

Over these last few weeks we've been looking at the Holy Spirit and the difference He makes in our life. One of the most important things the Holy Spirit does for us is that He makes God **real** to us.

You see it is one thing to *believe* that Jesus is our Saviour  
it is another thing to let that truth shine into our heart.

It is one thing to know in an **intellectual** way that he is loving and powerful,  
it is another thing to let that

'light impact our life' so that when we are sad, or when we are worried, or when we feel churned up inside,  
we say –

*“whoa ‘if I am his and he is mine’ then what is going on here!?”*

*Have I forgotten who I am?, Have I forgotten what he has done for me? Have I forgotten who he is?*

This is what the Holy Spirit does.

So,  
Something difficult comes into our life and instead of endlessly worrying we seek the comfort of God's  
presence,

Some choice is before us, and instead of going with our instinct we choose to live instead in the light of truth

Some opportunity opens up and instead of simply ignoring it we recognise the hand of God and take a risk.

This is what it means to be filled with the Spirit

To be aware of the truth of God's presence in difficult times,

To know how to live in the good,

To see the hand of God in our life.

This is what it means to be filled with God's Spirit.

And it is one thing to know it intellectually,

it is another thing to know it in our experience.

And if we don't know this,

if we've never experienced this,

if this is gobbledygook to us then, then this is a bad sign.

For Christianity is not just an ethical system,

its not just a set of rules to live by, or a creed of doctrine to believe

Christianity is an experience of the whole heart,

its an every-part-of-our-life relationship with God.

And if we don't know this, then we need to ask

“do I really know what Christianity is all about?”

Have I really understood it?

Do I really get it?

For God intends his presence to be an experience of the whole heart and through it we receive peace,  
blessing and a sense of eternal purpose in partnership with God.

And so tonight I want to talk about **how** we can make this true for us.

I want to talk about:

Two **ways** to be filled with the Spirit of God and

Two **marks** which show that we are

Two ways to be filled and two marks that show that we are.

### **1.1 Lets Talk about the Ways to be filled**

If the Holy Spirit were a liquid then 'to be filled' would just be a matter of more pints.  
If the Holy Spirit were a power then 'to be filled' would just be a matter of more watts.  
But the Holy Spirit is a person.

The Holy Spirit is not a liquid or a force  
He is a person  
And so the question is,  
How can you be filled with a Person?

*You know if you're married it is possible to do all the right things,  
say all the right things,  
to look happy enough from the outside and yet for the relationship to be going no-where.  
It is possible to go through marriage working together, living together, talking together – and yet to know  
that the relationship is stagnating.*

*Yet perhaps there was a time when you can look back and know,  
that they were once filled with each other.  
There was a time when your thought-life, heart-life and passion-life was filled with each other.  
But now its not like that...*

*We can be filled with a person when we are in love  
We can be filled with a person when they are a leader.  
<picture of Tony Blair>  
Once everything they said sparked your imagination,  
filled you with hope, promised the effort was worth the sacrifice,  
and you were excited and your whole thought-life, political life and emotions were filled with him...  
And then it can change.*

It can happen with friends at School.  
My children have come home and said something like...  
*Mum do you know 'Janey'?,  
well 'Janey does this and Janey does that', and  
'And Janey says this and Janey wears that' and  
'And Janey goes here, and Janey wants to be a Doctor'  
And Janey's mum would wear what you're wearing' and  
'Janey's dad talks to dolphins'.  
(Well ho-blooming-ray for Janey...!)*  
It can seem that every conversation is filled with Janey!

How are we filled with a person?  
Its simple  
To be filled with someone means that we choose to come under their influence  
so that we want to respond to their desires and needs and wishes.

What does it mean to be filled with someone?

It means to desire to be so under their personal influence,  
that we are  
always trying to please them; and  
always listening to their advice.

This is how to be filled with a person.

These are the two ways to be filled with the presence of the Holy Spirit  
The person of God.

To choose to

*always trying to please Him; and  
always seek to listen to His advice.*

*So that when we pick up a Bible we are looking to know how  
how to please him;  
how to listen to his advice.*

*When we come to him in worship*

We are looking to how to please him by laying down our lives  
And listening for his words to us

*When we go to work, stay at home, go to church – the same two things cause us to be filled with his Spirit  
Lord, how do I please you with my life and choices?  
how do I follow your advice?*

This is the secret of being filled with the Spirit,

It is the essence of a living relationship with God.

Through it we receive peace, and blessing and a sense of God's purpose in our life.

Lord how do I please you and follow your advice...

But many of us don't experience this because

**1.2 we grieve God because we don't trust his motives.**

A little earlier in our passage in Ephesians 4v30 God says "*do not grieve my Spirit*"

You see, God desires our flourishing,

He wants our Peace, He wants our Blessing, He wants to see his purposes unfold in our life **because**

He wants us to flourish

And so when we make choices that screw up... it grieves him!

*Look imagine you are a parent and you say to your child*

*"yes you can borrow the car tomorrow, but don't drink and don't come back too late"*

*And the next thing you know*

*Its 5:00am in the morning and they've wrapped the car around a tree and they're in hospital with a smashed  
leg and their facing a drink driving charge*

Are you upset? – well just a little!

But no-where near as upset as when you speak to them and they say

*"well I ignored your advice because I think you're always just trying to spoil my fun!"*

That really hurts...

You're upset.

not just because they have smashed your car  
not just because they have hurt themselves  
But because they don't trust you.

And that hurts because  
How can there be a relationship if there is no trust!

This can be true with our relationship with God!  
God says: 'share what you have, be kind, use your sexuality properly, speak the truth, don't be ashamed to speak for me, forgive others'

And we think 'well, if I obey this advice then it will just spoil my fun!',  
'if I tell the truth, if I practice celibacy, if I use my money this way, if I stand up for my faith, then it'll make me unhappy'. So we ignore it.

And the result is that we grieve God –  
We grieve him not just because we'll end up making a mess out of our lives  
We grieve him not just because we'll miss the opportunities to learn, to grow, to make a difference in the world  
We grieve him because, at the heart of it, we are telling him "we just don't trust you"  
And it must hurt!!

Jesus spends himself, tirelessly, sacrificially and constantly to help us  
God stoops down and gets beaten up, ignored and crucified for us  
and we say "well after all that you have done for me, after all you have given me, after all the pain I have put you through...  
I don't follow your advice because in my heart I am not willing to trust you, because you just want to spoil my fun and limit my life"

And as a result we are not filled with God  
we forfeit his peace, we miss his blessing, we squander our lives  
And this grieves him.

To be filled means to choose  
to want to please him  
to listen to his advice  
and many Christian's miss it, and many churches miss it,  
because we won't trust him; and

### **1.3 secondly we grieve his Spirit because we don't value his love.**

When we think of ourselves,  
Sometimes we can just see "the failures, the mistakes, the things we have screwed up",  
Sometimes we can just see the things people have done to us,  
the hurts that we have received and the wounds that we carry.

Sometimes we attach more weight to these things than we do to Jesus' love  
Sometimes we take our brokenness more seriously than God's forgiveness  
Sometimes we think these have more power in our lives than what God has done...

And this grieves Him too.

John Newton many years ago was writing to a young pastor –  
because all this Pastor ever did was to talk about what a failure he was –  
how weak he was, how sinful he was, and how God couldn't accept him for all the mistakes he just kept making...

Listen to what Newton said to him. He said:

*your understanding of the gospel is intellectually very sound but there is much in your experience of Christ that is missing,*

*you are very capable of giving advice to others but you need to listen to the advice yourself*

*you are too 'taken and controlled' by your own sinfulness and you are not taken and controlled enough by God's love.*

***I'll say that again, you are too taken and controlled by your own sinfulness and you are not taken and controlled enough by God's love.***

*you express not only a low opinion of yourself which is right,*

*but too low an opinion of the person, work and promises of Christ which is certainly wrong.*

*You complain much about your sin – but that is not your problem*

*You acknowledge your brokenness – but that is not a problem*

*You see the glory of God and you think "I cannot live up to this" – but that is not a problem,*

*Indeed the truth is you are probably even more sinful than you realise ☺*

*But even this is not your problem!*

*NO the problem is that you don't know how loved, how precious, how valuable you are.*

*This is your problem.*

*You don't see how important you are to God*

*You don't see **why** God came for you.*

*Your sins have more weight and more glory in your life – than the love of God!*

*That is your problem!*

Your sins and your past have more weight and more glory in your life than the love of God!

To be filled with His Spirit is to see how precious we are to God

How noble he has made us, the future he has for us, how pure he has washed us

That is what it is to value his love.

*David will tell you that the secret of drawing well, is for every 1 line you draw look 10 times at what you are trying to capture*

*Newton said "for every one look at your sin take ten looks at your saviour"*

*for every one look at your past – take 10 looks at your future...*

If you want to be like Christ, look at Christ!

*In Norway there is an extreme sport called down-hill-forest skiing.*

*It's where you Ski as fast as you can, down through a thick forest, from one end to the other*

*I read an article where the world champion was interviewed after two of his friends were killed having crashed into the trees.*

*They asked him how he avoiding crashing.*

*He replied. "Don't look at the trees. Look for the gaps in the trees".  
Don't at what you are trying to avoid – look at what promises you freedom!  
for every one thought at how you fail – take 10 looks at how valuable you are...*

*We've just got back from a Holiday in Wales where sometimes the twists and turns on the mountain roads  
were tight and the sheer drops treacherous.  
Steve's tip on how to survive driving in treacherous countryside?  
Don't look backwards when you are trying to drive forwards.  
Don't look backwards because you are bound to crash!  
for every one look at your past – take 10 looks at your future...*

Jesus has dealt with your past, there is nothing else to be said. It is done and dealt with. So stop looking.

He knows how you struggle with what is ahead and how you are full of the fear and self-doubt  
So look at Jesus and his love for this is your route to freedom  
Look at Christ and understand how wide and long, how high and deep is his love for you ALWAYS.

Don't grieve him by discounting his love for you.  
Don't grieve him by mistrusting his motives for you  
But be filled by the Spirit  
- living to please  
- listening to his advice.  
Then see how God blesses you and makes you flourish and gives you an eternal purpose.

So this is the way to be filled with God's Spirit  
**2. Quickly then, here are two marks by which we may know we are.**  
God says in *Ephesians 5:18*, Pauls says  
*Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery.  
Instead, be filled with the Spirit.  
Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.  
Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,  
always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Now the context is getting drunk – and (I am told) most people get drunk not by themselves (unless there is a personal struggle going-on)  
but with others.  
Most people get drunk with friends.  
You go out together, you get high together,  
you get less inhibited together  
and suddenly what happens... Karaoke!

People who can't sing suddenly believe they are Michael Bubble, or Beyonce reincarnated!  
When the inhibitions are down and the joy is up – what happens - you sing!

So Paul says  
When you get together,  
When you are filled in the Spirit together  
Sing!

When you are under the influence of alcohol: the joy is up, the fear is down and you sing !  
And I don't just mean you sing quietly into your boots  
I mean you sing your heart out

When we are filled with the Spirit, the sense of his Peace is on you, his blessing is about you, and you know you have been made for a purpose...

then sing

Let our soul soar!

It is a mark of the Spirit!

You know "Song" has accompanied every spiritual revival that has ever happened.

There has never been a major seismic movement of the Spirit without a body of Christian song being written.

The desire to 'give joyful expression to our faith' when we are filled with the presence of God just bubbles out...

One of the marks of being spirit-filled is that there is a song of praise going on in the heart...

It is a foretaste of heaven!

Except in heaven God's gonna have to give me a new set of vocal cords so that it doesn't turn into hell for my neighbours!

You know whenever we discover something wonderful we want to share it.

*You get to the top of a mountain with an utterly stunning view and immediately you want to turn to a friend and say "wow, that's incredible isn't it"*

*You find a really funny You-tube clip, what do you want to do, you gather your friends and share it!*

*You see a wonderful try in Rugby with the winger dancing through the opposition, breaking tackles, and jinxing across the line – and you want show everyone (or is that just me?)*

Why? because it does them good **and** because it amplifies your own experience

Whenever we find something worth praising we want to share it.

We want **their eyes** to light up like ours, we want their heart to beat like ours, we want them to be amazed like we are!

Why? because it does them good and because it amplifies our own experience

To know God and to want to celebrate him, share him, let our soul soar in him together is a mark of the Spirit's presence –

it does them good

and it enhances our experience of him even more!

A mark of the Spirit's presence is a desire to celebrate him

### **Another, mark is a sense of Gratitude**

Paul says "*always give thanks to God the Father for everything*",  
*for everything* – do you see that?

To be filled with God is to see life from his perspective.

It is to see everything that he gives as a gift, and

everything that happens as a chance to bury ourselves more deeply in his love.

There are people in this church struggling with illnesses and struggling with broken relationships and yet whose lives shine with gratitude to God for his love and it is an incredible glory to witness.

Things go against them, life is full of bad news and yet they remain faithful to God witnessing to his goodness.

It is a mark of the Spirit; and  
it makes being around them an utterly uplifting experience.

They are just so positive about life, because they see life from God's perspective and they are grateful to God for everything...

Some so called friends recently took me climbing mountains!

*I had a choice*

*I could grumble – no fun to be with*

*but look up see the view – and celebrate*

The number 1 sin and the root of all godlessness is ingratitude

In Romans chapter 1 Paul describes people who

“see the wonder of the world, enjoy the power of their own creativity, the joy of human ‘pleasure and delight’” and they neither acknowledge God nor are grateful to him....

so what happens - they progressively become more and more separated.

But the converse is true – “to see the wonder of the world, to enjoy the power of our own creativity, the experience the joy of human ‘pleasure and delight’” and to acknowledge God and be grateful to him is to come closer and closer.

Look at what God has done for you –

look at the love he has lavished on you, the patience he has shown you,

the forgiveness he keeps offering you, the world he has placed you in,

the future that he has prepared for you and let your gratitude pour out!

It is both a mark of the Spirit in you and a way of reinforcing his presence.

Jesus has done it all for us!

He has died, he has promised life, he has called you his child, he has made you an heir of heaven

So

Live to please him

Listen to his advice

Let the gospel song rise in your heart

Be thankful and be filled with his Spirit!