

Scripture Reading:

Acts 10: "27 And as [Peter] talked with Cornelius, he went in and found many who had come together. 28 Then he said to them, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. 29 Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?" "30 So Cornelius said, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, 31 and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God. 32 Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you.' 33 So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God." 34 Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. 35 But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. 36 The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ--He is Lord of all-- 37 that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. 39 And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. 40 Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, 41 not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. 42 And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead. 43 To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins." 44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. 45 And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. 46 For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, 47 "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days."

"The Spirit is Poured Out on All Flesh"

Peter has been brought to Caesarea as God's instrument for bringing the Gospel to the Gentiles as promised:

- Last week we considered at length the message that Peter brought
- This week we begin to study the reaction to this message and its implications.

As we do, it is good once again to remember that Luke is giving his friend Theophilus an orderly account of those things which 'were fulfilled among them'...

Luke is explaining how:

- Jesus has come to save His people from their sins
- How the Spirit has come as the promised comforter to empower the Church
- How the Church, the bride of Jesus, the New Jerusalem, the Temple of the Holy Spirit will now fill the earth with the Kingdom of Jesus!

Most of the Gospel of Luke was focused on the first point, showing how Jesus came, lived, died and rose again to be the great sacrifice for sin so that God's people can be forgiven and made new in Christ who is now ascended to the Father's right hand.

- This is what Peter preached to the Gentiles here at Caesarea as we saw last week.

So far in Acts, Luke has focused on how the Church was established, with the coming of the Spirit:

- First to the Jews at Pentecost
- Then to those in Samaria
- And now to the Gentiles.

After we see Peter making his defense before the Church in Jerusalem and a final look at Peter and King Herod, Luke will turn his attention to the final point in his orderly account: We will study the great missionary journeys of Paul as the Gospel goes to all the earth & Luke will conclude with a great vision for the future:

Acts 28: 30 "Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, 31 preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him."

- This work of the Spirit taking the Kingdom to all the world continues down to our day as we believe and carry out the Great Commission.

As is SO often the case, if we do not remember the big picture, we are much more likely to learn all the wrong lessons from the particular text that we are studying.

- This is especially true regarding the Holy Spirit who has been greatly misunderstood and abused in our modern age.

Our sermon title reflects the work of the Spirit being done here in Caesarea foretold by the Prophet Joel long ago, and quoted by Peter at Pentecost:

Joel 2: 28 "And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. 29 And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. 30 "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. 31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. 32 And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved."

Now in reflecting on what has been taught about the Spirit for the past couple of hundred years I was tempted to use a different title:

- "You Spirit is Too Small"

The reason that I say this is because we have taken a major event in the history of the world; The coming of the Holy Spirit to the Church; and turned it into a nice gift for us to each have for ourselves! Today you are much more likely to hear people talk about how they have been baptized in the Spirit, how the Spirit gives them the gift of tongues, how the Spirit gives them spiritual gifts and how the Spirit guides them!

Now there are certainly kernels of truth in all of these statements...

- But we end up with a Holy Spirit very different from how He is presented in the Scriptures!

- **The Spirit revealed to us in the Bible is not just some power that we can tap into... He is the 3rd person of the Holy Trinity and we have largely forgotten this in the modern church.**

Oh sure, we can “prove” that the Holy Spirit is God with a couple of proof texts, like when Ananias lied to the Spirit in Acts chapter five.

- **But as Pastor Wilkins admonished us at family camp, how often do we reflect on the eternal communion and love demonstrated in the Trinity?**

The Spirit is not just some force buzzing around the eternal Father and Son...

- **He is the very breath of God who delights to glorify the Father and the Son as He proceeds eternally from them!**

This is impossible for us to completely understand but it is a mystery that has been revealed to us in Scripture. We must always be looking to expand our understanding of how great our God really is, rather than trying to bring Him down to something we can handle and understand.

- **Yes, if I am trusting in Jesus, then the Holy Spirit does come to me as a Comforter and He will empower me with gifts to accomplish the work in the Kingdom that I have been given to do**

BUT, we must remember that we are all members of the ONE Body of Christ and that He works all of these individual things together and this is what has been largely forgotten. The Spirit was poured out on the Gentiles just as He was with the Jews & Samaritans. Thus, there could be NO doubt that all were part of the Church that would fill the earth with the Kingdom of Jesus.

- **However, we must remember that this was not the beginning of the Spirit’s work...**

IF we know our Bibles well, then we will know about His work and how what has happened here is simply a continuation of His work! If we don’t know our Bibles well we could be caught up in some of the modern discussions about how or even IF the Holy Spirit was present in the Old Testament. From the opening verses of Genesis we see the Spirit’s loving and caring work in this world:

Genesis 1:1 “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.”

The concept that is being communicated is that of a mother hen, hovering and brooding over her nest as she cares for the eggs.

- **From the very beginning of creation we see the Spirit’s care for the whole creation.**
- **Just as He has eternally proceeded from the Father & Son we now see him always hovering or brooding over the Creation that was spoken into existence!**

We get a picture of this care again after the world is destroyed and covered with water in Genesis 9:

- **Kids, what is the 2nd bird Noah sends out over those waters?**
[That’s right, a dove, sent three times every seven days... just numbers?]

And of course we must have eyes to see the Spirit’s work in redemption, not just with the coming at Pentecost, but throughout the history of God’s people...

We see the Glory Cloud, the Spirit of God descending at critical times:

- **We see powerful pictures of God’s care and the Spirit at the Exodus, where they are protected by a pillar of fire and the seabed is dried up as the wind blows all night.**

Then the Children of Israel are brought to Mt. Sinai:

Exodus 24:15 “Then Moses went up into the mountain, and a cloud covered the mountain.”

16 “Now the glory of Jehovah rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. **17** The sight of the glory of Jehovah was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel. **18** So Moses went into the midst of the cloud and went up into the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.”

During those forty days Moses is given very specific instructions for building the Tabernacle where God would dwell with His people: A Tabernacle patterned after God’s throne room in heaven.

- As soon as the Tabernacle is finished we see the Spirit of God descend as the glory cloud again:

Exodus 40:33 “And [Moses] raised up the court all around the tabernacle and the altar, and hung up the screen of the court gate. So Moses finished the work. **34** Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle. **35** And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of Jehovah filled the tabernacle.”

- Later under Kings David and Solomon the Temple was constructed in Jerusalem. Again, specific instructions were given and then we see God descending upon the Temple when it is completed:

II Chronicles 7:1 “When Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of Jehovah filled the temple. **2** And the priests could not enter the house of Jehovah, because the glory of Jehovah had filled Jehovah's house. **3** When all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of Jehovah on the temple, they bowed their faces to the ground on the pavement, and worshiped and praised Jehovah, saying: "For He is good, For His mercy endures forever."

- There are two important references to the Spirit and the Temple made by the Prophet Ezekiel:

First Ezekiel is shown how wicked those in Israel had become just before the exile and the final step is God’s presence leaving the temple there in Jerusalem before it is destroyed by the Babylonians.

Ezekiel 11:23 “And the glory of Jehovah went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain, which is on the east side of the city.”

Now we should note that nowhere in the accounts of the restoration after the Babylonian captivity is there any reference of God returning to the Temple there in Jerusalem.

- However, Ezekiel is given a grand vision of a new Temple that will be the dwelling place of God:

Ezekiel 43:1 “Afterward he brought me to the gate, the gate that faces toward the east. **2** And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east. His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory. **3** It was like the appearance of the vision which I saw--like the vision which I saw when I came to destroy the city. The visions were like the vision which I saw by the River Chebar; and I fell on my face. **4** And the glory of Jehovah came into the temple by way of the gate which faces toward the east. **5** The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of Jehovah filled the temple. **6** Then I heard Him speaking to me from the temple, while a man stood beside me. **7** And He said to me, "Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever.”

- We must understand all of this history and these prophecies to rightly understand what happened in the New Testament.

We must reject the modalism that has crept into much of the modern church where we see God as the Father meeting out justice in the Old Testament, then God coming as Jesus in the New Testament teaching men to love one another, and then the Holy Spirit being poured out on the Church... Then we can all be filled with the Holy Spirit and speak in tongues in the Church age waiting for Jesus to come back and take us to heaven so the Father can then finish the work He was trying to do with the Jews!

- Such thinking may not be expressed that plainly, but it is very dominant today
- It is the wrong view of history and presents a very bad view of God!

The bottom line is that IF we don't see how our Triune God has acted in history, then we will not understand what is going on here in Caesarea.

- Jesus died to save His people from their sins and by baptism they are joined to the Body of Christ, the Church!
- The outpouring of the Spirit was the fulfillment of the prophesy that was given to Ezekiel and the vision of this new Temple is a vision of the Church

[Your homework can be to compare the details of Ezekiel chapters 40-48 with Revelation 21-22 remembering that the New Testament call us the Bride of Jesus, the Temple of God & the New Jerusalem]

- Listen to Ezekiel's description of how the Spirit filled Church will now go to all the world:

Ezekiel 47:1 “Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and there was water, flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east, for the front of the temple faced east; the water was flowing from under the right side of the temple, south of the altar. **2** He brought me out by way of the north gate, and led me around on the outside to the outer gateway that faces east; and there was water, running out on the right side. **3** And when the man went out to the east with the line in his hand, he measured one thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the water came up to my ankles. **4** Again he measured one thousand and brought me through the waters; the water came up to my knees. Again he measured one thousand and brought me through; the water came up to my waist. **5** Again he measured one thousand, and it was a river that I could not cross; for the water was too deep, water in which one must swim, a river that could not be crossed. **6** He said to me, "Son of man, have you seen this?" Then he brought me and returned me to the bank of the river. **7** When I returned, there, along the bank of the river, were very many trees on one side and the other. **8** Then he said to me: "This water flows toward the eastern region, goes down into the valley, and enters the sea. When it reaches the sea, its waters are healed. **9** And it shall be that every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live. There will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there; for they will be healed, and everything will live wherever the river goes.”

- Jesus had told the disciples they would be fishers of men and this vision given to Ezekiel helps us to see what He meant:

In his defense next week before the Apostles in Jerusalem Peter will stress that what happened here in Caesarea was the same as what happened to the Disciples on the Day of Pentecost and by implication the Samaritans as well.

The Spirit was poured out on all flesh, Jew & Gentile, Men & Woman, slave & free, young and old. Our Comforter is the 3rd Person of the Trinity and this should truly bring us great comfort!

- Our application today is primarily to believe what the Bible teaches us about the Spirit!
- We must also remember that He can and does use us individually as well.

I will leave you with two passages to ponder this week as we consider how the Holy Spirit works in His Church today: First, in II Corinthians chapter 3 Paul encourages the Saints to understand the glory that has come:

1 “Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you? 2 You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; 3 clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. 4 And we have such trust through Christ toward God. 5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, 6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. ... 12 Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech-- 13 unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. 14 But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. 15 But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. 16 Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

Our transformation is not to be just an individual experience, but we are to be that water that flowed eastward from the New Temple to bring blessing to all the earth. And as the Spirit fills the earth with the Kingdom of God, yes, He gives special gifts and opportunities and often in very practical ways:

- Not only did the Spirit reveal to Moses how the Tabernacle was to be built, but He also provided the talent needed to build it!

Exodus 31: 1 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 2 "See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. 3 And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, 4 to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, 5 in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of workmanship.”

- Bezaleel was neither a priest nor the son of a priest and yet God gave him gifts that allowed him to properly construct the Tabernacle that all the Priests would serve in for years to come.

So as it pleases the Lord, let us be a people of great faith: Believing that the Spirit of God will fill the earth with the Kingdom of God and that He will in part use our hands for the work that must be done!

Communion Meditation: Isaiah 25:6-9

Verse 48 of our text said, “And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.”

“6 And in this mountain The Lord of hosts will make for all people A feast of choice pieces, A feast of wines on the lees, Of fat things full of marrow, Of well-refined wines on the lees. 7 And He will destroy on this mountain The surface of the covering cast over all people, And the veil that is spread over all nations. 8 He will swallow up death forever, And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces; The rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; For the Lord has spoken. 9 And it will be said in that day: "Behold, this is our God; We have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the Lord; We have waited for Him; We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.""