaching did you hear about the Holy Spirit when you were a young Christian?
- ◆ Have the controversies about the gifts and baptism of the Spirit impacted you personally? How have you resolved these issues?
- ◆ Have you experienced things that have made you wary or even fearful of the Holy Spirit?
- ◆ What rhythms have you in your life at the moment, that cultivate an awareness of the presence of God? What practices in your life at the moment are hindering your awareness of the Holy Spirit?
- ◆ Reflect on Hebrews 3:7-19. How at times is this "hardening" outworked in our lives?
- ◆ What could you change this week as a result of this sermon/study?