November 14

Greetings DGCC Family.

Maybe it’s a certain song – a hymn, a worship song, or some tune that invokes a fond memory. Maybe it’s a prayer, a certain passage of Scripture, or a favorite devotional. Or perhaps a scene from a movie, or a book, or a line from a special poem. Whatever it is, it produces “that feeling” that might cause a lump in your throat, the welling of tears, or a feeling of warmth that brings a smile to your face and a sense of peace or happiness. I have to admit, after 36 years, I still get “that feeling” when I catch my wonderful wife’s eye from across a crowded room. She says I’m really just a “softy.” I tell her not to let that get out or it will ruin my image.

In any case, science will tell you that those feelings are the result of chemicals in your brain – “neurotransmitters” like serotonin or dopamine that produce these feelings. That lump in your throat or those tears in your eyes are the result of chemicals and electrical impulses that course through your nervous system and produce physiological effects.

To that I say, “Really?”

I happen to think that as the creation of the Creator, we are so much more than chemical reactions and electrical impulses. I happen to think that those feelings are the work of the Holy Spirit, God’s presence that dwells within us when we accept His Son as our Savior.

As we move this week into the book of Acts, we see the presence and the work of the Holy Spirit as the disciples and other followers of Jesus work to establish the early church; work that is only made possible through God’s Spirit on earth and in the lives of the disciples.

The opening of Acts features the resurrected Jesus instructing His disciples what to do in the moments before His ascension:

“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (1:4-5).

Notice here how Jesus characterizes the giving of the Holy Spirit: it is a “gift.”

So it was with the disciples 2,000 years ago, and so it is with us. When we accept the Son, the Father sends us the promised gift of the Spirit that courses through our soul and fills us with the Divine Presence. It is a gift given of love and grace.

Tomorrow: Pentecost.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
November 15

Grace and peace to you this day.

Democrats and Republicans. Liberals and conservatives. Black and white, gay and straight, rich and poor, believers and non-believers, haves and have-nots. We live in a country, if not a world, that seems at times to be endlessly divided, decidedly divisive, and abounding in barriers.

Believe it or not, life was no different for the disciples and the early church. Consider the Feast of Pentecost following the ascension of Jesus. People from all over the known world had gathered: “God fearing Jews from every nation” (2:5). This means that people of many different cultures, languages, religious practices, and so on. Differences that no doubt created barriers of mistrust, suspicion, and skepticism, especially when it came to this new “religion” preached by the disciples of Jesus. But then, enter the Holy Spirit:

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?” (2:1-12).

The Holy Spirit breaks down barriers. Barriers of language. Barriers of culture. Barriers that divide. And in a single moment of divine power the Spirit of God creates the church, His church. And the fire kindles…and the fire spreads.

Tomorrow: Boldly speaking.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
November 16

Greeting you today in the name of Jesus.

Pneumatics. It is a branch of engineering that studies the use of compressed air or other gasses to power tools or other devices. When I was a young boy and later a young man working in the machine shop where my Dad worked, there were air compressors around the shop with hoses attached to them. They were like the air hoses you use at gas stations to fill your tires, only stronger. One of my jobs was to use these hoses to blow off the metal burrs from the various parts produced by the machines. They were powerful enough that you had to keep them away from your face or you could damage an eye.

The root of the word “pneumatics” is the Greek word “pneuma,” which means the movement of air with force or power. In a spiritual sense, it means the power of God; the power that animates and governs one’s soul. It is the same word that Luke, the author of Acts, uses for the word “Spirit” when he writes of the Holy Spirit. This “power” is evident in many passages in acts. This is what the disciple Peter says upon his and John’s release from being questioned by the Jewish ruling council:

“Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly” (4:27-31).

The followers pray. The room shakes. And God’s Spirit, His “power,” fills those present and allows them to “speak the word of God boldly,” not just in Jerusalem, but eventually, throughout the known world.

This is the same Spirit that dwells in all who claim Christ as their eternal hope. The Spirit who days earlier raised the Son from the dead in accordance with the will of the Father. My prayer for you today is that you feel the Spirit’s power, that you embrace the Spirit’s grace, and that you are comforted by the Spirit, God’s Comforter.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
November 17

Greetings, Family of God.

In modern times, we tend to have the misunderstanding that the Holy Spirit enters human history at the feast of Pentecost as recorded in the first chapter of Acts. However, like the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is eternal. In fact, we read of Him in the opening words of Scripture:

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters” (Genesis 1:1-2).

Perhaps more importantly, not only was the Holy Spirit present, the Holy Spirit was active in eternity. Consider these words from the apostle Paul:

“They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. He witnessed to them from morning till evening, explaining about the kingdom of God, and from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets he tried to persuade them about Jesus. Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe. They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: ‘The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your ancestors when he said through Isaiah the prophet: ‘Go to this people and say, “You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.’ For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them”’ (Acts 28:23-27).

Notice two things here. First, the Holy Spirit speaks “the truth.” Second, the Holy Spirit speaks “through” people, in this case, the prophet Isaiah.

This is important because God’s presence through His Spirit is the presence of Truth, and He chooses to speak that Truth through us, His people. As we have seen earlier, not only that, but the power of the Spirit enables us to speak boldly, and with God’s authority.

Jesus famously told the Samaritan woman that “God is Spirit” (John 4:24). That Spirit is Truth. That Spirit is Power. And that Spirit is alive…in you, and in me.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
November 18

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

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-SI_HRWooA

IHS,
Pastor Lou