

# HOLY SPIRIT—LIFEGIVER

By Rev. Will Nelken

*Presented at Trinity Community Church, San Rafael, California, on Sunday, July 10, 2011*

---

## New Life

You are here today because you have received life. Most of you of have received it twice! You were born with it. Then, you were born again with it!

The first life is the life of your flesh—your body and mind. The second life is the life of your spirit, for before the day of your new birth, your spirit was “dead because of your sins” (Colossians 2:13). Make no mistake about it: sin is deadly. If you toy with it, you do so to your own peril. God has said that “the wages of sin is death.” “But the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus, our Lord” (Romans 6:23). This is the gift we call salvation! It is newness of life. It is the kind of life that God Himself enjoys, imparted to everyone who trusts in Jesus Christ as Lord of your destiny.

This is life for you from God, and it is life for others—through your relationships with them.

The Holy Spirit, who once brought ordered life to the earth out of chaos (Genesis 1), has now brought divine life and divine order to you. How did this come about? To get a handle on it, let’s review Jesus’ visit to Jerusalem at the end of the Feast of Tabernacles (also known as the Festival of Shelters, or Booths, or Ingathering).

The Feast of Tabernacles was the fifth and final festival of the Old Testament calendar year, celebrated five days after Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), usually mid-October. It was a joyous celebration and thanksgiving for the year’s bounty. By New Testament times, the tradition had developed that during the feast a priest would draw water from the pool of Siloam and carry it in a sacred procession to the altar, where it would be poured out before the presence of the Lord.

John 7

<sup>37</sup> *On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, “Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! <sup>38</sup> Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, ‘Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.’ ” <sup>39</sup> (When he said “living water,” he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him. But the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet entered into his glory.)*

## Have a Drink

*“Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! <sup>38</sup> Anyone who believes in me may come and drink!”* The image of receiving drink from Jesus will be familiar to many of you. Three chapters earlier, John related an encounter that Jesus had with a woman from Samaria at Jacob’s Well. He asked her to give Him a drink from the well.

John 4

<sup>9</sup> *The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, “You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?”*

<sup>10</sup> *Jesus replied, “If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water.”*

<sup>11</sup> *“But sir, you don’t have a rope or a bucket,” she said, “and this well is very deep. Where would you get this living water? <sup>12</sup> And besides, do you think you’re greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well? How can you offer better water than he and his sons and his animals enjoyed?”*  
<sup>13</sup> *Jesus replied, “Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. <sup>14</sup> But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life.”*

In a similar manner, He invited the crowds in Jerusalem (John 7) to take advantage of His presence and receive a life-giving drink. *“Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! <sup>38</sup> Anyone who believes in me may come and drink!”*

Are you thirsty? Emotionally? Relationally? Spiritually? If so, Jesus is calling to you, “Come and drink!” If you put your trust in Him—rest your life in His wise and loving care—He will plant within you a well of satisfaction that quenches your deepest thirst.

### **Artesian Waters**

Moved by a vision, when I was nineteen years old, I began searching for God. I searched in various Oriental religions and New Age practices. Jesus began to draw me to Himself, but I was resistant, thinking that Christianity was too narrow-minded and too old-fashioned. When I finally gave up pushing Him away, I asked Jesus to reveal Himself to me and give me the truth. He did just that! Through reading the Bible, He made it so plain and so satisfying that, in turn, I destroyed all the books of teachings I had been studying. My search had ended. I had found God (or was found by Him). I have never been spiritually thirsty for anyone or anything else since that day. He put within me a spiritual spring of living water!

That’s just what Jesus had predicted to the crowd of worshipers in Jerusalem that afternoon: *“Rivers of living water will flow from [your] heart.”* He doesn’t just offer a cup of cold water. He offers an artesian well!

That reminds me of an old song:

*Spring up, O Well, within my soul  
Spring up, O Well, and make me whole  
Spring up, O Well, and give to me  
That life abundantly.*

*I’ve got a river of life flowing out of me  
Makes the lame to walk and the blind to see  
Opens prison doors, sets the captives free  
I’ve got a river of life flowing out of me*

The Amplified Bible is even clearer: *“He who believes in Me [who cleaves to and trusts in and relies on Me] as the Scripture has said, From his innermost being shall flow [continuously] springs and rivers of living water.”*

This promise was not given casually, but on the basis of an invitation: *“Come to me!”* It was to those who would respond and come, putting their trust, allegiance, and reliance in Jesus, that the Son of God made this promise. If you have heard His call at any time in your life and responded with trust, allegiance, and reliance, then Jesus has planted in you this well of living water.

These waters will satisfy your soul, washing you with God's presence, mercy, and grace. These waters will generate power for living as a child of God and for doing what He asks of you. But wait, there's more...! Your innermost being—your spirit—is not a pool for containing God's grace; it is a spring of rivers for pouring out God's grace to others.

You have something to give. You have a story to tell—a story of God's undeserved kindness and saving power. More than that, you have God's grace and power to offer.

Jesus said, *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the Lord's favor has come"* (Luke 4:18-19).

This is also true of you! Jesus said, *"As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you"* (John 20:21). He has given you the same Spirit the Father gave to Him. He has not only commissioned you to go in His name, but He has anointed you for the task.

## **Spirit to Come**

John explained: *"(When he said "living water," he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him.)"*

The living water is the Spirit of God. It is not a feeling; it is a Person. It is not an experience; it is a relationship. That's why Jesus said it would quench a person's thirst. Feelings and experiences are fleeting—they come and go. But this relationship with the Spirit of Christ is forever. He has come to stay! He will "never leave you, never abandon you" (Hebrews 13:5).

He has come as your Teacher (to teach you what is true). He has come as your Reminder (to remind you what Jesus has said). He has come as your Peace, your Advocate, your Counselor, Your Strengthened, your Guide. He has come to glorify Jesus Christ in your life.

Oswald Chambers said, "The Holy Spirit alone makes Jesus real, the Holy Spirit alone expounds His Cross, the Holy Spirit alone convicts of sin; the Holy Spirit alone does *in* us what Jesus did *for* us."

This living water flows from your innermost being where the Spirit has taken up residence. Notice that the Spirit's presence is not reserved to a select few, but is given to "everyone" who trusts, follows, and relies on Jesus. That's the truth that we derive from this passage, but that is not what this passage says. John did not write, "who *is* given to everyone," but "who *would be* given to everyone."

We understand that believing (trusting, following, and relying) in Jesus is a prerequisite, but there is more. Someone asked me last week, "Why, in the Old Testament, did the Holy Spirit only come upon specific people, but after the cross He indwells all believers?"

This is one of the earmarks of the New Covenant in Christ: the Holy Spirit is given to everyone who believes in Jesus. It was not always so. Under the First Covenant, the Holy Spirit only appeared sporadically, and only moved on certain individuals, and usually for a specific, short term task. What changed, and why?

## **Glory to Jesus**

John revealed the secret: *"The Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet entered into his glory."*

The Holy Spirit's influence and power were at work before Pentecost, but *He* was not here. As soon as our Lord returned to the Father's side and was glorified, the Holy Spirit came into this world, and He has been here ever since. Jesus told His disciples, "*If I don't [go away], the Advocate won't come. If I do go away, then I will send him to you.*"

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter stood to address the wondering crowd, and told them, "*God raised Jesus from the dead, and we are all witnesses of this. Now he is exalted to the place of highest honor in heaven, at God's right hand. And the Father, as he had promised, gave him the Holy Spirit to pour out upon us, just as you see and hear today*" (Acts 2:32-33).

The Holy Spirit could not come to dwell in us until Jesus was glorified, signifying that the Father's plan to send His Son to save us was complete. Once we were forgiven, and our hearts cleansed from sin, then the Holy Spirit could come to us. Once Jesus had finished His saving work, then He could plant His Church and begin unifying His people. This is what the Spirit has come to do.

## **Believe and Receive**

Jesus said that He would send Him, and He did. He is here now and He is here for you. When you receive the Holy Spirit, you receive resurrection life from the Risen Lord. When you receive the Spirit, you receive freedom from sin's judgment and its power (Romans 8:1-2). When you receive the Holy Spirit, you receive strength to live for Jesus and courage to take His message to the ends of the earth.

A contemporary song captures the feeling for me:

*My chains fell off, my heart was freed  
I'm alive to live for You  
I'm alive to live for You  
Amazing love, how can it be?  
You gave everything for me  
You gave everything for me*

Have you received Jesus as the Leader of your life? Do you trust Him? Have you given Him your allegiance? Do you rely on Him for what you need?

## **With, In, and Upon**

Have you received the Holy Spirit? He has been *with* you, or you would not be here today. But if you recognize that He is with you, you also need Him *in* you.

If you have received Jesus as Lord, then the Spirit of God is *in* you, as well, transforming your life. If you recognize that He is in you, you also need Him *upon* you.

Jesus said, "*You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you*" (Acts 1:8). Every Christian should receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Ask Jesus to baptize you with His Spirit; He loves to do this. You will miraculously gain a new language, specifically for communicating with God on His level. And you will gain powerful assurance of God's purpose for your life, and other supernatural gifts with which to serve Him.

Receive the Holy Spirit—the Lifegiver!