

The Effects of Revival

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Preacher: Rev. Jonathan St. Clair

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at ChristChurchEastBay.org. Good morning. I'm Andrew. I'm part of the youth group here.

At Christ Church, our scripture reading today is from Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2, verses 1-4, 9-14, and 37-47. As printed in your liturgy, so you can find it.

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest upon each of them. All were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Parthians, Medes, Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus in Asia, Phrygia and Panphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs.

[1 : 24] We hear them declaring the wonders of God in their own tongues. Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, What does this mean? Some, however, made fun of them and said, They have had too much wine.

Then Peter stood up with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd, Fellow Jews and all you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you.

Listen carefully to what I say. When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, Brothers, what shall we do? Peter replied, Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The promise is for you and for your children and all who are far off, for all whom the Lord will call. And with many other words he warned them, and he pleaded with them, Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.

Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

[2 : 32] Everyone was filled with the awe of the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give anyone who had need.

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke their bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.

And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Lord, send the Holy Spirit and amplify my voice.

If you are new to Christ Church, we're doing something new this fall. In fact, something we've never done before in our almost 17 years together, and that is preaching about revival.

And I've just been sensing the Lord leading us in this direction for quite some time because we were locked down as a church for a year. Some of us haven't been able to participate in our church for two years or maybe even more.

[3 : 38] And our church experienced an incredible amount of change, an incredible amount of challenges in a very short period of time. And so I've just, in this post-pandemic season, as we're reforming Christ Church with newcomers and old-timers, with people from Berkeley and Oakland

and points north and south and east and west of here, I just sense the Lord inviting us to preach and to pray for a revival of the Holy Spirit to come and build the church.

To build the church up into an awakened and enlivened and quickened body of Spirit-filled, Spirit-led Christians.

And as we consider the work of the Holy Spirit in the church, I want to draw your attention to the difference between the ordinary work of the Holy Spirit and the extraordinary work of the Holy Spirit. Because on the one hand, there's this regular work of the Holy Spirit that's usual, that's quiet, gradual, steady, and ordinary work to maintain and to extend the kingdom of God among us all the time.

And we praise God for that. It's like the perpetual dew of God's grace, these little dew drops that form on each individual little blade of grass, working with each of us in our own way and in our own time.

[5 : 04] And then there's the exceptional work of the Holy Spirit, the unusual, striking, sudden, rapid, extraordinary work of the Spirit to, in the church, manifest and increase the glory and the power of God in our lives.

And this is not like the dew every day. This is like the seasonal rain that comes. And it's this collective, simultaneous work that's happening among us all at the same time that's just absolutely remarkable.

And so what I'm calling the church to do is to pray not just for the dew, but to pray for the rain, to pray for the rainy season to come, to pray for a downpour of the Holy Spirit, as it were.

Does that make sense? So today, in the sermon series so far, we've talked about the urgent need of the church, at least in the Western world, for revival.

And we've talked about the hindrances to revival and longing for revival and expecting revival. And today we're talking about the effects of revival. And what I've been arguing, Andrew and I have been arguing, that every revival is really a repetition of Pentecost.

[6 : 16] And so today we want to take a deeper look at this narrative of when the Holy Spirit came upon the church so that we might know how to pray that the Holy Spirit would reproduce these effects among us.

And I'm going to try to persuade you over these next few minutes that the ministry of the Spirit produces or creates a five-fold vitality in His church.

The ministry of the Spirit creates a five-fold vitality in His church. And let me talk for a few minutes just about the ministry of the Spirit.

It's not that the Holy Spirit had never shown up in the world before the day of Pentecost. The Spirit had been given to this person here and that person there.

And of course, Jesus Himself was full of the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit had never been poured out en masse, had never been outpoured on a group of people in an overwhelming and unexpected and unmistakable way.

[7 : 19] And that's what happens at Pentecost. The Holy Spirit comes down on this small congregation of about 120 disciples, about this size group. And we're told in verse 1 that when the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.

Why? Why were they there? What were they doing? Well, they were praying. Because the resurrected Jesus had told them to go and to wait to be clothed with power from on high.

And so Acts 1.14 tells us that they joined together constantly in prayer. Praying for the Holy Spirit. Praying to be clothed with power from on high.

And there's no revival without this kind of praying. No revival without joining constantly in prayer. Lord, clothe us with this power from on high. Well, look at what happens in verse 2.

Suddenly a sound, like the blowing of a violent wind, came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. And they saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.

[8 : 26] So the sound in their ears was like a category 5, you know, hurricane force winds. And the sense to their eyes was like flames of fire.

And perhaps in this moment they're remembering John the Baptist who said, One is going to come who's going to baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire. And maybe they're like, oh, that's terrifying and exhilarating all at the same time.

Well, what does this wind and this fire mean? Well, there are signs to us that the Holy Spirit is this raw, wild, untamable power that unleashes among us the uncreated energies of God.

So that when the Holy Spirit comes, what happens? Well, the same Spirit that brought order to the chaos of creation at the beginning, the same Spirit that came to the dead body of Jesus and gave it life and raised him up to immortality and indestructibility, that Spirit comes upon the church and it affects two major changes among Jesus' disciples.

Before Pentecost, as we know, these apostles were weak. They were helpless. They were afraid. But what happens after Pentecost?

[9 : 45] After Pentecost, they're filled with this blazing power. Look at Peter and his courage. He had denied his Lord. And yet now he's facing fearlessly this hostile crowd and the power of the authorities that can put him to death.

And he doesn't seem to care. These people who had been hiding, men and women hiding behind locked doors for fear of the authorities, are now out there. They go out and they turn the whole Roman Empire upside down.

How do we explain that change? It's a miracle. The Spirit of God came down. And when the Holy Spirit came, the resurrected, ascended, and enthroned Lord Jesus, through the Spirit, was giving his power and his authority and his energy to all the people who were trusting in him and calling on him and following him.

That's what Pentecost is about. And that's really what revival is all about. That the Holy Spirit comes to listless and lifeless believers. And he puts a fresh wind and a fresh fire in our hearts so that we are experiencing in a new way the fullness and the abundance of life in our resurrected Lord Jesus. Does that make sense? But you know, what else happens beyond that? They not only have a new power and a new life and a new courage, but we're told in verse 4 that all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

[11 : 24] This Holy Spirit came dancing on the disciples in tongues of fire to enable the church to find her tongue, to enable the church to open her mouth and speak words and utter rational, intelligent, coherent, persuasive words in language that everybody could understand and that was relevant to their lives.

You know, many people think that when the Holy Spirit comes he's going to turn me into a Marvel superhero. But that's not what the Holy Spirit does. What happens when the Holy Spirit comes is that people come under his speaking ministry, under his truth ministry.

So that in verse 11, they say, we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues. When the Holy Spirit comes, people can hear about the wonderful works of God in and through Jesus in a fresh way like they've never heard it before.

They can hear about the mighty acts of God, the saving deeds of God to intervene into our lives and to come and turn fallen, ruined, sin-soaked creatures like us into new creations.

And that's what happens to Peter in verse 14. It says, Peter stood up with the 11 and he raised his voice and addressed the crowd. Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you.

[12 : 50] Listen carefully to what I say. And when the Holy Spirit comes, the Spirit produces this five-point sermon from Peter. You can read about it later. Peter gives them a sermon about the scriptures and the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

That's what happens when the Spirit comes. Do you remember Jesus' favorite name for the Holy Spirit? The Spirit of truth. The Spirit brings a new power on the church to declare the truth of the gospel.

And after Peter gets done with this long five-point sermon, he kept everybody late. They had to get to lunch late. It was really annoying. What does it say in verse 37?

It says, when the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, brothers, what shall we do? See, the Holy Spirit brings this truth that we are sinners and Jesus alone can save us.

And that truth begins to penetrate beneath the surface, beyond the superficial and the shallow stuff, down to the real stuff, down to what matters most, down to the deepest human heart problems and heart needs that we have.

[14 : 10] And so I just want to say that if you're here today and you're exploring Christianity, we are so glad that you've come to do that here, but I have to warn you that part of the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to cut you to your heart.

The Spirit of Truth wants to come and give you a painful, piercing truth, an uncomfortable and even inconvenient truth, a demanding and a challenging truth.

The Holy Spirit wants to come and convince you of the plight of your sin and of the power of Christ to save you. And the Holy Spirit wants to come and cut your heart so that you can see how desperate you are before God and that you might cry out to Him like these people cried out, what shall we do?

What shall we do? And if you're someone here today who identifies as a Christian and if you're praying for revival and you want more of the Holy Spirit, I want to warn you, be careful what you pray for because this Spirit of Truth wants to deal with you and wants to deal with the things in your mind and the things in your life that are not in line with the truth of the gospel.

He wants to come and blow through your life like a fresh wind. He wants to blaze through your life like a fire. The Holy Spirit wants to come and give you a new energy and power and authority and courage like we see our brothers and sisters had in those first days.

[15:46] In fact, the Holy Spirit wants to come and He wants to open your mouth so that you too can speak the truth of the gospel to other people so that you too can declare the wonderful works of God in Christ and so that you, like Peter, can say, let me explain this to you.

So I invite us to examine ourselves this morning. Whether we're exploring Christianity or whether we identify as Christian, do I really want this ministry of the Holy Spirit?

Do I really want the Holy Spirit to cut me? And do I really want the Holy Spirit to change me?

Because when revival comes, that's what happens.

And it doesn't just happen to an individual here, an individual there. It happens to whole communities all at one time. That's the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

And the ministry of the Spirit comes, and we notice in this text that the Spirit creates a five-fold vitality in the church. The Spirit comes and creates a five-fold vitality in His church.

[17:02] And a church that's not in revival might be strong in one or two of these areas, but when the Holy Spirit comes and revival is happening, He creates a vitality in all five of these areas simultaneously, and that is this.

Vibrant worship, intimate fellowship, doctrinal teaching, biblical evangelism, and compassionate social concern.

A church is ordinarily maybe strong at one or two of these, but when the Holy Spirit comes, He brings alive all five, and I want to talk about each one for a moment. First of all, vibrant worship. We're told in verse 42 that they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer, or in the Greek it says to the prayers, which means they devoted themselves to prayer in private, in their closet at home, where they prayed before the Father who's unseen and sees what's done in secret.

But they also committed themselves to these public gatherings of prayer when the church would come together and plead with God about particular things. They devoted themselves to this, and it says in verse 46 that every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts.

[18:15] They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God. They met in both the temple and in homes, this balance between the organic and the organized, the formal and the informal.

They said we don't just need the large congregation of the temple, we also need the smaller groups in our homes. We need both. And the church committed themselves, it says, daily to pray, not just one prayer meeting a month.

They had 30 prayer meetings a month. And if we're gonna have revival in this place, we've gotta pray more at home, and we've gotta pray more at church.

And that's why we've created opportunities for us to do that here on Sunday mornings, Tuesday nights, second Wednesday of the month is our even song and prayer. We had 30 people last time. I hope we'll have 120 people next time.

And if you missed it, I'd love for you to come and join us. But it says here that they, in their vibrant worship, with a glad heart they praised God.

[19:20] There was an exuberant, unfiltered joy. Because God the Father has sent his Son and his Spirit to save us, how can we not be joyful? Isn't the fruit of the Holy Spirit joy?

I mean, I don't know about you, but a few times in my life, I've walked into a worship service, and I thought, oh no, I've come to a funeral by mistake. You know, nobody's smiling, the music is slow,

it's all in a minor key, it sounds like a dirge, and I'm like, cheer up.

You know, because Jesus died, but spoiler alert, he rose from the dead. So we should sing boldly, and robustly, and loudly, and joyfully, and with one voice, like that choir that was up here.

We should all be the choir. Amen? But there's a reverent rejoicing, because it says in verse 43 that they were filled with awe. And the reason they were filled with awe is because they sensed the power and the presence of God, this high and holy God, and he was doing wonders and signs among them.

And that caused them to just fall on their knees with a sense of awe before God, and that's what happens in revival. The Holy Spirit comes, and we have both glad praise and reverent fear with continual prayer.

[20 : 41] The ministry of the Spirit creates this vibrancy, this vitality in worship. But he also creates this intimate fellowship, right? These first Christians were not living as isolated individualists.

They said, we need each other. And when it says that they devoted themselves to fellowship, that means they committed their most precious resource of their time.

They said, the church family is going to be more important to us than any other potential time investment out there. That God and the people of God are going to be our top priority in our scheduling and our organizing.

That we're not going to waste any time on anything that's not worthy of our time. Well, what did they do when they came and met together every morning and every evening before and after work?

They devoted themselves to fellowship, or that word in Greek is koinonia. And what it does not mean in Greek is they devoted themselves to hang out over coffee.

[21 : 41] Because the word means they devoted themselves to a sharing in common. And what is it that they were sharing in common? These were not affinity groups. They were not shared interests.

They did not say, oh, you like IPAs? So do I. Oh, you like novels? So do I. Oh, you like the NBA? You like to knit? You like politics? So do I. It was not a sharing in those things.

Though I like some of those things. What were they sharing in common? They were sharing in common the grace of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

They were sharing in common the divine and eternal life of God Himself among them. They were sharing in common the abundant eternal life of Christ within them.

Their common shared participation in God gave them a common shared life together. I don't know if you've ever read this book called *The Pursuit of God* by A.W. Tozer, but he says this.

[22 : 46] He says, Has it ever occurred to you that 100 pianos, all tuned to the same fork, are automatically tuned to each other? They are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which one must individually bow.

So 100 worshipers met together, each one looking away to Christ, are in heart nearer to each other than they could possibly be were they to become unity conscience and turn their eyes away from God and strive for a closer fellowship.

And you see, in revival, what happens is that the whole church becomes tuned to the fork of Christ and Him crucified. And because we're tuned to that fork, we, without even thinking, we just start sacrificially giving ourselves to love and serve each other because that's what He did for us.

So when the Spirit comes, He creates this five-fold vitality, vibrant worship, intimate fellowship, doctrinal teaching is the third thing. In verse 43, it says that they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching.

When they got together for worship and for fellowship, they came to fix their attention on the divine truth that had been given from the Father through Jesus by the Holy Spirit to the apostles.

[24 : 12] These spirit-filled Christians were not enjoying among themselves a mystical experience that caused them to neglect their intellect and to stop thinking and to despise theology.

Rather, the fullness of the Spirit caused them to engage their minds in the truth of divine revelation. And that's one of the great tests to know whether or not you have the Spirit and are full of the Holy Spirit is do you give any time to seek the truth that's been given through the apostles in the New Testament?

These are the authoritative teachers that Jesus taught. And don't we wish that we could have been part of those sessions, right, where Jesus is interpreting the Bible to them, where Jesus is telling them, here are the words and the works and the ways of God.

Well, friends, in a way, we can be a part of that because it's been preserved for us in the New Testament. What we see here is that the Spirit of God leads the people of God to submit to the Word of God.

One of the great living New Testament scholars of our time is N.T. Wright and he says this, he says, where no attention is given to apostolic doctrinal teaching and to constant lifelong Christian learning, people quickly revert to the worldview or mindset of the surrounding culture and end up with their minds shaped by whichever social pressures are most persuasive with Jesus somewhere around as a pale influence or memory.

[25 : 49] And haven't we seen that happen in the church in North America over the last three years, five years, seven years, whenever you want to start the clock, right? But a church that's in revival when the Holy Spirit comes is a people that's soaking in this truth and this doctrinal teaching of the New Testament.

Now, you might say, gosh, you're almost, we hopefully, you're almost at the end of your sermon, but why have you only talked about the interior life of the church so far?

I mean, why haven't you said anything about the compassionate outreach of the church to the outside world? And you're right. When revival happens, when the Holy Spirit comes, he brings in the church this balance where she's devoted both to nurturing her interior life of God's people and to meeting the exterior needs of the city, both spiritual needs and material needs.

But I do want to say that there's a priority here. There's a priority of interior worship and fellowship and teaching because those things are what energizes and what directs all the rest of the stuff out there.

If we don't have anything going on in here, we can't start to sustain things out there. And that's the fourth thing I want to bring up is that the Holy Spirit comes and brings about biblical evangelism.

[27 : 18] And again, we have a priority here before compassionate social concern because people's material needs are a signpost to their deeper and more urgent spiritual needs that are eternal and ultimate things.

We believe at this church that people are not just bodies but they're immortal souls who are going to stand before the judge of all the earth. And that's why this text is so excited to tell us in verse 47 that the Lord was adding to their number daily those who were being saved.

What does that mean? Saved from what? Rescued to what? Well, if you go later this afternoon and you read Peter's gospel preaching at Pentecost, you'll get the answer.

He basically tells them that you are more sinful and flawed than you ever dared imagine and you're more accepted and loved than you ever dared hope.

And that's basically what verse 38 is saying. Peter replied, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

[28 : 29] He says, repent of your sins. All evangelism, all sharing of the gospel has to say that. That you are living in the bondage of sin and death. That you need to be saved from that.

That you cannot save yourself and if you were to die right now, you'd go unprotected before the judgment of God and you would perish forever. That's what Peter's just told them. But then he tells them, that's why you must be immersed.

You must be immersed into Jesus who's the only one who can deal with your sin. The only one who's died in your place. The only one who can forgive you. Jesus is the only one who can give you the Holy Spirit to come and indwell you and get the mercy of God and the love of God inside of you so you can experience its power.

This is Holy Spirit inspired evangelism. It's based on these two truths that number one, God is holy and his law is just and you fall far short of it.

But number two, that God is loving and that in Jesus he's dealt with your sin and you can be totally forgiven and accepted. And I have to say that a church that is all about acceptance and all about grace and all about God's love and they never tell you about the law of God or his wrath on sin or the reality of hell and the justice of hell, that's not a very loving church.

[29 : 59] It's actually, it's not a church in revival. But a church that's only ever telling you what's wrong with you, that you're guilty, that you need to be repent and they're not telling you that Jesus wants to accept you, that Jesus can give you the freedom of forgiveness and the power of the Holy Spirit, that church is also not in revival.

When the Holy Spirit comes he brings these two truths to bear and the evangelism, the biblical evangelism of the early church included both.

And what we know is that it led to exponential, explosive conversions that changed the whole Roman Empire. prayer. Now the final thing I want to say is that there's one more mark of Holy Spirit vitality that we see in revival.

Vibrant worship, intimate fellowship, doctrinal teaching, biblical evangelism, and finally, compassionate social concern. It says that in verse 42, they devoted themselves to breaking bread. That is the Lord's Supper where the Lord comes to us and he says, hey, everybody, I want you and I welcome you into a personal relationship with me.

[31 : 17] And people were so transformed by that experience that they would go out and they would say that to their neighbors. Hey, I want you to come and be in personal relationship with me. In verse 44, it says all the believers were together and they had everything in common.

They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need because the fruit of the Holy Spirit is love. And when needs would arise, they would practice this radical, voluntary generosity where they said, you know, the Father shared his son and the son shared his life with us so by the Holy Spirit, we're going to share all the things that we have to meet real needs among our brothers and sisters.

But they didn't stop there. They just kept extending that principle of generosity and care out to everybody. People that were radically different than them socially, racially, economically.

I love this statement from Rodney Stark. He's a sociologist that wrote a book called The Rise of Christianity and he paints this bleak picture of the misery and brutality of life in the Greco-Roman world and he says, to cities filled with the homeless and impoverished, Christianity offered charity as well as hope.

And to cities filled with newcomers and strangers, Christianity offered an immediate basis for attachments. And to cities filled with orphans and widows, Christianity provided a new and expanded sense of family.

[32 : 47] And to cities torn by violent ethnic strife, Christianity offered a new basis for social solidarity. And to cities faced with epidemics, fires, and earthquakes, Christianity offered effective nursing services.

Friends, in revival, when the Holy Spirit comes, He leaves in His wake orphanages and hospitals and schools and the abolition of slavery and the reform of child labor laws and the reform of prisons and factories and the rescue of women and children from abuse and the care of the mentally ill.

If you just go and read about what God's done and how the Holy Spirit works in revival, you'll see that pattern over and over and over again. And don't we want to be a part of that?

Christ Church, don't we want this five-fold vitality, vibrant worship, intimate fellowship, doctrinal teaching, biblical evangelism, compassionate social concern?

I want to give you a moment just to speak with the Holy Spirit. I know we're a Presbyterian church so I know that's crazy. But I want you to ask the Holy Spirit a question right now.

[34 : 10] Holy Spirit, how do you want to create this five-fold vitality in my life? What are you wanting to do?

Is there anything in my life that's grieving you? Anything that might be quenching the work that you're trying to do?

Is there anything in me that's hindering you from carrying out your will in my life? Holy Spirit, is there anything you want me to stop doing?

Is there anything you want me to start doing? And if as you ask that question, you sense a prompting from the Holy Spirit, you sense that the Spirit is saying something to you, write it down. Don't forget it. Go home today and pray about it. Ask God to do some work in your life because He needs to do work in my life if we're going to experience revival at Christ Church.

[35 : 21] If we want the Holy Spirit to come down not just as the dew but as the rain, as a downpour of showers of God's grace among us.

May it be so. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.