

Christ the Lord Episcopal Church Pinole, CA

Pentecost Day: May 23, 2021

“Holy Spirit as Prayer Partner”

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Good Morning everyone and Happy Pentecost Day; we all look great in red. Today is considered the birthday of the church, and one of its founding rituals was prayer. Our reading from Romans this morning talks about the gift of the Holy Spirit, not in a generalized or imagined way, but distinctly as our own private prayer warrior and partner who gives us mediation to God.

The Early Church understood the power of prayer. The Early Church was victorious not because it owned a lot of land or a fancy auditorium, no big checkbook or financial statements, no powerful political clout. In fact, members were often taunted or threatened for being a follower of Jesus. Just as we talked about last week, the fate of the apostles was not an easy one. How do you grow a faith strong enough to face crucifixion, even upside down, or being thrown in a lion's den, being estranged from family and all the other perils of their time?

The Early Church was victorious because they learned how to lean into the Holy Spirit. They learned how to partner in prayer with the Holy Spirit. They prayed in the Spirit and, as a result, they saw people radically healed, prison doors opened, thousands of people coming to faith and entire communities transformed. Because they partnered in prayer with the Holy Spirit they were able to line up their prayers with the perfect will of God. These were people who prayed in trust, with patience that God knew what was best for them. People who could imagine the unexpected, and wait on the miracles and strength to endure whatever obstacles were put in front of them.

Praying is not foreign to us, right? Our service is actually entitled “Morning Prayer.” And most of us have turned to prayer over and over again as we have faced one sort of trouble after another. This last year we have been broken, knocked down, defeated, maybe lost a loved one, experienced a heartache, faced a bad medical report, lost hope, encountered enemies and faced our fair share of trials and tribulations. This last year we have found ourselves confused, anxiety-ridden and at times almost overcome with depression.

It is during these times that we individually and collectively have reached out to God in prayer. We have tried to compose some type of prayer that would bring help, healing, reconciliation, grace, forgiveness, peace, deliverance and relief. And we, like the Early Church, are still here, moving forward in uncertain times.

During those times when you reached out in prayer did you realize the Holy Spirit was working on your behalf? Could you feel something in those times when the words would not come? Did you gain an insight, a sigh, a breath? That was the Holy Spirit. What about when we feel out of control? We like to have a measure of control over our finances, our health, and our lives. We like to be able to go where we want to go and do pretty much what we want to do. We have certainly noticed over the last year and a half that doing what we want to do, and what we actually can do has been severely compromised.

But when we give up control to the Holy Spirit in prayer, when we let the Spirit guide our words or thoughts, we become open to new insights and spiritual lessons. We become closer in relationship to God, as the Spirit has the map and blows things in our direction – sometimes when we least expect it. I know that none of us, at least in this church, expect to roll in the aisles, being taken up by the Spirit. As for myself - sitting in nature, or just before bed I will begin to pray: “Dear God” and then I wait...praying is saying, but silence is listening. And not long after I say

the words, “Dear God”, my mind will bring up a person or situation I want to hold in prayer. Or the solution to a vexing issue will pop up - just as simple as writing the sermon everyone needs to hear on a Sunday!

You don't need to be silent in prayer, but you do need to pray with expectation and room for God's breath to move you and your needs to their right and proper place in the Universe. Even if that place was never in your own thoughts. This is opening up, letting go, and letting God. So many times when we pray we don't always know what is best for us or for the person for whom we are praying. We cannot see the full picture. We don't know the future. We don't know what is in their heart or what is best for them or for us. But the Spirit knows.

It is easy for us at times to get confused or to think the wrong thoughts. It is easy for us at times to ask the Lord to just remove something in our lives, when the Lord wants to really use that thing for our benefit. We know that the Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit is our Teacher, our Comforter and our Guide. But are we aware that one of the greatest things that the Holy Spirit wants to do in our lives is to be our prayer partner?

We need to be reminded of the prayer life of the early church. They were not in control of their destiny as we see how they were martyred. Yet, here we sit, in church, digitally, still praying in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The legacy of the followers of Jesus continues, thanks to the Holy Spirit.

Here are some reminders of who our prayer partner really is. The Holy Spirit is Perfect and is part of God. It understands God and God's plan for us and is able to guide us and help us have a victorious prayer life.

The Holy Spirit knows what is best for us as individuals and as a corporate body. It can interpret God's plans to us. It can prepare us for the future. The Holy Spirit is

our Advocate, Guide, and Comforter sent in the Spirit of Jesus himself. In the true spirit of Love and 100% Light. The Holy Spirit loves us, energizes us, and gives us strength for the journey.

The Early Church recognized this. We too must remember that the foundation of our faith and the basis of our work in the world does not revolve around bank accounts and financial statements, buildings or political stances; the foundation of our faith is the love of Jesus Christ: given, received, and then shared with the world.

And to nurture that foundation we need to pray with the Holy Spirit, not against it. We need to be flexible in whatever direction God is calling us to go. This Church, Christ the Lord, has been guided by the Holy Spirit in all it has done through this past year and a half, and we have done a lot considering the circumstances. Let us continue to listen to the Spirit, our greatest prayer partner, and move through these uncertain times with confidence. **Amen**