

Acts 2.1-12

What does the Spirit do?

Amington Parish Church

Sunday 23 May 2021

Pentecost

Giving gifts

§ Have you ever opened a gift from someone and you had no idea what it was or what it was for? You have to arrange your face to say, 'Oooh lovely' while your brain tries to figure it out.

§ I wonder if any of you likes raspberries? They are one of my favourite fruits. But do you know what this is? *Hold up box containing Raspberry Pi 3*. Believe it or not, this box contains a Raspberry Pi. However, it's never seen a hedgerow – or wherever it is that raspberries grow on – and it's not wrapped in pastry.

Some of you may know what it is, because we have one in the church office... *take it out of the box...* § it is a micro computer. It's actually the best-selling British computer of all time, having sold over 30 million units since launch. And, Bruce will be delighted to know that most of them are made in Pencoed, Wales.

Now you know what it is... but would you know how to use it?
Or what to use it *for*?

Sometimes the Holy Spirit is a bit like this for Christians: we may (or may not!) know what it is; even if we do, we may not have a clue what he does or what he is *for*; but the more we explore who he is and what he does, the possibilities are endless.

Do you know what the best possible gift you could ever receive is? It's a broken drum: you just can't beat it.

There's a lot in the Bible about the Holy Spirit – I'm going to pick out seven things the Bible tells us he does.

The Spirit...

(1) ..Teaches

First, Jesus said the Holy Spirit **'will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you'** (John 14.26).

Just as the Spirit inspired the people who wrote the Bible, so he inspires *us* when we *read* those words. So, even though they are hundreds and thousands of years old, and originally written in a language most of us can't read, God still speaks to us through them. It's a miracle! And it's a miracle of the Holy Spirit.

(2) .. Empowers

¶ Second, the Spirit empowers us. There are so many examples of this, right the way through the Bible – not least in Acts where the scared and uneducated and confused fisherman called Peter was empowered – to do what? *To bear witness to Jesus*. Peter stood up and spoke to a huge crowd of people and told them about Jesus.

The miracles came later – the first and most important thing the Spirit empowered Peter to do, was tell people about Jesus.

(3) .. Gives

¶ Third, the Spirit gives. He is, literally, the gift that keeps on giving. The Spirit gives faith, love, hope, wisdom, abilities to do things we couldn't otherwise do – and so much more besides!

The gifts the Spirit gives can be colossal gifts of power, to speak in another language, to heal someone's body riddled with cancer, to show someone a vision of the future.

But equally as important are the gifts of an encouraging word to a hurting friend, the discipline to keep praying even when you can't be bothered, the willingness to help clean the church building, the strength to carry on when you feel spent.

(4) .. Helps

Fourth, the Spirit helps. Jesus called the Spirit a **'helper'** which is sometimes translated as **'comforter'** (John 14.16).

On all your computers there will be several 'helper' services which run in the background. You can't tell they're running unless you know where to look. They are there to keep files in sync, to check your emails, to update your browser, and so on.

Sometimes we don't realise how the Spirit has helped – other times we try to do things without asking for help. But he is *always* there: Jesus said, **'I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you for ever'** (John 14.16).

(5) .. Prays

Fifth, the Spirit prays. I've said many times, I'm rubbish at praying. I don't know if you believe me, but it's true. I find it really hard. So one of my favourite verses is this: **the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans** (Romans 8.26). It's not an excuse not to pray – but the Spirit *always* prays, within us, for us, through us. And, he helps *us* to pray: Paul says we must **pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests** (Ephesians 6.18).

(6) .. Shows

¶ Sixth, the Spirit shows – he shows us our sin. In Acts when the apostles share the gospel, not once do they use the word ‘love’ – but almost every time they use the word ‘repent’. The Spirit shows us the truth about ourselves: that we are broken and sinful. Jesus said, **‘when the Spirit comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong’** (John 16.8).

It’s not a nice thing, to be shown to be wrong. Frankly it’s often quite embarrassing. But it’s so important. After all, if you’re going in completely the wrong direction, aren’t you grateful if someone shows you, so you can turn around and end up in the right place?

(7) .. Promises

¶ Finally, the Spirit promises. All this stuff the Spirit does – and there’s more than we’ve looked at today – all this stuff is simply the down-payment, the deposit, the first-fruits of all that God has in store for his people.

Paul said God’s people are **marked in Jesus with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance** (Ephesians 1.13-14). The Spirit is the ultimate promise from God – and friends, God does not and will not disappoint. Alleluia.

The Spirit... Is Yours

¶ All this – and it's not a complete list by any means, there is even *more* – all this, it's not just for vicars or church wardens or super holy people – it's for *all* believers. On Pentecost Peter said:

“This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people...” ’

Acts 2.16-17 (NIV)

Do you get it? *This*, Peter said, is *that*, and *that* was God's promise to give his Spirit to *all* people. Not just the leaders. Not just the preachers. Not just the musicians or the craftsmen – but *all* people. In Acts 4.31, **they were all filled with the Spirit**. Not only the Apostles, but *all* of them. Do you get it? ¶ The Spirit is for *all*.

When it's someone's birthday – someone you love – do you give them something they'll hate? Of course not!

Jesus said, ‘If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!’

Luke 11.13 (NIV)

So let's ask him. Please stand...