

The Spirit-Filled Son of God

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- [0 : 0 0] All right, well, last Sunday we heard Luke, the gospel writer, telling us about John the baptizer, and this is in Luke chapter 3.
- If you have your Bible, you can open it up to Luke chapter 3. And as we heard, John did not hesitate to rebuke people because of their sins and hypocrisy.
- He didn't hesitate to tell them the hard and unpleasant truth that if they did not repent, God's wrath would come upon them and they would face the unquenchable fire at the judgment.
- But that wasn't all that John said. He said God was willing to forgive them if they repented and that he was willing to wash them or immerse them in the Holy Spirit through the powerful one coming after John.
- And as I was thinking about this, I appreciate how John didn't just tell people what they wanted to hear. He told them what God had to say to them as the word of God came to him.
- [1 : 0 7] And eventually this landed John in some trouble. From Luke chapter 3, verse 19, Luke tells us that when John rebuked Herod the Tetrarch because of his marriage to Herodias, his brother's wife, and all the other evil things he had done, Herod added this to them all.
- He locked John up in prison. If there was anyone that John might have been tempted to go easy on or to just, you know, adjust the tone of his message a little bit for, probably it was Herod.
- Herod was the ruler of the whole region of Galilee, the Tetrarch of Galilee. And yet what did John say to Herod? He told him to repent too.
- He pointed out very specifically the sins of Herod, one of them being his immoral marriage. And more than just that, he rebuked Herod because of that.
- And Luke says all the other evil things he had done. So John was very consistent. I think we see in this just that, you know, had you or I been there, John would not have hesitated to say the same sort of things to us too.
- [2 : 3 0] To shine the light on specific sins in our lives and call us to repent as well. Well, Herod didn't like that, of course. And so he locked John up in prison and this brought John's public ministry to an end.
- But now Luke rewinds just a little bit and lets us know about something that happened before John was put in prison. When people were still being baptized by John, something very significant took place that we don't want to miss.
- From verse 21. When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove.
- And a voice came from heaven. You are my son whom I love. With you I am well pleased.
- So picture this in your mind. John is down by the water's edge. There's a crowd of people on the shore.

[3 : 50] John is teaching. People are responding and they're going forward. They're walking down into the water with him. They're confessing their sins to God.

And they're being baptized, immersed in the water. And then in the midst of all this, a man goes forward. But this time something totally different takes place.

The parallel account in Matthew gives us some other detail here. According to Matthew, there was an exchange between Jesus and John in this moment.

John actually tried to deter Jesus from being baptized. He said to Jesus, I need to be baptized by you.

And do you come to me? So John knew who Jesus was. John knew that this baptism and what it represented forgiveness, repentance, cleansing for sins, John knew that this did not apply to Jesus.

[5 : 07] It made more sense in John's mind for Jesus to come out there and baptize John in that moment. And yet Matthew tells us that Jesus said it's right for us to do this.

Matthew chapter 3 verse 15, Jesus replied, let it be so now. It is proper for us to do this, to fulfill all righteousness. So Jesus neither Jesus nor God in heaven was worried about the people there getting the wrong idea about Jesus in this moment because as we just read, something amazing happens after Jesus is baptized that is just shockingly different than with everyone else.

Continuing on in Matthew, it says there in verse 16, as soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water.

A careful reading of this might suggest that Jesus was first immersed in the water and then he was on his way up out of the river when something spectacular took place.

Matthew in his account says, at that moment heaven was opened and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.

[6 : 36] At that moment heaven was opened. Can you imagine this? According to Mark who has the same thing in his gospel, as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the spirit descending on him like a dove, being torn open.

Luke tells us that at this moment Jesus was praying and as he was praying heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove.

So picture this, Jesus has just been baptized, he's now beginning to walk up out of the water towards the shore and he's praying when all of a sudden it looks as if the sky is ripped open overhead and out of this tear in the sky comes the Holy Spirit of God.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all say that the Spirit of God came down upon Jesus like a dove. In Matthew and in Mark, like a dove seems to describe the manner in which the Spirit descended.

Something like fluttering gently downwards, slow, gentle, gracious. Here in Luke, like a dove seems to describe the outward visible form of the Spirit.

[8 : 19] Spirit. And there's two understandings of this. I mean, some kind of take this quite literally, in bodily form, like a dove, meaning that the Spirit actually resembled a dove.

This is maybe what people saw, only it wasn't a dove, it was the Spirit. Others, including myself, stress that this is the language of simile, like a dove, in bodily form, like a dove, not meaning that he was a dove, but that he was dove-like in appearance, manner, in the way he came down out of the tear in the sky, and in the way that he came to rest upon Jesus, perhaps also in color, movement, and shape, dove-like.

As I read this, my imagination conceives of something maybe a little more like this, exactly how it looked. We weren't there, so we didn't see it.

But can you imagine this? What an amazing thing it must have been for those who witnessed this. Jesus' hair dripping wet, his mouth moving with prayer to God, and the sky seems to open up, and the Spirit of God himself comes down from above gently and gracefully and rests upon him.

And then in that same instant, your ears come alive with the sound of a great voice. And a voice came from heaven, you are my son whom I love.

[10 : 00] With you I am well pleased. God himself speaks from heaven in an audible voice as all this is taking place.

according to both Mark and Luke, God speaks directly to Jesus. You are my son. This is amazing.

This message is primarily for Jesus. These words are for him. And what is God saying to Jesus?

these are the words of family relationship, affectionate family relationship. You are my son. I love you.

I'm pleased with you. I'm delighted with you. There's this kind of deep, mysterious, joyful relationship happening here that the people witnessed.

[11 : 06] nobody else's baptism had this happen after it. This was unique. There's also a sense in which these words were spoken not only for Jesus, but also for the people.

Matthew seems to emphasize this in his description of God's words. It's as if with these words God was saying to the people, this is my son.

And so part of the point of all this is for the people who were there to understand just who Jesus is. I want you to know, says God, this is my son.

I love him dearly. I'm delighted with him. And I would suggest to you that this is why Luke is careful to include this in his record of all that happened with Jesus.

Up until this point, we've seen all kinds of different signs. We've seen angels visiting Zachariah and Mary and the shepherds and we've heard wonderful messages from them.

[12 : 21] there's been miraculous conceptions of John and even more miraculous of Jesus.

There were the prophetic words spoken by Elizabeth, Mary, Zachariah, Simeon, Anna. There was the sign of how Jesus' birth ended up in this town that wasn't where they lived, which fulfilled prophecy and confirmed his ancestry.

Luke's told us about the sign of how wise and understanding Jesus was, even as a 12-year-old boy, discussing things at the temple with the teachers.

And now there's this great sign of John, the son of Zachariah, preaching in the wilderness and calling people back to God and saying to them, there's somebody amazing coming, somebody so worthy, somebody so powerful.

And now this awesome sign that this Jesus, the son of Mary, is the son of God.

[13 : 41] God himself speaks from heaven audibly. you are my son. We've got the visuals, the spirit descending upon Jesus.

Think about this. God is making it as clear as it can be for us. Up until now, he's spoken through angels, prophets, both men and women, and in case we missed all of that or in case we doubt those messengers, God now removes the messengers altogether for an instant and speaks directly to the people who are there.

You are my son. This is my son. And he gives them this spectacular thing to see and to hear so that there's no doubt.

Do you see this sign? Do you believe it? From here, Luke is now going to shift from telling us about John's ministry to telling us all exclusively about Jesus and what happened with him during this very public and well-known time of his ministry.

But we should stop here for today. I debated whether we should go into the genealogy of Jesus, which is listed next, but I thought, no, we'll save that for next week. Genealogies.

[15 : 15] Let's stop here for today. Let's ponder the significance just a little bit of the Spirit of God coming down upon Jesus. What does this mean? What is this all about? We've already talked about how it's a clear sign that Jesus is the Son of God, but what's the significance of the Spirit of God coming down upon the Son of God?

Think back to Old Testament times. When the Spirit of God came upon a person, amazing and wonderful things usually followed.

For Samson, it was superhuman strength. For Solomon, it was unrivaled wisdom. For Elijah, it was the ability to perform great miracles.

angels, and for the many prophets of the Lord, it was this ability to hear and speak the very words of God. And so for all who witnessed this that day and who are aware of all those things written in the scriptures, expectations should be high.

God is God about to do or say through this man, through Jesus. Not only that, but several prophecies spoken by the prophet Isaiah specifically tell us to watch for a coming man upon whom God's spirit rests.

[16 : 49] Let me remind us of a few of them this morning. Isaiah 11, verse 1. A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse, that's the father of David.

From his roots a branch will bear fruit. The spirit of the Lord will rest on him. The spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of might, the spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord.

And he will delight in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes or decide by what he sees with by what he hears with his ears.

But with righteousness he will judge the needy. With justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. And it goes on. There's coming a man descended from Jesse.

That's the father of King David. And what's special about this man besides the truly awesome things that Isaiah says that he will do is that the spirit of the Lord God will rest on him.

[18 : 07] And Isaiah points out with poetic parallelism some of what that means. It means that this son of Jesse will be filled with the wisdom and understanding of God.

He will be filled with the counsel of God. He will wield the power and might of God. By the spirit he will have a true knowledge of God and a proper fear of God.

So even 700 years prior to the birth of Jesus God has told his people to watch for and expect a man descended from Jesse who will have the spirit of God upon him.

And now God here at Jesus baptism God is making it clear. This is that one. Jesus my son.

Another one from Isaiah chapter 42. This is God speaking through Isaiah. God says here is my servant whom I uphold my chosen one in whom I delight.

[19 : 15] I will put my spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. Again, God speaking through Isaiah tells his people to watch for his coming servant, his chosen one.

And notice how this coming servant is described. My chosen one in whom I delight. It's the same thing God just said to Jesus, with you I am well pleased, delighted.

I will put my spirit on him. God said through Isaiah 700 years before this. And now here, what are we witnessing but God putting his spirit on Jesus, his son.

According to this chapter of Isaiah, it's through the spirit of God that Jesus will bring justice and show compassion to the weak and give light to the nations and open eyes that are blind and free captives from prison.

As we'll see in a few weeks' time, it's through the spirit of God upon Jesus that he will proclaim good news and freedom to the poor and to the oppressed.

[20 : 38] So this is huge. The spirit of God coming down like this upon Jesus is God saying so much more than just this is my beloved son. It's God saying my chosen servant is here.

The son of Jesse has come. I'm about to speak to you. I'm about to reveal to you from the depths of my own wisdom and understanding.

I'm about to counsel you through this one like never before so that you know me, so that you fear me as you ought to.

And even more than that, this is the one through whom I will bring justice to the nations. God is saying a lot through this clear and visible giving of his spirit to Jesus.

we're going to see the power of God flowing through Jesus like through no one ever before as we continue on through the story in Luke.

[21 : 46] Do you see the signs which God is giving to make it clear? We're now going to move into celebrating the Lord's table.

And as we do, I want to anchor our approach to the table in this wonderful truth that's expressed by John. It comes from 1 John chapter 4 verses 9 and 10.

The second half of this verse, this passage, verse 10, is actually printed on the wall out in the foyer there. Let me read this for us.

this is how God showed his love among us. He sent his one and only son into the world that we might live through him.

This is love. Not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

[22 : 59] This is where the story of Jesus eventually goes. It goes to the cross where Jesus suffered and died, where the son of God died in order to atone for our sins.

is love. This is how that forgiveness being offered by John is made possible for those who repent and believe.

It comes through the sacrificial atoning sacrifice of Jesus at the cross. John reminds us that the son of God has come because God is love.

So each month we remember that. We remember that our forgiveness was purchased by the body and blood of Jesus which was broken and poured out as he died on the cross.

in keeping with what Jesus told his followers to do we remember that by eating bread which represents his body and drinking grape juice which represents his blood.

[24 : 31] It's a special meal by which we reflect on God's great love. love. Though we are sinners God has made a way for us to be washed clean.

Our guilt taken away. Our sins forgiven. Our relationship to God restored. Life given to us.

and it all comes through Jesus the son of God. And so we're going to eat and drink again in remembrance of him.

I'll have the elders come up and pass out the elements in a couple moments here. And if you're here and you have repented and believed in Jesus then I want to invite you to partake with us.

This is your remembrance too. If not please just allow the bread and the cup to pass you by. We'll take the next minute or so to just reflect to pray and then the elders will come forward and they'll serve the bread and the cup.

[25 : 47] We'll wait until everybody has been served and then we'll eat and drink together in unison after I pray! give thanks.