

Welcome

Jesus said "The Father, will give you another Helper, to be with you forever."

Hymn, by *BD Sienna (c.1400)* MHB 273, AHB 310 Listen to it [here](#)

1. Come down, O Love divine,
seek thou this soul of mine, and visit it with thine own ardour glowing;
O Comforter, draw near, within my heart appear,
and kindle it, thy holy flame bestowing.
2. O let it freely burn,
till earthly passions turn to dust and ashes in its heat consuming;
and let thy glorious light shine ever on my sight,
and clothe me round, the while my path illuming.
3. And so the yearning strong, with which the soul will long,
shall far outpass the power of human telling;
for none can guess its grace, till he *[the soul]* become the place
wherein the Holy Spirit makes a dwelling.

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Song, by John Bell Listen to it [here](#)

1. Come, Holy Spirit, descend on us, descend on us
We gather here in Jesus' Name.
2. Come breath of heaven ...
3. Come Word of Mercy ...

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Scripture

- John 14:15-23
- Romans 15:14-19
- Galatians 5:16-25

Prayer:

Gracious God and Father,

In your great love for me, and indeed the whole world, you came and taught us through your Son, my Saviour, Jesus Christ who loves me and gave himself for me.

I thank you for your kindness toward me, demonstrated daily in many and diverse ways, and for the privilege of hosting your Holy Spirit, whose presence amazes me not just because of the benefits I, and amazingly, others receive but also because of my complete unworthiness to be the recipient and channel of such benefits.

In Jesus' name, I thank you.

Amen

Message: The Gift

When one is learning something new, there are often things said or done that don't make sense at the time. A toddler listening to the conversation of adults, hearing words that are new, ideas that are new, concepts that are a mystery. A young person being taught principles that, even if the theory is understood, sees no useful application for them. An adult reading some article or listening to some discourse and being struck by a claim that lodges in the memory but progresses no further. Then days or even years pass by and some incident occurs that brings those nearly forgotten words to front of mind. So that was what they were talking about! Is this how it works in practice? I understand now what that person meant. I remember so-and-so talking about that and here it is! What had an air of mystery about it at the time is now seen clearly, standing before you, or, if not fully clear, at least better understood.

What do you suppose the disciples were thinking when Jesus was talking to them on the night of the Last Supper. Surely they did not comprehend all that he was saying. Washing of feet. A betrayal coming. A denial coming. The claims "I am the way, the truth and the life", "When anyone kills you ...!", "I am going to him who sent me", "You will all be scattered." And then this: "I will ask the Father and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever" and again later "If I go I will send the Counsellor to you." What could all that possibly mean? Then the crucifixion, resurrection, forty days of teaching, and ascension. And all of that after three and a half years of jaw-dropping experiences.

Wow! Put yourself in that situation and imagine trying to process it all. It would be close to overwhelming. It's almost like if there was anything more, it would be the emotional and mental tipping point, the final straw. Yet there *was* something more, but this time, rather than tipping them over the edge, this something more was what enabled them to cope. Actually, more than cope. It was also a realisation that everything that had been said and done in recent times by Jesus was a necessary prerequisite to be able to fully appreciate and utilize what God was now doing. Pentecost, as it was known and is still, had reached its dramatic fulfillment on the fiftieth day after that last Passover (Easter). The Comforter was indeed given, visibly and audibly with extraordinary and immediate consequences which are described for us in Acts chapter 2 and beyond, and which are often brought to our attention on Pentecost Sundays. The events of the last few years were now seen so much more clearly. No doubt 40 days of post-Ascension Bible Study with Jesus was pretty eye-opening and wonderful, but now even more so, with the resultant boldness and giftings beyond the normal expectancy of those men of diverse but otherwise quite ordinary backgrounds. It was just as Jesus had foretold: "the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." (John 14:26) It's pretty clear from the book of Acts, the speeches by Peter and others, and the writings of the Gospels and letters of John and Peter and James that they certainly did remember what Jesus said and did. Not only that but now to

The Gift

better understand what he meant and to convey that meaning to others.

It is natural and appropriate that we should focus on what happened on that first Pentecost, ten days after the ascension – the healings, preaching, conversions and miracles, soon followed with suffering. But the consequences of the coming of the Holy Spirit were not, and are not, only extraordinary and immediate. Being gifts, they were, and are accessible and usable as soon as they are given, but there was still more.

There is another work that the Holy Spirit carries out in the life of the believer which is less visible, less dramatic, takes more time but has both significant temporal and eternal value. And we read of that work in our reading from Romans. And it's this: "that the Gentiles might be sanctified by the Holy Spirit". Certainly Paul speaks of "the power of signs and miracles through the Holy Spirit", never to be brushed aside, and still available. But the work of sanctification is a long-term work that can only be completed through this wonderful gift and cooperative effort of the Holy Spirit. Paul repeats this in other places, such as his writing to the Thessalonians: "God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit." And of course there's that list in Galatians where Paul itemizes the expected outcomes of cooperating with the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. [Incidentally, self control is right up there in importance with the Gospel itself. It was a significant part of the message Paul presented to Felix (Acts 24).] James calls it "working out our salvation".

Scripture exhorts us to "live by the Spirit". After all, it is only through the Holy Spirit that God interacts with us, to lead us, protect us, teach us, point us to Jesus and of course to sanctify us.

We live under the New Covenant by which God fulfills his promise to pour out his Spirit on all flesh (Joel 2). The "all" here, I suggest, refers to both Jew and Gentile, all who call on him for mercy. And through the giving of the Holy Spirit he begins and continues his work of sanctification, so that we might walk before him in holiness (without which no one will see God), in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of ... (you guessed it) the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:31). And what a comfort that is. Imagine the fear of the Lord without the comfort of the Holy Spirit! Two things which, if present in the life of the church, we are told bring strength, encouragement and growth – what more could you ask for, all free!

On this day we remember with thanksgiving that Jesus, though ascended and now seated at the right hand of the Father where he intercedes for us, did not leave us alone to carry on with life without assistance. Instead, he did as he promised and has given us the Holy Spirit. Yes, that includes you. So continue to ask your Father that this same Spirit might have more and more influence in your life in sanctification, power for his purposes, strength for the challenges of life, help with understanding Scripture. All these things and more.

And he will do it!

Prayer with suffering Christians (*Barnabas Prayer 24/5/26*)

Sovereign Lord, we thank You for the empowering of Your Church through the outpouring of Your Holy Spirit. Thank You for the Spirit's power to counsel, comfort, teach and guide Your people. We praise You for His witness around the world, especially in contexts where those who love You are a persecuted and despised minority.

We pray that by the Holy Spirit's power You will fill your Church with abundant hope as we trust in You and make us channels of Your grace to spread Your good news of salvation, for we ask in the Name of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Acts 1:8; Romans 15:13).

Hymn *by C Wesley T. Nearer Home: 'Forever with the Lord' Listen to it [here](#)*

1. Spirit of faith, come down, reveal the things of God,
and make to us the Godhead known, and witness with the blood.
'Tis yours the blood to apply and give us eyes to see,
who did for every sinner die has surely died for me.
2. No one can truly say that Jesus is the Lord,
unless you take the veil away and breathe the living Word.
Then, only then, we feel our interest in His blood,
and cry with joy unspeakable, "You are my Lord, my God!"
3. O that the world might know the all-atoning Lamb!
Spirit of faith, descend and show the virtue of His name;
the grace which all may find, and saving power, impart,
and testify to humankind, and speak in every heart.

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Benediction:

In Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham has come to you, so that you might receive the promised Spirit through faith. (Gal 3:14)

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. (Rom 8:11)

Amen.

This service was prepared by Warren Mack for HopeNet SA