



The Rest of the Story.

THE REST OF THE STORY

By Rev. Will Nelken

Presented at Trinity Community Church, San Rafael, CA, on Sunday, May 22, 2022

Matthew 9:35 Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages of that area, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And He healed every kind of disease and illness. ³⁶ When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷ He said to His disciples, “The harvest is great, but the workers are few. ³⁸ So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask Him to send more workers into His fields.”

This was the only recorded prayer request which Jesus gave to His followers. Pretty important, right?

What motivated His request? Compassion.

What was the need? Great harvest + Few workers = More workers.

Who can do something about this need? His disciples.

What can we do? Pray.

Who should we ask? The Lord who is in charge of the harvest. They are His fields. Ask Him.

Ask the Landowner

Matthew 20:1 “For the Kingdom of Heaven is like the landowner who went out early one morning to hire workers for his vineyard. ² He agreed to pay the normal daily wage and sent them out to work.

³ “At nine o’clock in the morning he was passing through the marketplace and saw some people standing around doing nothing. ⁴ So he hired them, telling them he would pay them whatever was right at the end of the day. ⁵ So they went to work in the vineyard. At noon and again at three o’clock he did the same thing.

⁶ “At five o’clock that afternoon he was in town again and saw some more people standing around. He asked them, ‘Why haven’t you been working today?’

⁷ “They replied, ‘**Because no one hired us.**’

“The landowner told them, ‘Then go out and join the others in my vineyard.’

Who is in charge of the workers in the field? The One who owns the field. Ask Him, “Send more!”

But it's easy to get distracted from the real need by lesser issues (sometimes, *imaginary* issues).

What's the Real Need?

Acts 1:6 So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking Him, "Lord, has the time come for You to free Israel and restore our kingdom?"

⁷ He replied, "The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and **THEY ARE NOT FOR YOU TO KNOW.** ⁸ But you will receive **POWER** when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be My witnesses, telling people about Me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Don't get distracted! We have a task before us (and it's not to figure out the schedule of the end times).

Your task (and mine) is to **WISELY** use the time we have been given to show other people the glory of Jesus Christ. (Redeem the time, buy up every available opportunity.)

Our task is to be His witnesses, to tell people about Him everywhere we go. (Not everyONE, but everyWHERE.)

Watch People's Reactions

So you've got a story to tell about Jesus' work in your life...

Peoples' reactions to your story will vary:

- That's ridiculous!
- Prove it!
- I just can't see it.
- That's interesting. So what?
- That's amazing! I could never do that.

Even if you show them what the Scriptures say, the immediate result is not guaranteed, for this is not an intellectual process of discovery, but a spiritual process, dependent on revelation and faith. (God's part and yours)

If someone is not yet willing to engage with the *text*, they are not yet ready, and you should just leave a seed of truth about Christ and move on, until another opportunity arises.

If they *wrestle* with the text, that's GOOD—the Holy Spirit is dealing with them. Don't get in His way! (Don't become the object of their wrestling.)

Gently present **APPROPRIATE** Scriptures and **PRAY** for them to have light from the Word.

If they embrace the text, wonderful! Listen to their insights and invite their questions. Take it as far as time and mutual comfort allow.

Depend on the Holy Spirit to give you the words you should share. Because your witness is to be given in co-operation with the Holy Spirit, not in His stead.

Co-operation

John 15:26 “But I will send you the Advocate—the Spirit of truth. He will come to you from the Father and **will testify** all about Me. ²⁷ And you **must also testify** about Me because you have been with Me from the beginning of My ministry.

It's a co-operative effort. The Holy Spirit initiates the work, and we join in where He is working.

Acts 15:28 “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...”

It will do no good for us to take off on our own to save the world. We must prayerfully discover where the Lord is already at work, and dive into that.

Confirming the Message

The Holy Spirit will also cooperate with your efforts, by confirming (in various ways) the truthfulness of the Message you bring.

Mark 16:20 They went out and proclaimed everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through the accompanying signs.

Hebrews 2:3 So what makes us think we can escape if we ignore this great salvation that was first announced by the Lord Jesus Himself and then delivered to us by those who heard Him speak? ⁴ And God confirmed the message by giving signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit whenever He chose.

Don't be concerned about *how* the Spirit confirms, or if you can see a sign. Just trust Him to do His work, and try to follow His lead. He knows how to do this!

The Power

So, when Jesus said to wait for the power of the Spirit before going, He meant it. We NEED the Holy Spirit's power in order to do our work well.

How does the Holy Spirit help us?

He empowers believers to live Christlike lives...

- Know the Lord
- Recognize His presence/prompting
- Respond to His voice

He breaks down barriers to faith.

He empowers believers to represent Him effectively...

- Moved with compassion/empathy
- Love the unlovely
- Demonstrate grace
- Supernatural gifts (knowledge, wisdom, faith)

He awakens faith in unbelievers. He draws them toward the Father.

He reveals Jesus to seekers.

Don't go without Him!

Filled With the Spirit

Have you been baptized with the Spirit? Experienced that initial infilling?

Have you been re-filled recently? If not, why not?

Ephesians 5:18 *Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit.*

¹⁸ Don't get drunk with wine, because it makes you lose control. Instead, keep on being filled with the Spirit. (CJB)

Ever be filled and stimulated with the [Holy] Spirit. (AMP)

“BE FILLED.” It is a verb, present, passive, imperative, in the second person, plural. What does that mean?

The verb is in the present tense—“keep on being filled”—so it is an experience we should enjoy constantly and not just on special occasions.

The verb is passive. We do not fill ourselves but permit the Spirit to fill us.

And the verb is imperative; it is God's command, and He expects us to obey.

Finally, the command is second-person plural, so it applies to all Christians and not just to a select few.

“Filled” is literally, to cram (as in a net—think of Peter’s great haul of fish). However, it is a figure of speech that does not actually refer to quantity of content, but to *influence* or *control*. Here, it means to be “controlled by” the Holy Spirit. (Just as it is possible for people to be “filled with envy,” or “filled with wrath.”

To be “filled with the Spirit” means to be continually controlled by the Spirit in our mind, emotions, and will. The filling of the Spirit means that my body (being so filled) belongs to Christ.

Evidences

Don’t settle for less than the real thing. This is too important! You need the *real* power.

The initial physical evidence of the baptism with the Holy Spirit is, according to the record of the Book of Acts, speaking with unknown (unlearned) languages (tongues), as in Acts 2:4.

One may have many supernatural experiences with the Spirit of God without being baptized with the Spirit by Jesus. But that’s no reason to stop short of that climactic empowerment. Seek the Lord for it.

Of course, there are equally important ongoing evidences: joyful (Ephesians 5:19), thankful (Ephesians 5:20), cooperative (Ephesians 5:21), plus all the rest of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

It is ONLY through the power of the Holy Spirit that we can walk in harmony with one another and discover the unity the Spirit gives.

What to Do?

As you examine your own life, and consider how you are spending your energy, your time, and your wealth—Do you find strong evidence of the Holy Spirit’s control?

Does His control extend to Wednesday and Friday, or do you lose control to the world’s influences on Monday, or take over again yourself by Tuesday?

How fragrant are the fruit of the Spirit in your interactions with those you know? What about with those you don’t know? Would a stranger following your social media posts conclude that you are a Christ-follower from your attitude and thoughtful expressions?

If “the force is not strong with you these days,” do something about it! **Return to the well.** It’s time to draw another drink from the depths of Christ’s love.

We know that nothing can separate us from His love, but we might neglect it or take it for granted. Lower your bucket into the cool, deep waters of the Spirit—seek the Lord, while He may be found.

Determine to devote yourself to worshipful prayer. Make room for the Spirit’s influence in your heart and life. Give Him your time and attention.

If you’ve not experienced the fullness of the Spirit, it’s time to **dig a new well!**

If it’s been some time since you’ve been consumed by the sense of God’s grace for you, the old wells have probably become contaminated by runoff from the world, or dried up from disuse. It’s time to dig a *new well!*

As you may know, digging takes more effort than dipping. Be prepared for pushback from your mind and flesh. Breaking old habits to start new ones is no easy chore.

But, in just three to four weeks (less than one month) you can establish a new spiritual habit of worshipful prayer.

Begin by asking the Lord Jesus to *fill* you with the Holy Spirit. Nothing less will do.

Then, open the pages of the New Testament and let the Spirit’s voice guide you to a fresh appreciation of the love God has showered over you.

As you read, whenever you find a cause or reason for worship, pause to do so, and continue until you have exhausted your own thoughts on the topic. Then pick up reading again.

Let’s start right now! Right here! Praying together! Come, Lord Jesus, and fill us now!