

**Christian Spirituality:
“Spirit-Filled Life”**

I Corinthians 2:4, 4:20

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Last Sunday, I suggested that God is loving and forgiving as another center of Christian spirituality. God does not punish us but through the cross offers grace and mercy for sinners. I emphasized that Jesus' role was crucial and theological. Jesus was not a passive sacrificial lamb to execute God's will, but he was an active mediator to resolve our human condition and help us reconcile with God. The cross of Jesus was the place where God offered an extreme generosity and extravagant hospitality to human beings. I looked at parenthood illustrating the relationships between God and human beings. I used a parenthood metaphor with my second son, Joshua's behavior. He has been drawing on the walls and I wanted to provide loving and forgiving parenthood discipline. But I missed one important point last Sunday. Briefly, I would like to follow up about a missing truth. My mother shared a very surprising fact with Youngjae and me. She said that Joshua resembled me not only his appearance, but also his behavior. A-ha! I realized that it was my fault! Here is another spiritual insight: The Bible tells us that we are all created by the image of God and we are all children of God. Our loving parent God will never abandon His children nor leave us alone, but always watches over us and keeps us safe like a human parent.

How do we feel God's caring presence and find God's grace in the cross of Jesus? The answer is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's role is crucially important and vitally essential that enables us to experience his holy presence. Without the Holy Spirit, Christian spirituality is pointless and useless. Then Christianity will remain as a dead religion. Spirit-filled life is what we Christians pursue and desire to achieve in our faith journey. This morning, I invite us all to learn more about the Holy Spirit and explore the meaning of spirit filled life in the Apostle Paul's message to the Corinthian church.

In today's Scripture readings, the Apostle Paul confidently tells his congregation that his speech and his proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom but with a demonstration of the Spirit and power. In other words, his motivation of life and ministry didn't come from human knowledge but they came from his experience of the Spirit. He also made sure that we understood God's kingdom depends not on talk but on power. The whole point is "Experience". The Apostle Paul found his purpose of life and ministry for

Jesus through the personal experience with the Spirit. Retired Methodist Bishop, Rueben P Job says, “The record of individuals and Christian movements that have transformed the world within and around them is testimony to their capacity to receive power from beyond themselves to fulfill their calling. This power was given to ordinary people who were called to live in an extraordinary way. Could that be your calling today?”

Spirit filled Christian life doesn't merely mean power from beyond yourselves nor capacity to have political power, earn higher social status, and be an influential person in the world. But it might mean strength and courage to go through your life challenges and difficulties trusting in God and Jesus. Let's remember Lynn Phinney as a great example of a spirit filled person. His faith and Spirit deeply inspired and humbled me as I witnessed his courage and faith as he walked through the darkest valley of death. When Lynn was diagnosed with last stage Lung cancer, I wanted to be in touch with him every week. Every time I called him, his spirit was always up and positive no matter what situation he was in. When the doctor told him that his cancer already spread over to his brain and his life would be left only more or less than six months, he told me that he would gladly accept that. Rather than being discouraged, he would choose to cherish remaining time with his family and church for the rest of his life. He chose hope rather than despair and so joy rather than sorrow. Facing the shadow of death must be dreadful but his spirit gave him boldness and power to go beyond his capacity until he took a final breath. What brought him this boldness and courage? That was the Holy Spirit. Lynn's earthly life was filled with the Spirit. When I heard that he passed away on Saturday morning, I hurried to go see him. Obviously, he wouldn't breathe any more. Perhaps, his spirit had already departed. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit is often described as the breath of God. Our life is given from God and God dwells in us and helps us breathe everyday on our own. Lynn's spirit and life was a great blessing to his family and to our church. We dearly miss his spirit.

When I think of a “Spirit filled life”, I have an image of an inflatable boat in my mind. Last week, I bought a used inflatable kayak at a sports store. Since I started my ministry here at Fair Oaks church, I always wanted to boat on the river. Finally, I made up my mind to buy a used inflatable kayak and tried to ride on the river. I had trouble filling it up with my small air pump. After pumping it up, I went down to the river. Actually, when I launched the boat and tried to ride in it, my wife told me that I looked so funny. Because of a lack of enough air, I found myself in the middle of the boat with both ends up around me. Literally, the boat made V shape due to my body weight. Needless to say, the boat wouldn't go forward. I gave up and returned that boat back to the store. Without full air, I couldn't make my boat float the right direction. In the same

way, when our spiritual life is fully filled with the spirit, we will be going the right direction. Maxie Dunnam, theologian in his book, “Alive in Christ” says that “not only is the presence of God in Jesus Christ to be experienced occasionally, but also the indwelling Christ is to become the shaping power of our lives. This is the dynamic of our spiritual formation.” Our lives need the spirit filled power and indwelling Christ not only in our individual lives but also in our ministries. We do not come to church just to worship the dead Jesus. Every Sunday is Easter. We gather together to celebrate the risen Christ and experience the power of resurrection. The risen Christ promised the spirit to us. When we accept this holy presence within us, the spirit will give us the power to go on our life with courage and boldness.

What we want to seek in our faith journey is to accept this Holy presence to fill our lives. We want to be bold enough. Søren Kierkegaard, a Danish philosopher defines our life as fear and anxiety. If we compare our life journey to a ship traveling in the ocean, we might encounter fearful waves, heavy storms and unidentified anxious challenges. These might threaten and discourage us. Sometimes we want to say, “I can't even do this!” because we feel life is too hard to navigate with just our own strength and capacity. Let us open our hearts to the Spirit and invite it to fill us with the power beyond ourselves. The Spirit will lead and guide us in our directions. Just put our trust in God and Christ. Amen.