

Call to Worship

I will give you thanks in the great assembly; among throngs of people I will praise you. (Ps 35:18)

Worship in song

Sing hymns and/or worship songs of your choice.

Reading from the Psalms

- Psalm 19:1-11

Prayer of confession

Dear Lord,

We love to glimpse your glory, feed on your truth and rest in your love. We love to shout into the darkness the purpose and power of God, but memories of our sinfulness mock our desire to worship you. Therefore, at your invitation, we come to you to be washed clean of our sins, so that nothing will hinder our celebration of your love.

Lord, today, you point to our wealth, and you ask if it is employed in your service. You caution us in your word about loving money and so we come today to lay our wealth at your feet for we have allowed it to control us and keep us from our purpose.

Our privileged life has made us disconnect from the rest of the world, unhearing and indifferent to those in need. We have institutionalised greed and made it respectable. Justice has been hard to find and afford. We have fostered a culture in which the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

And so we intercede for ourselves and our nation confessing with sorrow what we have become. We ask your forgiveness and the strength to become a people of compassion and justice. Amen.

Assurance of forgiveness

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. (1 Jn 4:9-10)

Prayer of thanksgiving

Loving Lord God,

How blessed are we when our sins are forgiven. How blessed are we when our sins have been paid for. How blessed are we when our sins no longer count against us.

When I hid my sins, I wasted away, my strength was sapped and I could not bear your hand upon me. But when I acknowledged my sin; when I did not cover up my guilt; when I resolved to confess my sin; you forgave me.

Therefore I declare: Let everyone have confidence in praying to you. Let everyone do so whilst there is still time. Let everyone accept your grace and protection.

You are my hiding place. You are the one who protects me from being overwhelmed. You are the one who causes me to sing of your deliverance. You are the one whose name we bless.

Holy Communion

In the Jewish calendar, two major religious feasts were celebrated each year to acknowledge God's faithful provision for life. These festivals became times of harvest thanksgiving. The harvest of the first barley crop was celebrated at the feast of Passover and the harvest of the first wheat crop was celebrated at Pentecost.

However, both festivals originally celebrated the provision of life at a more spiritual level. The feast of Passover celebrated the time when the judgement of God passed harmlessly over the Hebrew people when the rest of the land was afflicted by plagues because the evil people had done. The second festival followed fifty days later. This was the feast of Pentecost which commemorated the Hebrew people arriving at Mt Sinai where they were given God's law, the commandments they were to live by which would ensure their survival.

Passover therefore represented God's judgement passing safely over people and Pentecost represented being told how to live rightly.

Both have direct parallels in the New Testament with Jesus dying at Passover, causing God's judgement to pass safely over people, followed by Pentecost, fifty days later, when God gave the church the gift of his Holy Spirit to empower our ministry and ensure the church lived rightly.

As we come together, at Jesus' request, to celebrate Holy Communion, we particularly do so to acknowledge the first of these two gifts, the gift of Jesus' death to pay the price for our sins so that we might have free access to God. The bread represents the body of Christ given to us that we might live ...and the wine represents the blood of Christ shed for us to pay the price for our sins. Lets' share both together.

The Bible Reading

- 1 Corinthians 12:7-11

The Message: KNOW THE POWER THAT MAKES YOU EFFECTIVE

When the Israelites faced the Philistines across a valley, ready to do battle, we read that every morning they put on their armour and sang battle songs. The trouble was, that for forty days, they never went into battle (1 Sam 17:16). The Philistine's champion warrior Goliath taunted them every morning, "Come and fight me you cowards," but God's people were intimidated into immobility. Their fallback position was just to get dressed up in armour and sing songs (1 Sam 17:20). Church can be the same. We can simply content ourselves with getting dressed up and singing the latest Hillsong choruses, but never join the battle because of an overriding sense of inadequacy.

It took a teenage kid (without any amour and without any singing) to fight enemy. Why? Because he was sure. He was sure that God would give him the supernatural ability to bring glory to God's name.

Are you just getting dressed up, singing songs but not engaging, or do you know God's empowerment by his Spirit for ministry – that enables you to do significant ministry?

Wherever Jesus went, he created around him a climate of 'heaven on earth'. Then he left... but not before he promised that his church would be empowered by the Holy Spirit, and so grow the character of Jesus and be empowered to create, to a limited degree, heaven on earth.

In our last session together, we spoke about God's Spirit growing the character of God within us. These characteristics are the spiritual fruit listed in Galatians 5:22-23: love; joy; peace; patience; kindness; goodness; faithfulness; gentleness; self control.

Today, we are speaking about another thing the Holy Spirit does for us, which is to empower Christians for ministry by giving us spiritual gifts and abilities like those listed in 1 Cor 12:7-11:

- ability to give a message of wisdom,
- ability to give a message of knowledge,
- ability to have great faith (beyond that which is normal),
- gifts of healings (plural),
- ability to do miraculous things in God's name
- gift of prophecy (speaking out God's word)
- ability to distinguish between good and evil spirits,
- ability to speak in tongues (praying to God in an unlearned language)
- ability to interpret tongues (1 Cor 12:7-11).

A three letter word, "but" made all the difference to what would otherwise have been for the disciples a sense of desertion, desolation and disempowerment at the knowledge that Jesus would be leaving his disciples. That word was "but".

"but the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit..." (Jn 14:26)

"but when the Spirit of truth comes..." (Jn 16:13)

The Holy Spirit is Jesus' provision for us in his absence. The Spirit of God would grow in us the character of God as we allow him to transform us; and the Holy Spirit will give us supernatural spiritual gifts to empower our ministry.

"But ... the holy Spirit". The Holy Spirit makes all the difference.

Following the two "buts" come the two "wills":

Jesus said to his disciples, *"You will be baptised with the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 1:5). He said, *"When the Holy Spirit comes on you, you will be my witnesses..."* (Acts 1:8)

Jesus knows it would be cruel to be abandoned by Christ in a hostile world under the influence of the enemy. He therefore makes a wonderful provision. This provision didn't mean we would be guaranteed to always live triumphalist lives this side of heaven. No, the full expression of God's perfect kingdom is something that won't

be fully realised until Christ returns. Until that time, Christians will battle in an alien world where they will be persecuted, misunderstood, abused, taken advantage of, and suffer the frustrations of understanding things only partly. However, Christians would be given something very special that would:

- be a seal of ownership, a defining mark which would assure them
- empowering their ministry. In some way the presence of God within us means that we have access to the future kingdom now – at least in part.

We have a great snapshot of how being empowered by the Holy Spirit transformed the ministry of the disciples in Luke chapter 10.

Here we read of Jesus sending 72 disciples ahead of him to prepare the people in the towns and villages ahead that he would be coming. That's also our job. We are preparing people to face up to Jesus at the end of time. Jesus tells the disciples to demonstrate Jesus' authority by healing the sick and encouraging them to commit their lives to God. In other words, his disciples were forerunners of Jesus' kingdom authority. That's why he says, *"He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me"* (Lk 10:16). The miraculous display of 'kingdom authority' by the disciples was designed to get people's attention, and people ignored it at their own peril (Lk 10:13-14). The disciples were to display God's authority as they told people, *"The kingdom of God is near"*.

In other words, you will be meeting God. Get ready. And here is a bunch of supernatural signs to indicate that you should take this message seriously.

Paul says that the secret gift we have that makes weak Christians dangerously effective Christians is the indwelling power of God's Holy Spirit. Paul says, *"The Spirit helps us in our weakness"* (Rom 8:26).

Paul had to remind his young apprentice Timothy that he had not been given *"a Spirit of timidity but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline"* (2 Tim 1:7). In other words, the Spirit of God has a very definite characteristic, one of empowerment.

Why is it, then, that we have people in our congregation who feel as if their life has not been changed by God, who don't feel they experience the intimacy of God and who don't seem to experience the power of God in their lives? Are they not Christians, or are they deluded by Satan who wants to keep them from believing they are Christians?

What is the response of the church to this? Do we give them a guilt trip and add to their frustrations and feeling that God has abandoned them?

Logically, there are only four things we can say:

1. We say that they are not Christians because they don't have the Holy Spirit.
2. We say that the Bible's claims are exaggerated and that its promises concerning the Holy Spirit are not true for ordinary people.
3. We say they do have the Holy Spirit but that they are going through character-building times of dryness, frustrations and delay in being able to experience him.
4. We say that they *do* have the Holy Spirit but that they need to be released into the full power and significance of having him within us. It is as if they have the pilot light on but have never turned the gas up to experience the

full working of the Holy Spirit.

Which of those apply to you?

Are you not yet a Christian? Have you not accepted Jesus as your Saviour? If that is you, we do not condemn you, we invite you to surrender to God.

If you are going through a testing time of spiritual dryness, we will not burden you with patronising clichés about building your character, but will journey with you and pray that you be given understanding and empowerment from God.

If you are struggling with belief, we say to you, welcome: join us as we grow in faith together.

In summary I am saying:

- Die to self
- Cry to God
- Try his promises.

All Christians have the Holy Spirit. However, it does not end there. You've got to allow the Holy Spirit to lead you each day. We need to continue to be 'being filled' with the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18).

Finally, by saying "yes" to the Holy Spirit, we need to expect that things will get untidy. People may weep or fall prostrate before God, or see visions from God. Our behaviour will always remain under our control, but when we yield to the Holy Spirit, our relationship with God and insight into God goes to a whole new level.

Will you now pray with me to be completely renewed, baptised and re-filled with the Holy Spirit so you are equipped with supernatural power to represent Christ's power, love and ministry?

Prayers for others

Pray with passion for those things God has placed on your heart, remembering the persecuted church, world events, the sick and our leaders.

Benediction

Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel. (Simeon's prayer Lk 2:29-32)

This service was provided to HopeNet SA by Dr Nick Hawkes

KID'S CHURCH or KID'S TALK or SUNDAY SCHOOL

Even Jesus got tempted

Matthew 4:1-11

You will need:

- 1) A slice of cake with icing and a cherry on the top
- 2) An accomplice who will play 'Mum'.
- 3) A cake tin
- 4) A plate

Act out this little play:

Mum *"Nicholas, I've baked a cake for the shared tea at church but I've cut out one slice for Dad's lunch. Don't touch it."* (Takes out one slice of cake from a cake tin and puts it on a plate on the table).

You *"O.K. Mum"*

(Have your back to the cake and start doing something [like playing with a yo-yo]. After a while, start looking over your shoulder a few times at the cake)

"It sure looks a lovely cake. I guess there is no harm in having a look at it." (Go over and have a look at it).

"It sure looks a lovely cake. I guess there is no harm in sitting down beside it." (Sit down and look longingly at the cake.)

"It sure looks a lovely cake. I guess there is no harm in smelling it." (Smell it).

"It sure smells a lovely cake. I guess Dad won't miss the cherry on top." (Eat the cherry.) *"Yum!"*

"That was good. I wonder what the icing is like. I'm sure there is no harm in giving the icing a little lick." (Lick the icing) ...*"perhaps just a little nibble"*. (Start nibbling and nibbling and nibbling).

"Oh dear, the icing seems to have gone. Well, a cake without icing is hardly a cake at all so I might as well finish it." (Eat the rest).

Mum *"Nicholas! What have you done?!"*

You *"Mum! Oh dear! Although I thought there was no harm in it, I seem to have eaten all the cake."*

Make the following points:

- 1) Everyone gets tempted. Even Jesus was tempted. It is not wrong to be tempted, it is only wrong when we allow ourselves to think too much about the temptation and to give in to it.
- 2) Giving in to little temptations can lead to giving in to big temptations.

3) The Devil puts the tempting thought into our minds to stop us doing things God's ways.

Read the story of how the Devil tempted Jesus right at the start of his ministry to try and spoil it. Read Matthew 13:31-34

Conclude by saying: We, like Jesus, can defend ourselves against temptation and know what the right thing is to do by knowing what God teaches in good in the Bible.