

Pako Evening Service: 11/09/2016.

Scripture Readings; John 16:5-24; Rom 8:1-17; Sermon: "I believe in the Holy Spirit"

Congregation, we live in an age where everything has become quite spiritual. You can now join Facebook groups where you can buy, swap or sell anything spiritual. In my library at home I have a number of books about the Holy Spirit and his role.

If you were to go to Koorong or online to Amazon, or to any other Christian book store you will be amazed at the different books about the Holy Spirit. From devotionals to 'spirit' filled Bibles to 'spirit' filled novels. In fact you could almost be forgiven to think that if you were to pick up one of those books, you would have the Holy Spirit in our hands.

This is probably why we have so many weird and wonderful things happening in some circles, all in the name of the Holy Spirit. This is also why some people suggest the Holy Spirit is about the 'have' and the 'have nots'. If you don't participate in the latest craze that is supposed to be a manifestation of the Holy Spirit then you are considered amongst the "have nots".

Now of course to have the Holy Spirit and to be spiritual means something different even within our circles. When I accepted the call to Foxton, one of the first questions that was asked at my Colloquium Doctum was whether I believed speaking in tongues was still possible?

Of course I believed speaking in tongues was possible, how could you not since Paul mentions the possibility in 1 Cor 14. Whether it is helpful or not, is another matter and whether you think it is a sign of a second blessing is an entirely different matter. In fact when I was asked that question, I quoted Don Carson in his book showing the Spirit.

He writes and I quote: Pg 160: "Although I think it extremely dangerous to pursue a second blessing attested by tongues, I think it no less dangerous not to pant after God at all, and to be satisfied with a merely credal Christianity that is kosher but complacent, orthodox, but ossified, sound, but soundly asleep."

And then a second follow up question was whether I believed in a closed Canon or did I believe the Holy Spirit still reveals more of God's will and way of salvation today? I believe in a closed canon, or if you like, I am a cessationist, Hebrews 1:1; WCF 1.6; But don't put God the Holy Spirit in a box!

I sense that in the past, especially in our circles we have avoided too much 'spirit' talk, because we know how easily the focus of true worship can be misdirected to it being all about us. Thankfully, the Holy Spirit's existence has never really been questioned in general Christian circles nor that He isn't equally God. So the interesting question I have for you this evening is, "What do you believe concerning the Holy Spirit?"

Many hours have been spent on this subject at church councils and Classes and Synodical meetings! Volumes have been written about the Holy Spirit. All good and helpful no doubt. Thankfully, the Scriptures have quite a bit to say on who the Holy Spirit is and what his function is in today's NT church.

The first thing we must remember is that the Holy Spirit, as well as the Father and the Son, is eternal God. And we should not forget that! Gen 1:1-2 reminds us that at the beginning the Spirit of God was present. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters."

Secondly, Scripture also speaks about their different function within the God head. To know God means to know him as Sovereign, the Creator, the Father, the law-giver, the God above us. To know God also means to know him as the God the Son, the Mediator, Jesus the Messiah. That is why Scripture states very clearly that whoever knows the Father knows the Son and visa versa. John 14:7, "If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well." (cf John 14:9-11).

However, to know God also means to know Him as God the Holy Spirit, the God who is in us. I guess here is where the rubber hits the road. With the Holy Spirit the knowledge of the eternal God gets under your skin. No longer can He be the God at a distance, but the God who lives within us.

In this world, many people if not all have an inkling about God. James 2:19 reminds us that even the demons do and shudder! Sadly, for many, it is not a deep understanding about who God is, but a God who is somewhere out there. Yet the reason why God is at a distance to so many people is because they do not have the Holy Spirit. And without the Holy

Spirit you cannot know Jesus and you cannot know God who is Spirit. You cannot have one without the other! Just as those who have a human spirit can only know what it is to be human, so also those who have the Holy Spirit can only know the deep things about God. Purely human observation or contemplation cannot know God fully or what God has prepared for his people.

That's why we are so blessed to have Scripture! The Holy Spirit makes God's mind known to us. (1 Cor 2:9-10a). "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived, what God has in store for his people, but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit..."

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit is a person. He is not an 'it'! Just because He is a gift from God, does not make him an "it." He is not an impersonal force or power as Star Trek movies made Him out to be or even as some sects claim that He is. Scripture has many references to the Holy Spirit as a person who acts in a personal way. He led Christ into the wilderness to be tempted (Mat 4.) He teaches the apostles to speak (John 16:12ff). He witnesses with our spirit that we are sons and daughters of the living God (Romans 8:16). He prays for believers with groans that words cannot express (Roman 8:26). Yes the Holy Spirit is a personal being, equal with the Father and the Son as eternal God. Scripture does not allow us to think any less or any more of him.

Fourth, let's move to the more specific function of the Holy Spirit. And if we want to state it plainly, the function of the Holy Spirit is to give glory to the Son. That is what Jesus says there in John 16:14; "He will bring glory to me, by taking from what is mine and making it known to you." How does he do that? In a number of ways, but primarily by winning people for Christ. So it seems to me that the Holy Spirit is interested in missions. It is the Holy Spirit who quickens us to new life. He does this by making us aware of our sin and guilt before a holy God.

He makes us aware that we are in need of a Saviour! We cannot determine that simple fact on our own. If it were left simply up to us, we would probably say that humanity is improving so things can only get better. Or we would say as some Christians do, "God has done all he could for us on the cross and that now it is up to us." To think and say that is blasphemy. The Scriptures never speak about only half the glory going to Father or the Son and the rest to us.

We acknowledge that we do need to take a decision about the Lord Jesus but we also acknowledge that any decision we make is a direct result of the Holy Spirit's work within us. Scripture teaches that if the decision were left entirely up to us, we would never choose God. Romans 5:10 reminds us that at one time we were God's enemies! Why would God's enemies choose to follow almighty God, much less his son?

Ephesians 2:1 says, "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins. Dead people cannot choose to save themselves. And so we acknowledge what Scripture teaches that it is "By grace we are saved, through faith, not of yourselves, but a gift of God" [Eph 2:8-9].

The Scriptures teach that the work of salvation is God's, from beginning to end, accomplished by the completed work of His Son. And the Holy Spirit brings that to bear on our lives through his work of sanctification. Paul says to the Philippians 1:6; "being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." That is the work of the Holy Spirit who has been given to us personally, by true faith. He has been given to us, by the Father and He connects us to Christ just as an electrical cord connects a light to the source of power. He makes us aware of our need for a Saviour to the glory of the Father.

Just as the Son of God did not speak on his own authority, but by the Father's mandate, just as He did not do his will but the Father's, just as he did not seek his glory, but the Father's, so the Holy Spirit seeks to glorify the Father by making the name of Jesus known to sinners.

So when a person is born again by the Holy Spirit, that person speaks of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. That's what happened at Pentecost. Peter's first sermon at Pentecost wasn't about how to speak in tongues or faith healing! He didn't even speak about who the Holy Spirit was. No, Peter simply spoke about Jesus and who he is and the Father's plan of salvation.

And congregation when the Spirit of God sets someone free today, that person doesn't shout "I have the Spirit" or "I can speak in tongues." Rather he says, "I know Jesus!" That is the acid test! This is the way we can know if some one has true faith. And when we have the Holy Spirit we share first in Christ and then in all his blessings. We cannot share in all his blessings without having Jesus as our Lord and Saviour! It is only after we have Jesus as Lord, that we can share in all his blessings. People like to end up in heaven where Jesus now is, but if you do not believe in the saving work of Jesus on the

cross for your sins, you will never get there! Many people like to stay out of the paws of the devil, and yet are unwilling to entirely allow themselves to fall into the hands of Jesus. They are unwilling to say “no” to the world and all its attractions but still expect an arm chair ride to glory.

Let me just list a few of the blessings we share with Christ. First, and probably one of the most important, we can have fellowship with the Father in heaven through the Holy Spirit. We know that in God’s sight we are seen as holy because of Christ’s work at Calvary and the Holy Spirit makes that known in our hearts!

We can enter the very throne room of grace with confidence! Heb 4:16 “Let us then approach the throne room of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in our time of need” Another blessing is our membership in one holy universal church, our part in the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life eternal guaranteed.

Eph 1:13c-14; “...Having believed, you were marked in Him (Christ) with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance...” Another great blessing is the abiding presence of the comforter, the paraclete, the counsellor, the advocate. Jesus says in John 14:16-17; “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”

Notice, the personal character of the Spirit. Jesus didn’t say counsel or comfort, but he uses the words “Another Counsellor” In the same context Jesus says that in the coming Spirit, he himself rejoins his disciples. Note verse John 14:18, “I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you.”

When Jesus spoke these words the disciples did not fully understand them, for Jesus needed to explain them more fully later on. But what a marvellous comfort for these disciples to know that their grieving would turn to joy when the Spirit of Christ would return to them, to live in them, to remind them of all the things Jesus had taught and said.

It is also interesting to note that in Rom 8:9-10, the Apostle Paul uses the “Spirit of God” interchangeably with you having the “Spirit of Christ” in you.” Perhaps this truth that the Holy Spirit is also the Spirit of Christ was brought home more to Paul than to many others.

Remember when Jesus met Paul on the road to Damascus, the call went out, “Paul, Paul, why do you persecute me?” Who is the me? None other than the Holy Spirit of Christ whose was dwelling in the people who belonged to the Way. Yes, it is because of the Holy Spirit living in us that we too can have comfort. And congregation it is because of this reality that we can have confidence about the future.

For whatever happens, the Holy Spirit cannot be taken away from us. In fact He will be with us and in us until that great day when we will no longer need him to be in us for we will be with Jesus in person. I sometimes ask the following questions. “How do we get to know the Father?” Answer “The Son reveals him.” “How do we come to know the Son?” The Holy Spirit reveals him. How do we come to know the Holy Spirit? He reveals himself to us. And when he does, he brings us to Jesus and we worship in adoration!

Amen.