

“Accept the Holy Spirit”

Last week, we looked at the words of David in Psalms 23, who was once a shepherd. Today we will direct our focus to verse 5 where it is written, “You anoint my head with oil”. First, let us read Psalms 23 together.

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name’s sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. (Psalms 23)

Upon learning about the work of a shepherd, there is one existence that caught my attention. It is the flies that constantly bother the sheep. The flies swarm on to the moist nose of the sheep and lay their eggs. Within a few days, they will hatch and the larva will begin to move around. Of course this is an unbearable discomfort to the sheep, causing them to irritate and hit their own heads on rocks and trees. Some even lose their lives in this frenzy. The sheep cannot swat away the flies that swarm to them, and are literally helpless. To protect these sheep from the flies, oil is often applied to their nose as a repellent.

As we all know, flies will not land on our noses to lay eggs. But we are often distracted and irritated with the presence of even a single fly. We turn off the lights to sleep for the night only to hear the buzzing of a fly. Annoyed, we reluctantly get back up, turn on the lights, and grab the fly swatter, ready for a battle and forgetting our sleepiness. This is probably not an uncommon situation for us. We also are so easily distracted and carried away. Such small thing can disrupt our hearts. The Lord our shepherd is well aware of this reality.

In the deserts of California and Nevada are many plants and flowers with thorns. With such harsh environment, there are few plants that actually grow, and those plants are the scarce food source for the animals who live there. And

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so the plants of the desert are easily eaten up. Corresponding to this situation, the plants protect themselves with thorns. Sheep can sometimes hurt themselves with the thorns of the desert plants. Oil is also applied to these wounds to help them heal.

Even looking at the realities between the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep, we see that it can be directly applied to us. We live disrupted by the many small things in life, and bear many small wounds in our daily life. The Lord can protect and prevent us from being distracted before they even happen, and can heal the wounds of our heart.

These words of David talk also of the oil anointed on him by God, and speaks to us that we too can be anointed by God with the same oil.

In the times of the Old Testament, priests, prophets, and kings were anointed with oil during their ordination in Israel. At festivals, high priests beginning with Aaron were anointed with oil (**Exodus 28:41**), These provisions were also written in the law. Kings 19:16 The prophet Elisha was also anointed by Elijah (**Kings 19:16**).

David, who wrote Psalms 23, was also anointed with oil as king at a young age (**1 Samuel 16:13**). In this way, David was ordained as king before God. At the time, he was the youngest of 8 and in position of no recognition. From a human point of view, he was in no way qualified. Yet, God chose him as king. David must have written his psalms in thanks, remembering his young days when he was anointed with oil by God and his grace.

In this way, priests, prophets, and kings were ordained by oil for centuries until the time of Jesus, when another meaning was added to anointing with oil.

Not long after Jesus started his ministry in Galilee, he went to Nazareth where he grew up. At the synagog he was handed a scroll with Isaiah 61 written on it and read it before his audience. This is what he read.

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor and the

day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion— to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor. (Isaiah 61:1-3)

After he read this, **“he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 20-21)** To scripture that had been written 700 years prior to this event by the prophet Isaiah, Jesus said **“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing”** and also pointed out that, **“The Lord has anointed me”(Isaiah 61:1)** and **“The Spirit of the Lord is on me”(Luke 4:18).**

Yes, Jesus himself decided that he was the anointed one, which meant that the Spirit of the Lord is on him. To Jesus, being anointed by oil meant that the holy spirit was with him. When we hear these words, we think of the time when Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan river, when he rose out of the water.

“As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”(Matthew 3:16-17)

Yes, at this time, the Holy Spirit came down like a dove on Jesus. To begin his work as the son of God, Jesus Christ was atoned by the Holy Spirit instead of oil.

This is how Jesus began his ministry. The first thing Jesus did in his ministry was to select his 12 disciples, have them by his side, and trained them by having them see and hear his words and actions.

He spends about three and a half years doing this, but then Jesus is captured, and is tried unjustly. During such critical times, as you all know already, his disciples had abandoned Jesus “fearing the Jews” and had run away. The disciples had no excuses and were in shame. Yet Jesus returns to them after his resurrection, and appears before them for 40 days. And when the time finally

came for him to part from them and return to heaven, Jesus left these words we know well to his disciples.

“After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 1:3-5)

Just as Jesus was about to leave them, he left a very important promise. This was not the first time he had told his disciples of this promise. This promise was that the Holy Spirit would also be given to them. And Jesus also spoke of what would happen when they are anointed with the Holy Spirit.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

The moment the Holy Spirit comes onto them, they will receive a power beyond our understanding, and they will become Jesus’ witnesses to the ends of the earth. Imagine this. If we met with someone 3 days after they had died, ate with, spoke to, and spent time with them, such experiences would change their views of life and death forever. The impact would be tremendous.

The 40 days spend with the resurrected Jesus would have been a time when conviction and strength grew stronger in the hearts of the disciples through each passing day. But Jesus knew that such state was still insufficient. He knew that they will go out and tell the people about Jesus but such human force would not last long, that it was not enough to overcome the many obstacles they will have to face.

And so they were told, rather than relying on their own strength, to wait in Jerusalem for the gift of the Holy Spirit. As they had repeated many mistakes, they must have known well by then to listen closely and follow the words of Jesus. They followed his words and stayed in the upper room of a house in Jerusalem, praying together.

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And as they were promised, the holy Spirit came down unto them. Receiving the Holy Spirit, the disciples went out to the world, strong. Their teachings spread through Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria to the ends of the earth. The fact that we are here to day in the North American Continent hearing the teachings of Jesus proves that the Holy Spirit came upon them and his words were accomplished.

The disciples who had once feared humans had been filled by the Holy Spirit and feared no one. The Jewish leaders used every means they could think of to try and stop their teaching, capturing, threatening, and whipping them but it was no use. Peter and the other disciples replied **“We must obey God rather than human beings!”(Acts 5:29)** and continued to spread the teachings of Jesus. Stephen became the first martyr of this mission and Jacob is also killed. Yet the gospel, continued to spread to the world through those who had received the Holy Spirit.

And lo an behold, the decent of the Holy Spirit which occurred in an upper room in Jerusalem 2000 years ago has been given to us in this day and age as well. To begin with, we are no different from the disciples. Humans have not progressed in the 2000 years that have passed. There is a limit to our power. But the Holy Spirit which has been given unto us gives us a power from above that we do not possess.

When you think about it, it is quite clear that the oil which was poured and anointed in the times of David was also the filling of the Holy Spirit. Yes, the event of David being anointed with oil by Samuel is it is recorded in the bible.

“So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features. Then the Lord said, “Rise and anoint him; this is the one.” So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah.” (1 Samuel 16:12-13)

David’s many achievements were not by the works of his own power and wisdom but because he was anointed, or given the Holy Spirit. It was only the result of God’s power.

The prophet Zechariah was familiar with the power of the Holy Spirit. He also knew of the power of humans. And so he confidently wrote the strong words,

“Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit” (Zechariah 4:6) These words are still valid to us today.

We Japanese show a strong interest in the word “spirit”. Whether “guardian spirits” or “ancestral spirits”, we love hearing “spirit” stories. It is not uncommon to hear of people being tricked into buying things or into giving money with the lines “the spirit of your ancestors are mourning” or “to be protected by guardian spirits”. In the hot summer season, the stories of spirits are being told everywhere to cool down with shivers or goose bumps.

But dear brothers and sisters, please know that there is no need to lend an ear to such stories. What we truly wish for is the Spirit of God, in other words, the Holy Spirit. Let us accept the Spirit the Lord wishes for us to accept. The spirit as described in 2 Timothy 1:7 **“For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.”** Let us eagerly receive this Holy Spirit promised to us.

Has Jesus Christ not promised us, **“So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. “Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (Luke 11:9-13)**

We are not ignorant to this fact. Even today, the Lord gives those who seek the Holy Spirit. To live with Christ, we need to be anointed with Holy Spirit. For us to live as the leader of our households, as workers in our workplaces, as church attendees, no, even as a human living the life we were entrusted, we require the Holy Spirit.

Paul has written of the fruits bore by the filling of the Holy Spirit upon us. **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22-23)**

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Not one of these fruits can result of our own power or ability. Yet they are essential to our lives. The plans we have made, the relationships we seek, and the resolve to the problems we face cannot be fulfilled with our own power and ability. What we require is the Holy Spirit in us. The words “You anoint my head with oil” written in Psalms 23 is still a promise made to us anew. Let’s pray.

Translated by Shirah Vogt