

On The Wings of A Snow White Dove

Sermon for Pentecost by Pastor Don Ginkel

The text: John 14:26

We read in Matthew 3:16, “**As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on Him.**” What a day!

In the Gospel song, “On the Wings of a Snow White Dove,” Bob Ferguson writes –

*When Jesus went down to the water that day
He was baptized in the usual way.
When it was done, God blessed His Son.
He sent Him His love on the wings of a dove.*

Fast forward. The place is Jerusalem. It's 50 days after Easter. The believers, 120 in number, are together in an upper room. At Jesus' ascension He had told them to wait in Jerusalem until He sent the Holy Spirit. As believers they already had the Holy Spirit, but now something very miraculous was going to happen. The New Testament Church was about to be born. There are three phenomena.

Phenomenon # 1: At 9:00 in the morning there was the sound of a furious wind coming from the sky. Undoubtedly this symbolized the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. The loud sound made its way to where the disciples were. It focused on that building and went inside it. The noise attracted thousands of people to the location of the building.

Phenomenon # 2: Fire like tongues suddenly appear in the room, and one flame then sat on the head of each of them. All the men and women, the young and the old were touched. Fire symbolizes purification.

Phenomenon # 3: They all began to speak in different languages. These were known languages. They could suddenly speak languages they did not know and had never studied. People from many foreign countries were present in the enormous crowd outside the building. They heard the Christians speak in every language represented there. What a miracle! On that first day 3,000 people were converted to the Lord Jesus. The number of converts continued growing each day at such a rate that they finally stopped counting.

But many church members today are ignorant of the Holy Spirit. Many people are not living in victory over life. Many believers that I know seem quite confused.

When my son, Mark, was a young boy, he greeted me late one evening after I had made some evangelism calls. “**Hey, dad,**” he said, “**did you save anybody tonight?**” It sounds like a sensible question to ask an evangelist, except evangelists don't save anybody.

I was the pastor of one congregation, and I received a call from another church to become their pastor. After I made the announcement at the first service a man came up to me and said, “**Oh, pastor, you can't leave. You got me saved.**” Maybe that's the way the person feels, but we should know that people don't “**save**” people. People don't get themselves saved either.

Before we become Christians the Bible says we were lost. St. Paul says in Ephesians 2:1 that before conversion, **“You were dead in your transgressions and sins.”** A dead man cannot do anything. A dead man doesn’t decide to become alive. A dead man doesn’t decide to get up out of his casket and walk away. A dead man remains dead. Everything must be done for him.

Before you became a believer you were dead. Totally. You were dead as a result of sin. In fact the Bible says that this deadness is inherited from our parents and they from their parents all the way back to Adam and Eve. It’s called original sin. You couldn’t do a thing. You couldn’t believe. Someone had to make you alive. The Holy Spirit is that Someone. St. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:3, **“Therefore I tell you... no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.”**

The Holy Spirit is a gift that God gives you at a certain point in life. You don’t earn it. You don’t deserve it. You don’t go to church to get it. God sends the Holy Spirit to you and makes you alive.

Not too long ago I heard someone say, **“Well, I just don’t feel like I’ve got the Holy Spirit. It would seem to me that I should feel something.”** My question is this: How do you feel something that’s invisible? The Bible tells me that there are evil spirits all around us, but they are invisible. I’ve never felt one yet, but I know they’re there. The Bible tells me that holy angels are invisible and they are all around us, but I’ve never felt one yet, but I know they are there.

The Bible tells me that God’s Holy Spirit enters into my life when I become a Christian, but I’ve never seen Him nor will I ever see Him until I get to heaven. But I know He’s there. He has given me the faith to believe it. I’m afraid what some people are feeling today when they claim to feel the Holy Spirit is the covering of goose bumps over their skin as they have an emotional experience.

The Holy Spirit is an invisible gift of God to all of God’s people as they enter into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and all of God’s spiritual gifts are accepted by faith, not sight or feeling, but faith.

Right before He went back to heaven, Jesus made the promise of our text, John 14:26, **“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”** The same Holy Spirit that came down to Jesus in the Jordan comes to you today. Everything you need to know is taught you by the Holy Spirit. You may be a poor reader, a poor mechanic, a poor financial advisor, but if you have the Holy Spirit Jesus says you’ll get to know everything you need to know for this life and the life to come.

The Bible says that the Holy Spirit is a Comforter! The Comforter tells you that you are forgiven in Christ. Someone makes an attack on your personal faith and says, **“You did that and you call yourself a Christian?”** They are trying to challenge your faith because you sinned. You need to listen to the Comforter.

A Christian lady finds out that she has only a few months to live because of some serious disease, and she is afraid of dying. It haunts her. She needs to listen to the Comforter. We all need to listen to the Comforter. Jesus sent Him to live with us and to do just what the term suggests — to give us comfort. It is the Holy Spirit who comforts you with the knowledge that Jesus paid for every one of your sins. It is the Holy Spirit who reminds you to hold on to the forgiveness given to you by Jesus.

Without the Holy Spirit you wouldn't have a really comfortable day in your life. You wouldn't have any peace. You wouldn't have any purpose in life. There is hardly a day in your life that someone or something is not examining you. If it's not someone in person, it's something you read in the paper or see on TV. Someone's always questioning: "**Do you really believe? Do you really think that Christ is worth all that to put your life on the line for Him?**" That's an examination.

But you can't fail that exam. The Holy Spirit is there to comfort you with the knowledge that you have already passed the exam. When Jesus conquered the devil two thousand years ago He passed the exam for you. When Jesus walked out of His grave He passed the exam for you. The Holy Spirit is there to comfort you with this message.

Now listen closely. The Holy Spirit is not the focal point of the Holy Trinity. Some people seem to feel that the Holy Spirit is the central, focal point of their Christian faith and experience.

According to the Bible the Holy Spirit points people to Jesus Christ. Christ is the focal point of all Christianity, not the Holy Spirit. It is in Christ that we **live and breath and have our being**. It is in Christ that we have **new life**. It is in Christ that we are **born again**. It is in Christ that we are **made holy people**. It is in Christ that we are **made sons and daughters of God**. It is in Christ that we've **received a mansion in heaven**. It is in Christ that we are **baptized, grow up, walk and die**. It is in Christ that we **walk through the valley of death**. The Holy Spirit is present to help us focus every amount of energy in the direction of Jesus Christ.

Some time back I was explaining some of these concepts to a person, and he said, "**You make me feel as if I don't really have anything to say about being a Christian.**" He said, "**I want to make my own decision when I am ready.**" You know, every one of us wants to feel as if we can make our own decision, but when it comes to receiving the gifts of God, we don't make a decision. The Giver decides, and the Giver is God.

God decided in eternity to make you His child. God decided to give you the Holy Spirit. Now you may use that gift as you decide. It is yours; it belongs to you.

If you desire God's Holy Spirit to control in your life tell God. Tell God you desire to be a Christian with a meaningful life. Tell God that you desire to be a Christian with purpose. Tell God you want the Holy Spirit to comfort you concerning your sins knowing that they are paid for by Christ. I like one additional verse in "On the Wings of a Snow White Dove." Please listen to it

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*When trouble surrounds us, when evil comes,
The body grows weak, the spirit grows numb.
When these things beset us, He doesn't forget us,
He sends down His love on the wings of a dove.*

Martin Luther once said, "**As a Christian you have the Holy Spirit, feathers and all!**" He remains a mighty Person in the Godhead to make you a solid believer here on earth and forever in heaven. Let's pray.

Holy Spirit, Comforter and Teacher of all spiritual truth, shine brightly in our hearts that we may see more of Jesus. We give You our thanks and praise. Spirit of God, abide with us. Keep our faith in Jesus strong, warm and alive. Help us share the Good News of Jesus with others so that

they, too, may believe in Him. As You blessed Jesus in the Jordan and the disciples on that first Pentecost, so come to each of us and richly bless us. Thank You for this day and this worship service. In Jesus' name. Amen.