

*Mondovi: Our Savior's & Gilmanton United Methodist Churches
6.1.2025, Ascension Sunday, Rev. Hyuntae Kim, Ph.D.*

A New Beginning Through the Power of the Holy Spirit

Acts 1:1-11

Let us pray: Lord of all, as we listen to Your Word today, come upon each person by the Holy Spirit. We cover this congregation with the precious blood of Christ. In the name of Christ Jesus, we proclaim that our sins and infirmities will be washed away by His blood. We also proclaim that the filth of the world clinging to us will be cleansed by the water of the Word. We declare that whatever must be burned away within us will be consumed by the fire of the Holy Spirit. Jesus, we love You. Amen.

Today, we heard from Acts chapter 1 what Jesus commanded His disciples just before His ascension. This was His last will given on earth. This command is given to all who believe in Jesus. If we honor the final wishes of an ordinary person who has passed away, how much more should we treasure and obey the final command of our risen Lord? We must also pass this command on to the next generation. I pray that all of us may receive this Word anew and make a fresh start.

What did Jesus speak about during the forty days after His resurrection when He appeared to His disciples? Knowing He would soon depart from them, He spoke to them about the most important subject: the Kingdom of God.

What is the Kingdom of God? It is not merely heaven where we go after death. The Kingdom of God is the realm where God is King and I become His subject, living under His rule and reign. It advances through those who believe in Jesus. Wherever the Kingdom of God comes, the influence of the devil is broken.

Until the day Jesus returns and fully establishes His Kingdom, His greatest concern is that we who believe in Him continue to expand His Kingdom to the ends of the earth. Wherever the gospel is proclaimed and received, the Kingdom of God is established. Those who believe in Jesus and are baptized are united with Him and belong to His body. Therefore, the priorities of the Head—Jesus Christ—should naturally become the priorities of His body—that is, us. The most blessed life is to live according to the purpose for which God created us. One day, when we graduate from this life and stand before Him to give an account, it will be the path to receiving His reward.

Jesus then took the apostles to a place near Jerusalem called the Mount of Olives. There, He gave them the final key—the method, secret, and wisdom—for how to carry out the work of God's Kingdom. First, He gave them a command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but

wait for the gift my Father promised, which you heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (vv. 4–5). Jesus knew the apostles could not bind Satan and set people free by their own strength in places where the kingdom of darkness was already operating. That is why He told them to wait for the promised Holy Spirit from the Father.

Jerusalem is like our starting place, our present location, including our church community. To testify about the living Jesus, we must first experience Him here through the Holy Spirit; without that, we cannot become true witnesses. We will lack power. When we believe in Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in us, though the measure may differ from person to person. But to become witnesses, we must receive power from on high. Even if we have already received the Holy Spirit from above, we must continue to seek and receive fresh anointing upon us again and again.

As the Father has promised, anyone who truly believes this promise and waits for the Holy Spirit can receive Him. We can see this promise in Joel 2:28: “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.” This verse is all about prophecy. It tells us that when we receive the Holy Spirit, prophecy naturally comes—that is, communication with God. When we receive the Holy Spirit, He doesn’t just sit quietly within us. He speaks, gives strategy, and when we obey, He fulfills His word. It is the desire of God—and of the risen Jesus—that we receive the power of the Holy Spirit and establish His Kingdom. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, His desire becomes our desire.

Still, at that time, the apostles had not yet received the Holy Spirit. So they did not fully understand the heart of Jesus. They asked, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” Their concern was still political independence for the nation of Israel—in other words, the restoration of their circumstances. This reveals the limitation of those who have not yet received the Holy Spirit.

Jesus answered them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority” (Acts 1:7). To apply this to our own lives, the “restoration of Israel” might mean: “When will my sickness be healed? When will my financial situation improve?” The answer is that the timing of such restorations is in the Father’s authority.

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That is God's sovereignty. This doesn't mean that God is indifferent to our situations. In His time, He will surely restore them.

As Jesus says in Matthew 6:33, if you "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," "all these things will be added to you." When we buy something important and expensive, we often receive smaller, less expensive items as bonuses. During my winter vacation, on our way back from Korea, my wife stopped at the Incheon Airport duty-free store and bought a couple of cosmetics. As a result, she received a variety of small samples and even a cosmetic pouch as free gifts. Seek first His Kingdom. Whatever you do, do it for the glory of God.

Jesus continues by saying in Acts 1:8, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." This verse functions as the pivotal verse, like a hinge on a door, that causes the Church to move rightly. Only when the Holy Spirit comes upon us will the power of the Spirit be released within us—God's voice, His strategies, and the strength to obey will be unlocked. When we obey, God will work through us.

After Jesus finished speaking, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him out of their sight. Yet the disciples kept looking intently into the sky. Why did the cloud hide Him? I believe it wasn't just a random cloud—it came specifically to veil Him. If the cloud could speak, perhaps it would have said, "Stop looking into the sky and go to Jerusalem to wait for the promise of the Father." The disciples didn't grasp the cloud's message, and they kept staring upward. So two men dressed in white—angels—appeared and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven?" It sounds almost like a rebuke. If we apply this to ourselves, it means: don't just stand around looking toward heaven, only thinking about going there after death.

The angels went on to say, "This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." When will He return? When the gospel has been preached to the ends of the earth, He will come again. While we wait for His return, we must build the Kingdom of God. The Church is where we gather in order to go out, where we are taught in order to be sent, and where we receive the Holy Spirit in order to be empowered to go.

Where is **your** Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth that you must go to? When you receive the Holy Spirit, the Spirit will show you. It may be your grandchildren,

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your next-door neighbor, your workplace, your school, or even a particular nation—this will vary for each person. In my case, God told me to come to the United States, so I did.

Before coming to America, our family prayed together every evening. One day during prayer, God showed my wife that America is a beacon shining light to the world, and He revealed that He wanted to renew and brighten that beacon once more—and that through this beacon, Korea too would rise again as a beacon. While seeking several confirmations, God also gave us a prophetic word through a pastor that we would meet people from many countries in the U.S., and that we would also minister to Americans like you. My wife and I had forgotten about that part about ministry for Americans, but we were amazed when we recently read this prophetic note again.

So then, how should we wait for the Holy Spirit? There is no answer besides worship, prayer, and the Word. Like the 120 disciples, you can devote a few days wholly to prayer, or like Cornelius' household, gather with one heart to hear the Word. There are other examples in Acts where people received the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands. One interesting modern example is someone who began to speak in tongues just by consistently reading the Bible aloud. Though speaking in tongues is not the absolute proof of being filled with the Holy Spirit, it is certainly one of the signs that the Spirit has come upon someone. Even for someone who has already received the Holy Spirit and desires to be filled afresh, there is no other way but to keep returning to God through the Word and prayer. Upon such people, God bestows favor. Make yourselves noticeable to God.

To all who long for a new beginning in life—come anew before the Lord. Receive the Holy Spirit and live by the Spirit's leading. If you usually watch TV for two hours, take one of those hours and give it to God. If you struggle to pray, begin by reading Psalms aloud. Gather with your family to pray. Come together at church to pray.

Let us seek the Holy Spirit to fulfill the dream of our beloved Lord Jesus—the work of building God's Kingdom. May my congregation and I all receive the power of the Holy Spirit to carry out powerful evangelism by prophesying, healing, and casting out demons, so that we may become a renewed church that reveals the living presence of Jesus. Amen.

Let's speak a word of commitment and encouragement to those beside, in front, and behind us: "Let us seek the Holy Spirit."