

Holy Spirit in the Life of Jesus and Us

Sermon Notes by the Rev. Arnold A. Bush, 3rd Sunday after Epiphany, Jan. 27, 2013, Church of the Epiphany, Tallassee, AL

Gospel: Luke 4:14-21 "Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee. When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day as was his custom. He stood up to read and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me."

Introduction

If you were taking a class on the Gospel of Luke, reading and reflecting on all the passages with a certain theme, we would read them in one sitting and note the context of every passage. This is what I want you to do this morning. We are in the third of a 3 year cycle, the Gospel of Luke, called cycle C. I want you to open a pew Bible and let me read the passage with a few words of explanation and commentary.

1. In Luke 1:15, the birth of John the Baptist is foretold to his father Zachariah: "An angel of the Lord appeared to Zachariah standing beside the altar of incense, and he was startled and gripped with fear. The angel said, "Do not be afraid, for your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son. He will be a joy and delight to you, *and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born.*"

2. The birth of Jesus is foretold as the angel Gabriel come to Mary in Nazareth. Luke 1:35 "The angel said do not be afraid, for you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a Son of the Most High." Mary responds, "How can this be since I am a virgin?" Verse 35: The angel answers, "*The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. May this word be fulfilled.*" Hold your finger on verse 35 and recall verse 15.. The power of the Holy Spirit is working in Elizabeth and Mary.

3. Luke 1:67 When John is born to Elizabeth, Zachariah's mouth was opened. Luke has a record of Zachariah's song, "*His father Zachariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied.*" Here Luke makes three references to the power of the Holy Spirit in the life of Elizabeth, Mary and John's father Zachariah. God is active in the births of John the Baptist and Jesus. And the Spirit came upon them. All three were afraid when the Angel appeared. What do we need to understand? God is involved in birthing.
 - Let each of us remember the date of our birth. God was there welcoming us into this earthly life. God love was touching our mother's body as we grew toward our entry into the world. Taken from the theological statement, "God is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow," I was once engaged in praying for the "healing of memories." I would ask the person to imagine that Christ was standing in the birthing room with the nurses and doctors.
 - Are we grateful that parents and relative were present to nurture us with food, warmth, human touch so we would grow physically and mentally?
 - Do we give thanks for being born as a citizen of the USA, or some civilized developed country?
 - The conception, growth of the child in the mother and the birth is the Creator's way to sustain the human race. The Holy Spirit placed all the hormones, urge to merge, human

conception, into human beings so they are able to reproduce themselves over generations.

4. The Baptism of Jesus: Luke 3:16 (page 1563) John states, *"I baptize with water but one who is more powerful than I will come, and He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."* In Luke 3:21, 22 *"when all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too, and as he was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son. Whom I love, with you I am well pleased'."*
 - Again, here is Luke recording John the Baptist's prediction and then the Holy Spirit descending like a dove upon Jesus as he was being baptized.
 - What is the Holy Spirit doing in our baptisms? He is adopting us as his children. We are not just babies or human beings floating out in the universe, but now we become a child of the kingdom of God. He makes us a member Christ's body, and we are now inheritors of His grace and kingdom. He has moved us from a small family into a large family.
 - If you were baptized as an infant, then the Holy Spirit was using your parents and godparents to bring you up within the Church. They promised that you would come to know and follow Christ (BOCP 858-859). You were a "nobody" before, but now you have become a "somebody by baptism."
 - I recall baptizing a tall, large gentleman in his early 20s who had served a year in the county jail. He grew up without a church background. He had never heard of the Parable of the Prodigal Son or the Lost Sheep. He said, "My Lord the Holy Spirit has welcomed me who has existed in 'wild and sinful living.' He is calling me home, and his grace is being poured on me in spite of the things I have done wrong in the past." I recall he was immersed in a cattle trough on the floor of the parish all and when he was sealed with oil by the Holy Spirit, there were many high-fives, lots of clapping, and loud *Amens*.
5. Moving to the Temptation of Jesus into the Wilderness. Look on the next page, 1564 and Luke 4:1. *"Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for 40 days he was tempted by the devil. He had nothing during those days."* He was tempted in three ways.
 - Here is Luke writing that the Holy Spirit led him into the wilderness to battle and be tested by Satan. If you ask many adults, who led Jesus into the wilderness to be tested, they will say, "The Devil seduced or enticed him to come into the wilderness."
 - Thus, It seems to me that sometimes the Holy Spirit moves us into situations where we are being tested, disciplined, and challenged. Think about a situation within your family that was a challenge or test for you. Getting over a death of a family member or a teenager challenging the parents' authority.
 - All of us have a story of a test or challenge. I recall back in 1995, when I was serving as associate rector of Christ Church, San Antonio. We were empty nesters and seeking to move back to the SE where our children lived (also where they played SEC football). We wanted to be able to see them more often. We moved in the spring of 1995, and I became rector of St. Jude's, Valpariso/Niceville, Florida. This was a place where the Diocese had set aside \$400,000 to buy property for St. Jude's to move. Niceville was an Air Force town where a high percentage of the population moved every 4 years. In the late summer, the treasurer and senior warden told me some families had moved away and the pledges were such that they would have a hard time paying me in the next calendar year. I was confident the Holy Spirit had led us to St. Jude's. Would I become a

bi-vocational priest and would Zoe have to find a teaching job? In September we hired the Rev. Carl Bright, rector at Christ the King, in Santa Rosa Shores, 20 miles away. He led us in the Alabama Stewardship Plan where the congregation is challenged to tithe or begin tithing. He led the four workshops with over 50 % of the congregation present. The plan teaches members to give out of their need to give and to give out of gratitude. The annual pledges went from under \$80,000 to \$150,000.

- Speaking of tasks and challenges, I love two paragraphs in a Prayer of Thanksgiving on page 835 found in the BoCP. *"We thank you for setting us at tasks which demand our best efforts and for leading us to accomplishment that satisfy and delight us" Then next: "We thank you for those disappointments and failures that lead us to acknowledge our dependence on you alone."*
 - I hope all of us will remember the tasks Holy Spirit will set before us in the future that challenge us and demand our best efforts. Let us live into those tasks that demand our best efforts.
6. Now to the Gospel for today from Luke 4:14-21. (page 1565) *"Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside."* On the Sabbath day Jesus went to the Nazareth synagogue as was his custom. He picked up the scroll from Isaiah 61:1-2 and found the place that was written:
- "The Spirit of the Lord is on me (note, Spirit is upon Jesus, OT) because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom (release) to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to set the oppressed free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor".*
- He set the scroll down and said, " Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."*
- The Holy Spirit had filled Jesus as he preached and healed people all over the surrounding countryside of Galilee.
 - In the synagogue, Jesus stands up and says here is my mission: "Preach good news to the POOR, proclaim freedom to the PRISONERS, recovery to the BLIND, set the oppressed or downtrodden free, and proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."
 - Jesus states his MISSION. He is the fulfillment of this scripture.
 - Here we are 30-40 followers of Christ. I think the Holy Spirit is saying to us, "Discern what is our mission. I believe deeply that part of the Mission of the Church of the Epiphany must include HELPING THE POOR, helping those who are BLIND TO GOD'S GRACE IN THE WORLD, HELPING THOSE WHO ARE BLINDED TO HUMAN NEEDS IN Central Alabama, and giving wholeness to those who are downtrodden or oppressed.
 - Another application is discerning our own MISSION in our work or family setting. Much of the literature on healthy marriages or marriage counseling is about challenging the family to have an agreed MISSION STATEMENT OR CLARITY IN EXPECTATIONS.

Conclusion: In looking at the Gospel of Luke, we see a reference to the Holy Spirit in surrounding the Births of John the Baptist and Jesus. We need to acknowledge the gift of life we received in our own births. In Jesus' Baptism in the River Jordan, the Spirit came down upon him and God Voice said, "You are my beloved Son." In our baptism, the Spirit adopted us into God's Kingdom, and we are now inheritors of His Kingdom. Are we experiencing God's love for us? Yes, God loves me.

Jesus is led into the Wilderness to be challenged and tested by the Devil. Sometimes the Spirit will set challenges and demands for us to meet. As we accomplish these challenges, we experience delight, and we also learn to depend on God alone.

When Jesus read from Isaiah 61:1-2, the Mission of Christ was laid out. Is not the Holy Spirit calling us to clarify that Mission as a Church and as a Follower of Christ. Prayer: part of the Thanksgiving prayer on page 836.