

Hearts on Fire!

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle within us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and we shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth. O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy your consolations. May the words of my mouth, the meditations of all our hearts be pleasing in your sight O Lord, you who are rock, redeemer & Renewer of us all. Amen.(Ps 19:14)

Grace and Peace be with you, dear Friends!

Perhaps you've noticed that the prayer for illumination before I share a message is consistent each week. I use this prayer with intention. This is a prayer that I first learned on a 72 hour weekend experience (Walk to Emmaus) and have adopted and adapted as the prayer I pray for myself and those with me. This is a prayer seeking the work of the Holy Spirit to be at work within me and within all who are present to hear the Word. I seek to be filled, led and blessed with Holy Spirit, and I desire the same for you. After all, as Followers of Christ, who wouldn't want wisdom and peace? And drawing closer to God, becoming more like Christ, experiencing the work of Spirit within us, within our hearts, our minds, our hands and feet, who would turn away from such an opportunity?

As a gathering faith community, we are called to a pattern of faith and life... a way of living with 'holy habits' as we are led by a 'Heart on Fire!' This pattern of faith and life is demonstrated in the public life and ministry of Jesus.

The four gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke & John) tell the stories of Jesus' life and ministry, each from the view (lens) of a writer who is addressing a particular audience (group of people).

The remainder of the New Testament includes narratives of the Acts of the Apostles, writings of the Apostle Paul, as well as writings from leaders of the early followers of Christ or writings to a group of followers of Christ.

For the next few weeks, our series will focus on the writing of James and the gospel of Mark as we explore the holy habits of discipleship which mark us with Hearts on Fire for the Lord.

As was mentioned last week, the scripture readings from book of James and the gospel of Mark address the practical side of theology... walking the talk. If you'll recall, James says faithful followers act like Jesus in the world... with compassion, kindness, mercy & justice, caring for those in need... quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger...doers of the word (1:19-22). Jesus lived as 'do as I do'.

John Wesley, brother Charles, and a few other like-minded followers set themselves to be different, 'Holy Club', who sought to support each other in 'Walking the Talk' and seeking to live a life of grace, engaging in prayer, study, and faithful action. These 'holy habits' are several of the 'Means of Grace' John Wesley spoke about. These are spiritual practices that help us grow in faith as followers of Jesus. They also position us for a life engaged in faithful action - loving God, our neighbor as ourselves with acts of hospitality, mercy & justice. These 'holy habits' kindle the flame within us and help us live as 'doers of the word'.

In a very real way, through the means of grace (Prayer, searching scriptures, the Lord's Supper, fasting, and Christian Conferencing) we encounter, engage, & experience God's Love. When we participate in these holy habits, we position ourselves to welcome the work of Holy Spirit to kindle the fire in our hearts, open our hearts to be transformed in wisdom, in faith, and live in peace, NOT like the World gives.

The pattern of life and faith given to us in the reading from James (2:1-17) is an admonishment to the first hearers of this word... let your walk match your talk. Or put another way, put your faith in your action. This passage is intended to re-frame the followers of Christ as agents of change, living differently than the world around them. Specifically, treating every person as a beloved and treasured 'child of God', offering opportunities that do not favor one over another, no matter what they wear, how they arrived, their status in social life. Devaluing, demeaning, and dismissing any person is as

much a sin as murder or adultery. Living with JOY (Jesus first, Others as Yourself) is the pattern of a faithful life.

In moving to the gospel, we remember that Jesus has addressed the issue of what defiles...it is a matter of the heart, living faithfully according to Torah.

As Jesus and the disciples have left the Galilee area, they've headed to the beach (Tyre is on the Mediterranean coast – Syria/Phoenicia). Word of Jesus healings and his arrival cannot be kept secret, even outside of Israel.

As we read, Jesus is approached by a woman, not of Israel, whose daughter has an 'unclean' spirit. Seeking healing for her daughter, Jesus denies her request with this: "The children have to be fed first. It isn't right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs" (v27).

What do you make of this response from Jesus?

Consider this... children = people of Israel; bread = Jesus (bread of life); dogs = a derogatory term possibly rooted in the economic oppression of Galileans by the people of Tyre...the woman may have been of Tyrian wealth. Yet, despite the rebuff, the woman persists: "Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." And the hope and faith in Jesus gives a widening of Jesus' response to heal and share God's grace with her. Friends, all who feast on the Word of God draw close in JOY, faith, hope and Love.

A similar healing is offered to the person whose ears are closed and tongue is twisted. Make no mistake, these healings are symbolic of the opening of hearts and minds, including the disciples, whose eyes will eventually see who Jesus is...Son of God, Son of Humanity, given as bread for the life of the world, a heart on fire.

I continue to pray daily for you and for me, that we may live with JOY, Faith, Hope, and Love for God for others so that all may know we are followers of Christ.

We are gathered, we are blessed, and in a little while, after celebrating the Lord's Supper, we will be broken and we sent forth to share the good news of the love & light of Christ; **passing it on** –faith, hope, love and JOY, wherever we go. May it be so Amen.

Let us JOIN TOGETHER WITH THE LITURGIST, Barbara Cook, AS SHE LEADS us in prayers for God's people, church & World ...

May The Words Of My Mouth

Music and Words by Rob Hill & Tim Hughes album: Here I Am to Worship

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| <p>Verse 1 May the words of my mouth And the thoughts of my heart Bless Your name Bless Your name Jesus And the deeds of the day And the truth in my way Speak of You speak of You Jesus</p> <p>Chorus For this is what I'm glad to do It's time to live a life of love that pleases You And I will give my all to You Surrender everything I have and follow You I'll follow You</p> | <p>Verse 2 Lord will You be my vision Lord will You be my Guide Be my hope be my life and the Way And I'll look not for riches Nor praises on the earth Only You'll be the first of my heart</p> <p>Bridge I will follow I will follow You I will follow I will follow You (REPEAT)</p> <p>CCLI Song # 3232310 Rob Hill Tim Hughes © 2000 Thankyou Music (Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing) For use solely with the SongSelect® Terms of Use. All rights reserved. www.ccli.com CCLI License # 2648763</p> |
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