# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

**“The Spirit in Jesus’ Ministry”**

**Luke 4:18-21**

**January 2, 2022**

A week ago Friday we celebrated the birth of Jesus, and last Sunday Pastor McLane preached from the passage in Luke 3 where Jesus is baptized and the Holy Spirit descends on him in the form of a dove. This morning we will look at a passage in Luke 4 where Jesus gives the central purpose of his coming into the word, a mission which from beginning to end is fulfilled in and through the work of the Holy Spirit. I invite you to join me in Luke 4:18-21 . . .

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the Lord’s favor has come.” He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down. All eyes in the synagogue looked at him intently. Then he began to speak to them. “The Scripture you’ve just heard has been fulfilled this very day!”

Today we conclude our sermon series on the work of the Holy Spirit by taking a closer look at the work of the Spirit in the life and ministry of Jesus. By doing so, we will also see the Spirit at work in our lives who are followers of Jesus. We begin the work of the Spirit in Jesus’ life with his conception. As Luke tells us in his first chapter, Jesus was conceived in his mother, Mary, by the Holy Spirit. And, just as the Son of God was conceived by the Spirit of God, so those who become children of God are given new birth by the Spirit. And, having given us new birth, the Spirit comes to live in us. In Jesus’ life, this indwelling of the Spirit is seen at his baptism where the Spirit descends on him like a dove. Just as the Spirit lived in Jesus and was critical to his ministry, so the Spirit lives in us and is critical to our ministry.

Next, we move to the beginning of Luke’s fourth gospel where we read that after Jesus’ baptism, the Spirit led him into a wilderness. The Spirit, who had given him birth and who dwelt in him, was directing him. Throughout his earthly life, the Spirit was guiding Jesus, and throughout his earthly ministry, Jesus was guiding his disciples. Then came the time for Jesus to leave this world. Now, who would guide his followers? Jesus tells them that the Holy Spirit will be their guide. As it was for them, so it is for us today. The Spirit leads us, and he does so in four primary ways.

First, the Spirit uses inner urgings to get our thoughts moving in a particular direction. An urging to pray for a particular person or situation, an urging to reach out with practical help, an urging to reconcile with a person with whom we are in conflict, an urging to refrain from a thought or word or behavior that disobeys God’s will for us. Second, the Spirit uses Scripture. The Bible, itself inspired by the Spirit who led those who wrote its words, will be our touchstone by which to check exteriorly what we sense interiorly. How do we know whether an inner urging is really from the Spirit? We can check it against the Bible and ensure that our urging is, at least in general, in line with God’s revealed will for us. The third tool that the Spirit uses to guide us is prayer which is simply our conversation with God about what we sense as the Spirit’s urging and what we are learning in his Holy Word. And, the fourth tool is fellow believers, friends in Christ with whom we can share how the Spirit has been urging us, what we are learning from God’s Word, and the ways in which we have gone to God in prayer seeking clarity and confirmation. The Spirit living in our Christian brother or sister will use that person to help us more clearly see how he is leading us.

Born of the Spirit, indwelt by the Spirit, guided by the Spirit, and empowered by the Spirit. Luke 4:14 tells us that Jesus went to Galilee following his temptation in the wilderness, “Filled with the Holy Spirit’s power.” What Jesus did in his ministry, he did by the power of the Spirit. What you and I do in ministry for Christ we also do in the power of the Spirit. The Spirit empowers us by growing within us his fruit, fruit we have explored throughout this sermon series, consisting of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. The Spirit also empowers us with special gifts, such as the gift of mercy or of teaching or of encouragement, used by the Spirit to build up the family of faith as each person uses their gift as directed by the Spirit. Empowered by the fruit being developed in us and the gifts given to us we, like Jesus, are ready to receive a purpose, a mission, a ministry.

In the text I read earlier, Jesus applies to himself the words of the prophet Isaiah: “He has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor.” To anoint, biblically speaking, is to send forth with a purpose. Jesus’ purpose was to bring Good News to those who are poor, that is, to those who are without. We are without God in our lives because of our sin, but the Good News of Jesus is that through him, we can become rich. We can be transformed from people who are without God to people who are reborn into God, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, led and empowered by that Spirit, and anointed with a purpose to love God and to love our neighbor.

The Spirit of the Lord in upon you and upon me, for he has anointed you and he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor, to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the Lord’s favor has come. Or, to use the language of our church’s mission statement, the Spirit of the Lord is upon us that we may know Christ, that we may become like Christ, and that we may share Christ.