

SEQUOYAH HILLS
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Sermon: “Let Him Work”

Rev. Ben Garris

Luke 24:49-53

May 28, 2023

Good morning, my name is Ben Garris, your newly minted minister and point person over Mission/Outreach/Fellowship. I am excited to share God’s word with you this Pentecost Sunday morning. We are finishing up the last few verses of the Gospel of Luke and our series Walking Witnesses, but if you would like a more detailed description of the giving of God’s Spirit you can read that account in Acts in your own time. Let us listen to the word of the Lord according to Luke’s account.

⁴⁹ And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.’

⁵⁰ Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. ⁵¹ While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵² And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; ⁵³ and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

Luke 24:49-53

I wonder, by show of hands, how many of us find the Holy Spirit a bit ambiguous or vague? I think the church today, and particularly our denomination among many others, struggles to connect with and understand the Spirit of God simply because the Spirit isn’t concrete. Spirit can’t be seen, you can’t reach out and touch it, you can’t smell Spirit or taste God’s spirit. Much like the wind, we know that the Spirit exists simply because of the effect we can see that it has on the world around us, but I think truthfully at times we find the Spirit to be elusive, like trying to grab air or water, we discover that God’s spirit cannot be pulled off the shelf anytime we might want more of it. We cannot simply order God’s spirit from Amazon or download more spirit to our devices.

How are we to understand God's Spirit, and what can we expect from this promised power from on high that is given to those who put their trust in God?

Historically, in the Bible the Spirit of God and the children of God are not permanently united until this special day where God's sends his Spirit to clothe people from all nations. Previously however, whenever God's Spirit would interact with humanity, it would be with specific individuals of God's choosing to the end that they would accomplish a specific work or task for God.

For example, Joseph was empowered to interpret dreams and ended up saving all of Egypt, and by extension the Hebrew people, from death by starvation. Because of Joseph's giftedness Pharaoh exclaimed of him in Genesis 41, **"Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?"** Elsewhere, in Exodus 31, Bezalel is a craftsman gifted with intellect, knowhow, and the Spirit of God in order to create specific items God instructs for the Tabernacle. Furthermore, those familiar with reading the Bible know that in the Judges scroll the Spirit of God comes temporarily upon selected individuals to accomplish specific missions as well. While these examples from history are not exactly one to one with Pentecost, there is a deep truth we can learn from each time the Spirit shows up.

Let's look all the way back at the beginning for a moment. **"And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters."** The text tells us the Spirit is there and then look at all of creation that came into being. From the very beginning, we see that wherever the Spirit of God shows up, amazing things happen! In other words as we read the scriptures and we come across the Spirit we know that something is about to happen, creation itself is spoken into being, dreams are interpreted to save the lives of nations, the most intricate work accomplished to build God's tabernacle, the lame walk, the blind receive their sight, the dead are raised, and yes, the church is empowered to do amazing work for God! Do not miss this! Where the Spirit of God is, something amazing is about to happen! What does this mean then now that the Spirit is in YOU?!

If you've ever been driving through a construction zone, maybe you've seen the signs, "Let 'em work" ... I ask you, what does that sign mean? (ask the congregation for their interpretation of the sign) It's a sign that tells us as we drive by the workers, not to interfere with the work that is going on, to let them do their work, (certainly don't kill the workers with your recklessness) but most of all, perhaps we are to

embrace the work that is being done even if it inconveniences our drive and our plans a little bit. Let 'em work is a slogan prompting us to recognize the ongoing work that is beneficial for all who use the infrastructure in a community. Let 'em work means be mindful of what is taking place and to do your part to ensure the work continues. Therefore, as you continue your own faith journeys, recognize the Spirit of God is here, and He is at work, so **let Him work!** His presence has been given to you who believe that He exists, and you who put your trust in Him! God has something great to accomplish in and through each of us, but as the construction sign reads, we must **let Him work!**

You might ask, “what will happen if I don’t let His Spirit work in my life?” To that I would offer this whether you are a believer or not: unlike the construction worker the Spirit will always accomplish what the Father wants to be accomplished, but the sooner you commit to embracing the Spirit’s work and prompting in your own life, the sooner you save yourself MUCH headache and trouble because God is ONLY good! His plans are only good! If the Spirit is prompting your heart, it is toward an end that is good! Many times, we think we know what is good for ourselves, but all too often we cause more pain and suffering when we fail to heed the Spirit, so instead, **let Him work!** Let him lead you, give the Spirit space to work in your heart and embrace the blessing of God’s presence given to you!

A skeptic might say, “if there is a God then don’t we all have the Spirit anyways because we are all alive?” In some regard that is correct. It is God’s ruach/Spirit/wind that fills our lungs and animates our bodies. It is His energy that sustains us and gives life to all of creation. Nonetheless, there is a difference between God’s common grace given to all creation and a specific promise: that for all who trust in Him, He will send His Spirit to set up shop in your hearts, to create a dwelling within you, that you may know Him and be blessed by His active presence in your life. So, **let Him work!** Don’t miss out on the promise! Don’t trudge your way through life, stumbling in darkness, when there is light and life waiting for you. **Let Him work!**

You may ask, “What does it look like to let the Spirit work in your life?” What might be accomplished in your life if you lean into the Spirit rather than ignoring His presence? In the simplest of terms, it’s like swimming with the current rather than against it. In the Navy, there is a saying, “fair winds and following seas”, meaning

that as you go on your way, both the wind and the water go with you rather than against you. Remember, where the Spirit of God is, there something great will be accomplished! This does not mean that there won't be opposition or struggle, but you will certainly eliminate any struggle of your own making by working with God rather than against Him. When you face challenges and difficulty, you will be strengthened, able to stand up under the weight of it, and persevere when oppression comes. The Spirit gives you power to go beyond yourself and do mightier works than you can imagine. To preach before a congregation for instance, to forgive 40 times 40 times, to love even your enemy, and to pray for those who are working against God. There are seemingly insurmountable goals ahead of us when we consider overcoming homelessness, systemic racism, and world hunger, just to name a few, but with the Spirit we will accomplish all that God intends for us to, **if only we let Him work!**

In conclusion, may we take the time each day to tune into His presence. His Spirit cannot be touched by us, but God's presence can be FELT by us if we make ourselves open to Him. May we set aside technology for a moment and give our attention to Him who made us. May our need for pleasure and the American dream be replaced with joy in God and in His dream for our lives and for our community. May the community of Sequoyah Hills become known as both, *filled with* the Spirit, and *moved by* the Spirit, that God's kingdom may come right here in Knoxville because there is great work to be done! May we **let him work** by embracing the will and work of God in our lives, that those without joy may find it, and join with us as we, like the first followers of Jesus so long ago, praise and worship God continually. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Benediction: "You go nowhere by accident. Wherever you go, God is sending you there. Wherever you are, God has put you there. He has a purpose in your being there. Christ, who indwells in you, has something He wants to do through you, wherever you are. Believe this, and go in His grace, and love and power."
—Rev. Dr. Richard C. Halverson's Benediction, U.S. Senate Chaplain from 1981 to 1994

