October 24

Happy Monday everyone!

Out of the gates, let me ask you a question as we enter the final week of October: Have you ever felt the presence of the Holy Spirit? What did that feel like? How would you describe it?

God’s presence in our lives, and in our world, takes place through the agency, and the work, of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes it’s an intuition that we feel, or a leading, or even a voice. Has that ever happened to you?

I remember feeling “called” to seminary. I put it off literally for years. Said more accurately, I fought it. “You want me to do what?” “Start seminary at the age of 55?” “Leave my perch on top of the corporate ladder?” “Learn Hebrew?” “No way, not me.” But the Holy Spirit was, shall we say, persistent, and here we are.

Or how about this: Have you ever felt like angels are watching out for you? Maybe a close call in traffic, an accident barely avoided, or some crisis averted?

As we read the Gospel of Luke, one of the main themes Luke writes about is the presence, and the work, of the Holy Spirit, as well as the intercession of the heavenly angels on earth. Luke was not one of the twelve disciples, and he was the only non-Jewish writer of the New Testament books. He was a physician, highly educated, and no doubt himself felt the strong presence of the Holy Spirit as He inspired Luke to write his Gospel almost 2,000 years ago.

Luke’s Gospel starts with a dialog between the Jewish priest Zechariah and the angel Gabriel. Zechariah was a devout and humble man, but nonetheless, his wife and he were unable to conceive children. Gabriel informs Zechariah that his wife Elizabeth is to have a son in their old age, and that son would become the man we know as John the Baptist. Zechariah is in disbelief because of their age, and upon hearing this news, responds like this:

“How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years” (1:18).

To this, the angel Gabriel responds with one of the most noble and forceful messages I find in all of Scripture:

“T’m Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news” (1:19).

Think of it. Gabriel is God’s personal messenger who stands in His presence, and in His glory, and in His majesty, waiting to do His personal bidding.
Personally, I believe in angels. I believe they fight spiritual fights for us that are often unseen. And I believe they bring messages to us, in whatever form that may take. Messages like: “The Holy Spirit is talking to you. Your seminary application is waiting.”

Tomorrow: Gabriel pays another visit.

IHS,

Pastor Lou

October 25

Grace and peace to you this day.

It’s happened to all of us, and it happened to me the other day. I was in my “comfy” chair, also known as “The Magic Lou Chair” for its ability to induce sleep, and the doorbell rang. Someone was actually at the door. Not an Amazon delivery, but someone either selling something, running for office, or who-knows-what. Not wanting to be bothered, I told Judy, “Just wait until they go away.”

And then the doorbell rang again. Dogs barking, my irritation level going up (“The nerve of someone actually coming to my door”), and eventually, they went away. For all I know it was Publisher’s Clearinghouse and I just passed up a million bucks.

As Christians, the Holy Spirit knocks on our spiritual door. Angels come calling. We either answer…or we don’t. After visiting the priest Zechariah, the angel Gabriel then pays a visit to a young, unwed Jewish peasant girl named Mary. This is how Luke records the scene:

“In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.” Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.” “How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?” The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail.” “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.” Then the angel left her” (1:26-38).
Mary could have stayed in her “Magic Mary Chair.” She could have waited to see if eventually God would send Gabriel to someone else. She could have even said, “Uh uh. No way. Not me.” But she didn’t. Instead, she answered the call, and she did so with these simple and beautiful words:

“I am the Lord’s servant. May your words to me be fulfilled.”

Tomorrow: Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

IHS,
Pastor Lou

October 26

Greetings DGCC Family.

The fourth chapter of Luke’s Gospel starts like this:

“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil” (4:1).

I have often wondered, “What is going on here?” Why would the Holy Spirit, presumably at the direction of God the Father, deliberately lead God the Son into the wilderness to be personally tempted by Satan Himself?

Does the Spirit lead us into danger? Does the Spirit lead us into temptation and peril and jeopardy? Here’s what I think.

The first thing to notice is this: before being led by the Holy Spirit, Luke records that Jesus is full of the Holy Spirit. The Greek word Luke uses here is *pleres*, it doesn’t just mean “full,” it means “totally full,” or “complete.” The Holy Spirit completely fills Jesus, meaning He completely equips Him and prepares Him. Then, and only then, does He lead Him into the wilderness, where He stays with Jesus through the entire period.

Following this, Luke records that Jesus returns to Galilee “in the power of the Spirit” (4:14). The Holy Spirit fills Jesus, then the Holy Spirit leads Jesus, and then the Holy Spirit empowers Jesus.

And so it is, I think, with our lives as well. The Holy Spirit fills us with spiritual energy and completes our identity as children of God. Then He leads us where He will within, and according to, the sovereignty of God. And when we get there, He fills us with His power, and with His strength, and with His force. These are among the gifts we receive as children of the Almighty.

Tomorrow: Jesus and the joy of the Spirit.

IHS,
Pastor Lou

October 27

Grace and peace to you this day.

Yesterday we talked about the filling, and the leading, and the power of the Holy Spirit as manifested in the life of Jesus and in our own lives as well.

But the story doesn’t end there. God desires that our lives be filled with joy. Not necessarily the kind of earthly joy that can be fleeting, superficial, or temporary, but the kind of joy that comes only through a deep relationship with our Creator. Here’s how Luke records it in chapter 10 of his Gospel:

“At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do” (10:21).

Here we have this remarkable scene of the Trinity on full display working in perfect divine harmony. God the Son, full of the joy of the Spirit, praising God the Father. And what is the source of His joy and praise? That God reveals Himself not to the elite, or the powerful, or those in charge, but to the innocent, the poor in spirit, the meek, and to “the little children.” This is what brings the joy of the Spirit to the Savior, who in turn praises the Father.

And so my prayer for you today is this: may you experience the joy of God’s Spirit, may you have God’s Word revealed to you and may you receive it with the eyes and heart of a child, and may you praise the Father for His abiding and steadfast love, and mercy, and grace.

IHS,

Pastor Lou

October 28

Happy Friday, everyone. Here’s your musical devotional for the week. Turn up the volume and enjoy.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUKcUxnvHEw

IHS,

Pastor Lou