

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church



Weekly Sermon Series

Taking Root: Digging in the Dirt...Standing on Holy Ground Acts 4:32-35; John 20:19-31

What does it mean to believe in the Holy Spirit in today's world? Let's get right to the root of our belief by remembering what we learned so many years ago in the explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith; even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith; in which Christian Church He forgives daily and richly all sins to me and all believers, and at the last day will raise up me and all the dead, and will give to me and to all believers in Christ everlasting life. This is most certainly true." [Martin Luther's Small Catechism].

Do these words rekindle memories of yourself at the altar, in a white dress or a white shirt and pants, facing the pastor as you recited the "memory work" assigned to you before you received your confirmation certificate? Or was it at a Friday night questioning before confirmation when you tried your best to be invisible as the pastor asked the twenty or so questions you were to know before the big Sunday?

Have these words reoccurred to you during those times in your life when you've known you were being led by the Holy Spirit: The first time you gave your halting witness of your faith, when you knew that you didn't have either the confidence or the words to express what you so deeply believed; the time when you were tempted to just enlarge the truth when it meant a job or promotion and you didn't; when a child is brought for Baptism and the pastor says, "My child, you have been marked with the cross of Christ and sealed with the Holy Spirit forever." Powerful words that have sustained our faith and grown our faith through the years.

Please read Acts 4:32–35 about the activity of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the first Christian communities. Note that it doesn't say these were actions that were directed by the leaders; rather they were spontaneous from the hearts of the believers. Do we see such Spirit-filled actions in Christian communities today? Has your congregation experienced tremendous outpouring in response to a need in your community? Have hearts been moved to give to starving children in some far distant country? Does the present economic plight of our neighbors move us to action on their behalf? Aren't these positive responses to the work of the Holy Spirit enlightening us with his gifts?

Read John 20:19–31. The disciples received the Holy Spirit when Jesus breathed on them just as Adam and Eve received life from the breath of God. The Holy Spirit gave them new life through faith in Christ's resurrection. It is this new life that enables us to follow Christ and to live with him throughout eternity. Praise God.

-- Week of April 19, 2009