

Sunday, June 12, 2022

Memory Verse: "Now the way we live is based on the Spirit, not based on selfishness." -Romans 8:4b

Text: "May the love cause your hearts to be strengthened, to be blameless in holiness before our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all His people." -1 Thessalonians 3:13

Message: "Holy Spiritians"

Scripture: Romans 8:1-17

Blurb: In this count-down message series, Pastor David reviews key biblical teachings for living as disciples of Jesus. This Sunday we engage again how Christians are filled with the Holy Spirit, who transforms us from the inside out. This makes all the difference: making us different, and making us live differently. God calls us to be holy in heart and life.

Love.Grow.Serve. Moment: Red Rock Camp

Report from Annual Conference: Marilee Leonard

[Recorded Worship Beginning]

WELCOME -Pastor David

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

"Now the way we live is based on the Spirit, not based on selfishness." -Romans 8:4b

WORSHIP SONG -Prerecording

Worship prayer -Pastor Andrew

[Live Worship Beginning]

GATHERING SONG: *Hymn to the Holy Spirit* -Sanctify

WELCOME -Pastor David

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

"Now the way we live is based on the Spirit, not based on selfishness." -Romans 8:4b

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify

I Love to Hear You Speak to Me

Come, Holy Ghost, Our Hearts Inspire

From the Inside Out

Worship prayer -Pastor Andrew

[Both Recorded & Live Worship]

READING OF SCRIPTURE: Galatians 5:16-25

In Galatians 5 Paul makes a pretty shocking argument that because we have the Holy Spirit living in us, we do not have to live by our selfish desires and sinful nature. Listen for how Paul says we can live holy lives for God. Galatians 5:16-25,

“16 I say be guided by the Spirit and you won’t carry out your selfish desires. 17 A person’s selfish desires are set against the Spirit, and the Spirit is set against one’s selfish desires. They are opposed to each other, so you shouldn’t do whatever you want to do. 18 But if you are being led by the Spirit, you aren’t under the Law. 19 The actions that are produced by selfish motives are obvious, since they include sexual immorality, moral corruption, doing whatever feels good, 20 idolatry, drug use and casting spells, hate, fighting, obsession, losing your temper, competitive opposition, conflict, selfishness, group rivalry, 21 jealousy, drunkenness, partying, and other things like that. I warn you as I have already warned you, that those who do these kinds of things won’t inherit God’s kingdom.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against things like this. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the self with its passions and its desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let’s follow the Spirit.”

REPORT FROM ANNUAL CONFERENCE: Marilee Leonard

LOVE.GROW.SERVE. MOMENT: Red Rock Camp -Pastor David

PRAYERS -Pastor Cassi

GENERATIONAL BRIDGE -Pastor Andrew

MESSAGE: Swan Song #2: “Holy Spiritians”

PP#1: Swan Song #2: “Holy Spiritians”

“May the love cause your hearts to be strengthened, to be blameless in holiness before our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all His people.” -1 Thessalonians 3:13

So, I find myself in a message series that’s being called my Swan Song! I know that it’s because I’m leaving in August, and that makes me now a lame *duck* pastor—sheesh, what’s with all the *fowl* language around transitions?—but I have a personal issue with swans! For the past 25 years, I’ve been unfairly targeted and attacked by swans all over the globe. I’m not kidding - I have stories! I’ve been followed, attacked, bitten, and my sandwich stolen. Swans make me nervous!

But I *have* been thinking about what messages I would like to share before I leave, and for this series I do want to review and reinforce some of what I think are key biblical teachings that I have tried to bring to this church and that are close to my heart and my pastoral discipleship. As you might guess, I will be talking about John Wesley...but mostly I’ll be talking about God!

I actually started this series last week. I used the object lesson of the flashlight. I do love my object lessons, as I have shared dozens of them over the years. But the idea that we are shining lights for God in our dark world is a dominant image for how I understand what it means for us to be disciples of Jesus.

Last Sunday was Pentecost, which is actually my favorite Christian holiday of the year. It's my favorite because I think it celebrates the most applicable part of the Christian faith: the gift we have in the Holy Spirit. Since last week was also graduation Sunday, I didn't get to spend as much focus on the Holy Spirit as I would like, so I'm going back to do that today.

So, here we go: Swan Song #2: "Holy Spiritians." 1 Thessalonians 3:13, "May the love cause your hearts to be strengthened, to be blameless in holiness before our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all His people."

PP#2: *Image of the three persons of the Trinity*

So, one of the things that I want to make sure that you know, before I leave Forest Hills—I simply must say this again—is that you have been given the Holy Spirit in your life. This is just so transformational!

You see, it is true that God is your Heavenly Father: that He made you, that He loves you, that He chose you, that He makes you His child. That is your key identity—and I'll be coming back to that next week!

It is also true that Jesus is your personal Lord and Savior: that He came to die for our sins, to earn our forgiveness, and that if you choose to be His disciple He gives you life abundant and eternal—and I'll be covering that in two weeks.

But as fundamental as all this is, it really means nothing to us without the Holy Spirit. You see, it is in the Holy Spirit that our God—who is this mysterious Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit—that it is by the Holy Spirit that our God is directly with us and in us. It is by the Holy Spirit that the miraculous love of God and the saving work of Jesus becomes ours, and that we are bound together with God!

This, to me, is the fundamental application of the Christian faith! I cannot overstate this!

PP#3: *Image for a person being filled with the Holy Spirit*

In fact, I will even say that I think we might be wrongly named! We are called *Christians* because we are to be little Christs: we are disciples of Jesus who belong to Jesus and who live like Jesus, because of Jesus. *But we can only do that because Jesus has given His disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit.* It is in the Holy Spirit that we personally experience God and have Jesus living in our hearts. It is the Holy Spirit that applies all of God's grace to us personally—that applies the faith of salvation that Jesus has won—into our lives. It is the Holy Spirit who is God with us, and near us, and in us, and empowering us, and transforming us, and perfecting us. We are *Christians*, for sure, but I think a better name for us just might be Holy Spiritians! Sometimes we can focus so much on Christ so that we don't embrace fully enough the Holy Spirit in our lives.

PP#4: Holiness Movement: A Methodist emphasis of John Wesley on the perfecting love of God in the lives of believers. This perfection is not human flawlessness but a wholehearted love of God and others. It is God's will for all believers, which God works through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

As United Methodists, one of our key theological understandings it that we are a holiness movement. God saves us, yes, in Jesus. But that salvation is not just a status change. We aren't just declared "righteous" before God when we are restored to Him. God doesn't just do things in name

only! God's plan of salvation is to, yes, declare us righteous: but then He gives His Holy Spirit to live in us *to make us actually righteous, living and behaving in righteous ways!* The Holy Spirit works in us to work the sinfulness out of us and to make us more holy as God is holy. When we walk with Jesus, the Holy Spirit in us makes us more and more like Jesus: in how we live, in how we behave, in what we say, in what we do.

PP#5: *Image for the Holy Spirit giving a person victory over his or her sin*

So, church, we must stop using the excuse that because we are all sinners that we can keep sinning! We are all sinners, yes, but God has not left us on our own! He does not leave us the way we are! Isn't this such good news? Our God takes us as we are, then comes into us, in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and transforms us from the inside out, so that we can stop sinning! Yes, even those sins that we struggle with over and over again. We don't have to stay stuck with them. We proclaim a hope for a different way of life, a different future, a hope that we do not have to stay the way we are now. Hallelujah! When we truly open our lives to the Holy Spirit, He will give us victory over our sin, and our bent to sinning. This is part of God's promise made clear in the Bible!

Church, we are Holy Spiritians! What we profess on Sunday changes how we live on Tuesday. And sometimes—more than we like to admit—the failures and sin we find ourselves continually struggling with are there *because we let them*: because we don't surrender them before God to fix them, because it's easier to simply live the way we are than it is to pair up with God and do the hard work to clean it up.

Here's the shocking biblical word to our world: the Bible says that because we have the Holy Spirit, we no longer *have* to sin! We can live differently: more grace-filled, more holy.

Now, it's not easy. Being a Christian is not for wimps! It means surrendering ourselves before God and giving up the selfish tendencies that lurk deep inside. And *that* we don't do easily.

Okay, we need to go to the Bible and get this grounded. Turn to Romans 8. This is one of Paul's great passages on living as Holy Spiritians.

PP#6: Romans 8:1-17 (CEB)

1 So now there isn't any condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. 3 God has done what was impossible for the Law, since it was weak because of selfishness. God condemned sin in the body by sending His own Son to deal with sin in the same body as humans, who are controlled by sin. 4 He did this so that the righteous requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us. Now the way we live is based on the Spirit, not based on selfishness.

Romans 8, staring right away at the first verse. Holy Spirit, help us understand this passage as you open it up to us. Amen! Verse 1, "So now there isn't any condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." When you claim Jesus as your savior, you are no longer condemned for your sin and you are not condemned eternally. Hallelujah! But that's not that *the end* of salvation, notice, it's actually just the beginning! Keep reading. Verse 2, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death." So, claiming Jesus brings the Holy Spirit, who sets us free from our slavery to sinning. Verse 3, "God has done what was impossible for the Law [and here Paul means the Jewish Law of rules], since it was weak because of selfishness." God's people have always been called to be holy, but that expectation was impossible because people turned selfish. "God condemned sin in the body [meaning broke sin's controlling power] by sending His own Son

to deal with sin in the same body as humans, who are controlled by sin.” God came as a human in order to free us from human selfishness. Verse 4, “He did this so that the righteous requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us.” We are given Jesus’ righteousness as a gift, so we can be declared righteous before God. But watch this, now: “Now the way we live is based on the Spirit, not based on selfishness.” Because we have the Holy Spirit, Paul is saying, the way we live is no longer controlled by our selfishness. Do you hear this, church?

PP#7: Romans 8:1-17 (CEB)

5 People whose lives are based on selfishness think about selfish things, but people whose lives are based on the Spirit think about things that are related to the Spirit. 6 The attitude that comes from selfishness leads to death, but the attitude that comes from the Spirit leads to life and peace. 7 So the attitude that comes from selfishness is hostile to God. It doesn’t submit to God’s Law, because it can’t. 8 People who are self-centered aren’t able to please God.

We are different now! How? Paul contrasts the two. Verse 5, “People whose lives are based on selfishness think about selfish things, but people whose lives are based on the Spirit think about things that are related to the Spirit. 6 The attitude that comes from selfishness leads to death, but the attitude that comes from the Spirit leads to life and peace. 7 So the attitude that comes from selfishness is hostile to God. It doesn’t submit to God’s Law, because it can’t. 8 People who are self-centered aren’t able to please God.” Okay, this describes people who do not have the Holy Spirit.

PP#8: Romans 8:1-17 (CEB)

9 But you aren’t self-centered. Instead you are in the Spirit, if in fact God’s Spirit lives in you. If anyone doesn’t have the Spirit of Christ, they don’t belong to Him. 10 If Christ is in you, the Spirit is your life because of God’s righteousness, but the body is dead because of sin. 11 If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your human bodies also, through His Spirit that lives in you.

Ready for the big reveal? Hang on, here we go! Verse 9, “But you [O Christian] aren’t self-centered. Instead you are in the Spirit, if in fact God’s Spirit lives in you. If anyone doesn’t have the Spirit of Christ, they don’t belong to Him. 10 If Christ is in you, the Spirit is your life because of God’s righteousness, but the body is dead because of sin. [You will still have those selfish bodily temptations and sinful cravings.] 11 If the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your human bodies also [will free you from sinning], through His Spirit that lives in you.”

PP#9: Romans 8:1-17 (CEB)

12 So then, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation, but it isn’t an obligation to ourselves to live our lives on the basis of selfishness. 13 If you live on the basis of selfishness, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the actions of the body, you will live. 14 All who are led by God’s Spirit are God’s sons and daughters.

Do you see this? It's pretty clear that Christians have the Holy Spirit living in them, and that changes everything...particularly us! It changes *particularly* how we live. Verse 12, "So then, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation, but it isn't an obligation to ourselves to live our lives on the basis of selfishness. 13 If you live on the basis of selfishness, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit [who you have living within you!] you put to death the [sinful and selfish] actions of the body, you will live. 14 All who are led by God's Spirit are God's sons and daughters." You have a new identity, and a new behavior. We are God's children, and we live God's way. We can, because we have the Holy Spirit! Are you hearing this?

PP#10: Romans 8:1-17 (CEB)

15 You didn't receive a spirit of slavery to lead you back again into fear, but you received a Spirit that shows you are adopted as His children. With this Spirit, we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The same Spirit agrees with our spirit, that we are God's children. 17 But if we are children, we are also heirs. We are God's heirs and fellow heirs with Christ, if we really suffer with Him so that we can also be glorified with Him.

Verse 15, "You didn't receive a spirit of slavery to lead you back again into fear [living against God by sinning], but you received a Spirit that shows you are adopted as His children. With this Spirit, we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The same Spirit agrees with our spirit, that we are God's children. [We have that inner confirmation, that inner testimony, assurance.] 17 But if we are children, we are also heirs. [We inherit all the life abundant and eternal that Jesus owns.] We are God's heirs and fellow heirs with Christ, if we really suffer with Him so that we can also be glorified with Him." We have a future in glory, if we live self-sacrificially today.

PP#11: Galatians 5:16-24 (CEB)

16 I say **be guided by the Spirit and you won't carry out your selfish desires.** 17 A person's selfish desires are set against the Spirit, and the Spirit is set against one's selfish desires. They are opposed to each other, so **you shouldn't do whatever you want to do.** 18 But if you are being led by the Spirit you aren't under the law ... 24 **Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the self with its passions and its desires.** 25 If we live by the Spirit, let's follow the Spirit.

Paul also said this good news in Galatians 5:24, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the self with its passions and its desires." We will, as humans, still have the selfish *temptations and urges*—we still have wrong wants—but because we belong to Christ, the Holy Spirit in us crucifies the power of these passions so that we are able to resist them. That's why, in 16, Paul says "Be guided by the Spirit and you won't carry out your selfish desires....you shouldn't do whatever you want to do."

God has made us for holiness, to be like Him. We are made in His image. That holiness was corrupted in selfishness, but God has called us back to Him. He gives His Holy Spirit to live within us, making us holy by making us able to live holy lives, both inwardly and outwardly.

Church, we must not gloss over this, no matter how much our world wants us to! The world wants to justify continued sinful and selfish behaviors. But we live differently! Yes, we do slip into sin, that is our reality. God is working on us, over time. But by the power of the Holy Spirit in us, we are getting better and better at NOT sinning. We are able to proclaim some victories even now over sin. And some day, we will be made perfect in our love for God and others.

PP#12: Holy Spiritians

Winning the Inner War: Focus your mind on what is right

“You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You.” -Isaiah 26:3

Now, I have preached a couple of series on the Holy Spirit and how we are called to live holy lives. I’m going to mention again just two of those points. One is about how we can win the inner struggle against sin. A key move is to focus our minds on what is right and true. Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life, right? His Way is the True Way that leads to Life. We must set our minds not on the way the world frames things, but on the way that Jesus does. Isaiah 26:3 “You will keep him in perfect peace—how our world needs this peace, with all of our anxiety, stress, and depression!—whose mind is stayed on You.” Philippians 4:8 “Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things and the God of peace will be with you.” Colossians 3:2 “Think about the things above and not things on earth.” Philippians 2:5 “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

Back in 2017 I said, “It’s a *focus* of your mind. So, here’s a very basic checkpoint: What in your daily lives gives you capacity to think on things above? What do you do that creates space for this focus? Here’s where daily devotions comes in, Bible reading, prayer. But also noticing the good in others, giving God thanks for little things throughout the day, for conversations with others that point to God in some way. We fill much of our lives with entertaining distractions...did you catch that word? Distractions. Harmless though video games, or Facebook, or TV or online shopping may be, do we allow them to become distractions for our focus on God? Simple step today: tilt the inner war in your favor by choosing less easy relaxers, and a little more focus.” We must train our focus, over time, to stay on God: on God’s truth, and God’s view of the world.

PP#13: Holy Spiritians

Winning the Inner War: Focus your mind on what is right

Winning the Outer War: Let the Spirit grow different behaviors

“Now the way we live is based on the Spirit, not based on selfishness.” -Romans 8:4b

In another message I talked about how to win the spiritual war in our outward lives. In Galatians 5, Paul lists the fruit of the Spirit, the holy fruit of behaviors that the Holy Spirit produces—grows—in us and out through us. You heard them earlier: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self control. We are different, and we behave differently. We must let—invite and make room for—the Holy Spirit to grow different behaviors in us. This is a matter of God’s love in us—the Holy Spirit in us—shining out of us in how we love others. It is something that the Holy Spirit does in us and through us. We must let the Holy Spirit grow different behaviors in us. Each person, and each encounter is an opportunity—practice—to live by the fruit of the Spirit.

PP#14: 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13

12 May the Lord cause you to increase and enrich your love for each other and for everyone.

13 May the love cause your hearts to be strengthened, to be blameless in holiness before our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all His people. Amen.

Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 “May the Lord cause you to increase and enrich your love for each other and for everyone. ... May the love cause your hearts to be strengthened, to be blameless in holiness before our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all His people.”

PP#15: Holy Spiritians: *We are different, and we live differently.*

Church, this holiness thing is rejected and ridiculed by the world, and even many Christians ignore it. It's too hard. Just talk about how much God loves you. Don't go any deeper. But God does! And this is key to having the peace and joy that God promises can be ours. God gives us His Holy Spirit so that we will have that inner will to *want* what God desires, and the outer *behavior* to do His will. God wants transformation for us, from the inside out. And God wants a transformed world.

PP#16: Philippians 2:2-13

“2 Make my joy complete by thinking the same way, having the same love, being united, and agreeing with each other. 3 Don't do anything for selfish purposes, but with humility think of others as better than yourselves. ... 13 God is the one who works in you both to want and to actually live out His good purposes.”

And God makes it possible! Philippians 2:13 “God is the one who works in you both to want (will) and to actually live out (do) His good purposes.”

One thing I want to be sure to say to you, church, is that you have proved this is true. As I look back over the past 13 years, I can say that I've seen this in you. You have grown. You have changed. You have become more holy. I see a deeper spiritual maturity in this church than when I first came. You are not the church you once were. You have grown in holiness. You have grown in love: as individuals, and as a whole. Church, I am so proud of you, and I carry so much joy because of you!

Keep growing! And, as Paul says in Philippians 2: “2 Make my joy complete by thinking the same way, having the same love, being united, and agreeing with each other. 3 Don't do anything for selfish purposes, but with humility think of others as better than yourselves.”

You are, after all, truly Holy Spiritians!

Amen.

[Live Worship Only] CLOSING SONG: *Act Justly, Love Mercy, Walk Humbly* -Sanctify

ANNOUNCEMENTS -Pastor David

Grow Groups

Next Sunday is Camping Sunday. Come dressed like you are going to Bible Camp!

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

“Now the way we live is based on the Spirit, not based on selfishness.” -Romans 8:4b

BENEDICTION -Pastor David

POSTLUDE -Sanctify (live)