

You know, the disciples used to watch Jesus pray and they were so attracted by the depth of his relationship with God that they longed for such an experience themselves.

The disciples looked at Jesus, and they saw
how close he was to his Father,
how God's radiance shone out from him,
how he coped with life and they thought
"You know I want some of that".

So they went to him and said "Lord, teach us to pray..." and
Jesus gave them the Lord's Prayer.

But **then** he went on to teach them about the Holy Spirit.

He said:

The Holy Spirit would help them to pray,
would deepen their experience of God and
would enable them to live life in all its fullness.

The Holy Spirit is the key
to a fulfilling relationship with God
to becoming more like Christ
to experiencing the glory of God in our life
He is the power to live life in all its fullness.

So tonight we kick off an 8 week series looking at the life of the Holy Spirit in us and the profound difference that He makes to our experience of God

Tonight I want to talk about what it means to be filled with the Spirit of God.

I want to use Ephesians chapter 5 as our guide, and you'll find that on p1176 of the pew Bibles

I want to talk about

The Work of the Holy Spirit IN us

The Awareness of the Holy Spirit ALONGSIDE us; and

The Life of the Holy Spirit FILLING us.

The Work, the Awareness and the Life of the Spirit in us

So let's begin with

1. The Work of the Holy Spirit in us.

When you look in the mirror who do you see?

Well of course we see ourselves

But I guess, to some extent, we all see someone who is not the person we would like to see...

For myself, I'm not just talking about a spectacular lack of hair,

the Picasso like positioning of eyes and ears, or

the forest that seem to be sprouting on my shoulders! ☺

I am talking about

someone who has done stuff that he is not proud of,

someone who has had stuff done to him that he is resentful of, and

someone, who has too many faults to be comfortable with.

You may know what I am talking about!

Hardly a week goes by when someone doesn't talk to me about the struggles they have when they look within themselves

Indeed anybody who is honest will know **exactly** what I am talking about: for when we look in the mirror NONE of us sees the person we would like to see...

But that's just the problem!

Because what WE see is NOT what God sees!

When **we** look in the mirror –

God sees someone made in his image, chosen by him and loved by him!

And it's really important that we get this...

Ephesians 5v2 calls us "*dearly loved children*"

So when God looks at you he doesn't see someone who is screwed up,

he doesn't see someone with baggage, or overflowing with insecurities,

He sees someone whom he loves AS deeply and AS unconditionally as a dearly loved child.

Now everyone of us needs the discipline and the faith to see ourselves as God sees us

This should not surprise you but on my wedding day I took a bath

I got carefully dressed and I looked forward with excitement (and a little fear!) to what was about to happen!

This is true for everyone who gets married.

They know that they have **chosen** their life partner AND HAVE BEEN chosen by them

They bathe, they dress their best, and they anticipate the future

This is true for everyone who gets married AND it is a picture of every one of us who has become a Christian

Ephesians 1:4 tells us that

1.1 From the beginning of time God knew you and he chose you.

He knew everything about you,

He knew everything that was going to happen to you,

He knew everything that you would do – AND STILL he chose you!

What does that mean? –

it means you can never let God down because he already knows what he's getting into!

it means you can NEVER be so bad that he does not *want* you

it means that despite everything we have done – and everything that has been done to us God still knowingly, lovingly chooses us

→ From the beginning of time God knew you and he STILL chose you!

Do you see what a difference that makes when you look in the mirror!

He chose you! and

1.2 Then the day that you chose him (*as someone who would bathe before a Wedding*) Eph 1:7 says that **His Holy Spirit washed you and cleansed you.**

On the day when you asked for forgiveness –
not only did God forgive ‘all your PAST sins’, but he also forgave all your FUTURE sins too!
Christ died for ALL your sins – the blood of Christ *goes on* cleansing us from all sin

On the day when you accepted God’s forgiveness
God forgave all your sins: past, present and future
Not just your past sins – but **all** your sins!

And what does that mean?

it means that when God looks at you he ALWAYS sees someone who has been forgiven;
He always see someone who has been washed
who is clean!

→ God has chosen you knowing everything about you
→ He **always** sees you as someone who has been washed and forgiven!

1.3 And then he clothes you.

When we get married – we get dressed in our best.

When we ask God to forgive us, he not only totally forgives us,
but he also clothes us with the goodness of Jesus.

On the cross there is this exchange.
We give Jesus our sins, our baggage, our shame –
HE gives to US his goodness, his beauty, his holiness.
On the cross there is this exchange:
Jesus takes our Shame – He gives us His Righteousness!

→ So when God looks at you he sees someone dressed in the beauty of his Son,
when he looks at you he sees someone cleansed and forgiven;
and when he looks at you he sees someone HE has chosen!
And the implications of this change our sense of self-esteem and value!

1.4 because then also sees someone who HE is looking forward to SHARING eternity with!

*On a wedding day the bride and groom LOOK FORWARD to their life together – They look **forward!***

*If the bride has married a Prince
then she no longer need be oppressed by the poverty of her background
she no longer need be ashamed of what has happened to her
In other words – the past no longer defines her –
it is the future that makes her who she is.
She is a Princess – He is a Prince
Do you see this?*

Therefore for US the past need not hold US captive
It need not dominate us; and
It does not define us.
It is our future with the Holy Spirit which defines who we are and how we should see ourselves!

Therefore when we look in the mirror

there is a **discipline** that we need to cultivate
and a faith that we need to exercise
which sees ourselves as God sees us.

*This is important for us all –
regardless of whether we are secure or insecure in ourselves
regardless of whether we have high or low self esteem
because it is the key to experiencing the glory of God in our life.*

Every time we look in the mirror we need to affirm what the Holy Spirit **has done** in our life
we are God's child, we are chosen by Him, Forgiven by him, Dressed in him and living for Him!
This is the key to an intimate relationship with God

Therefore God says you can become
v1 "imitators of God"
v2 living a fragrant life of love.

Because through this we become

2. Awareness of the Holy Spirit alongside us.

God wants us to live a life of love experiencing the glory of God in us.

And we cannot do this unless we live with the awareness that God lives alongside us.

This means that we need to know, that we have

2.1 the ability to hurt God by our choices.

in Chapter 4v30 Pauls says "do not grieve" the Holy Spirit.

By this we see that the Holy Spirit is a **person** – not a force –
He can be hurt by our choices and attitude!

*Imagine you wake up the morning after you've got married and you say to your wife –
'I'm just off to the Strip Club – I'll see you later', or
imagine your wife says to you 'you know I really fancy the Best Man I'm going to wake him up and spend
the day with him'.
How would you feel?*

*Imagine you wake up and your newly wed husband just goes off to work and doesn't even say good morning
to you?
How would you feel?*

*Imagine you wake up and your wife is full of foul language or gossip
How would you feel?*

Hurt, offended, disappointed, angry?

Yes all these things?

Would the relationship grow cold and distant?

Of course!!

The same is true with God's Spirit –

what we do, what we say and how we live can both delight him OR hurt him!

It can both draw him close or push him away.

If we are to experience the glory of God in us then we need to be aware that we wake up with him alongside us.

Say "Good morning", "spend some time together", "see if there is anything in your life that is not pleasing to Him".

- anything that makes your conscience uneasy
- anyone whom you have not forgiven
- 'any want' you want that God doesn't

We cannot draw close to someone if what we do, or say, or think offends or distances us from them. so we need to be aware that we have the ability to hurt God;

And we also need to be aware that

2.2. We have the ability to hide from Him too.

v8 talks about being in darkness

People stay in darkness because they are afraid.

We are often afraid of what God will do in our life

We are afraid that we are not worthy of him.

We are afraid of what he may do in our lives.

We worry about the changes he will make, the demands he will have or the expectations will he bring.

We are afraid

that we may lose our reputation or our friends

that we will make a fool of ourselves

that we will have to do things that we don't want to - and will have to stop doing things that we do!

Well maybe so maybe not

But the point is that God's plans for our lives are always much bigger and better than our own!

He wants to brilliantly redecorate the house of your life but we need to be willing to throw out the rubbish first!

If we are to live with God then we must trust that he knows what he is doing, and that he always works for our good.

He is the one who loves us more than life

He is the one who understands everything about you, and

He is the one who wants only the best for you!

Jesus said, 'Would any of you fathers give your son a snake when he asks for fish? Would you give him a scorpion when he asks for an egg?

So then, how much more will I give the Holy Spirit to those who ask!'

There is no sting in the tail with God.

He never plays tricks on us.

He only wants to bless us.

So will you stop hiding?

Will you put away those things that grieve him?

Will you commit yourself wholeheartedly to living with Jesus Christ as Lord?
Will you (v14) “Wake up, O Sleeper rise from the dead and let Christ shine on you”

3. Because (thirdly) Christ wants his Spirit to fill our life

If I said “look do you want a chocolate” and then having got your interest I said “well go buy your own” that would mean!

In the same way God doesn't just show us the best way to live and tell us to get on with it.
He gives us The Holy Spirit who is the power to live it!

v15 says

3.1) Be Wise

*“Be careful how you live not as unwise but as wise,
make the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.
Do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is”*

God says “be wise”, make right choices.

The difference between an animal and a human is that a humans don't have to give in to their impulses or hormones or instincts they can seek God's wisdom!

The difference between an animal and someone made in the image of God is that someone made in the image of God isn't a slave to their fears or their habits or their selfishness – they can choose.

Therefore every temptation becomes an opportunity to choose:
to runaway and hide and do what we do (in secret) or live in the light of his presence.
Every day we get opportunity to choose to live for God “and so make the most of that opportunity and be wise” or just give in to our instincts, our bad thought patterns, our impulses.

God calls us

to be wise in the choice to speak or to hold our tongue;
to be wise on how we spend our money
to be wise on what we choose to look at
to be wise on whether we choose to forgive
to be wise and make the most of every opportunity to break that bad habit, or that destructive pattern of behaviour
... to be wise...

That is how we experience the glory of God in us

Be Wise; and

3.2) Be Filled.

v18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery (the word here is “excess”). Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

When we are under the influence of alcohol our inhibitions are suppressed.

Alcohol distorts reality

so we think we are funnier than we are,
we think we are better looking than we are; and
we think we are better drivers than we are!

Alcohol makes us do things that we shouldn't – like dance, or flirt or tell people what we really think of them!

Being under the influence of alcohol suppresses our humanity because it suppresses our ability to choose. Our ability to make wise choices marks the difference between an animal and a child of God and Alcohol suppresses this!

But being under the influence of God's Spirit is completely the opposite
It enhances our humanity

The Holy Spirit restores to us our sense of dignity as Children of God (Alcohol too often robs us of our dignity). The Holy Spirit gives it back!

The Holy Spirit heightens our ability to see ourselves as we truly are

The Holy Spirit empowers our ability to choose

Being filled with the Spirit allows us to do things that we wouldn't or couldn't do before – for he magnifies God's strength in us!

Being filled with the Spirit is to experience the Glory of God in us!

In our choices, in the things we do and say!

And if you would be filled with the Spirit tonight then all you need do is

1) have the faith to see yourself as God sees you

2) confess to him those things which grieve him; and

3) put him at the centre of your choices again and again and again.

This is not something we do once and for all – it is something we do on a daily basis.

For we can so easily forget who we are,

go back to old patterns of thinking and leave him out of decisions.

Every one of us gets a chance to ask God for His Holy Spirit to fill us tonight.

Paul calls us to be wise, to be filled and then to

3.3) Be Thankful.

v20 "give thanks to God the Father for everything".

I want you to notice that after you have been filled with God's Spirit it doesn't say:

fall over, speak in tongues, shake like a tree, laugh like a hyena, or tingle like a tingly-thing!

God says be **thankful!**

The physical, emotional or intellectual phenomena of the presence of God's Spirit – are just that – they are phenomena (they are outward manifestations, they are symptoms).

falling over, feeling God's closeness or sensing the penny drop are outward manifestations only...

So if someone gets prayed for and something outward happens 'to them' we are not to feel **insecure**.

for we do not **validate** our faith by outward phenomena

Faith takes God's word as it stands, it believes it to be true, and it thanks God that now it IS -

... regardless of any feelings or experiences.

Faith is not validated by feelings – it validated by the Promises of God.

So if something outward happens to someone who is being prayed for but not 'to us' we are not to feel insecure that is not how we validate our faith
and we are not feel **inferior**

The truth is that God has blessed all Christians with 'every spiritual blessing', (Ephesians 1:3).
Every Christian has been blessed with every spiritual blessing!
We just need to see this for ourselves!!

So there are no first-class or second-class Christians within the church of Jesus Christ.
We all stand before God equally forgiven, equally his child, **equally** loved and with equal blessings available to us!
do you see this?

So if something outward happens to someone being prayed for
we are not to feel insecure, and we are not feel inferior
and we are not to be **disappointed that it doesn't happen to us!**

Never make the mistake of looking for an **experience** of God's Spirit
We are to not seek an 'experience of God' we are 'to seek God'!
The experience is the froth – God is the substance!

God deals with us all as individuals.
And the impact of his presence is different for us all
we may fall over, we may cry, we may **think** "wow",
we may just become even more deeply convinced
it will be different for all of us – just as all of us are different.

So be wise, be filled, and be thankful
And if you would be filled with the Spirit tonight then all you need do is
1) have the faith to see yourself as God sees you
2) confess to him those things which grieve him; and
3) put him at the centre of your life again and again and again and ask the Holy Spirit to fill your life.