



WHERE LIFE & PURPOSE CONNECT

Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of July 2, 2023

Weekly Prayer

Merciful God, grant me the grace of your presence. I need to be reminded that I am not alone. I long to feel your Spirit and to hear your still, small voice whisper in my ear. Feed me with the spiritual food which only you can give, because you alone can satisfy the deepest needs of the soul. Amen.

Monday, July 3

Scripture: Genesis 1:2, 26-27; Psalm 33:6-9

The earth was without shape or form, it was dark over the deep sea, and God's wind swept over the waters—

Then God said, "Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they may take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth."

God created humanity in God's own image,
in the divine image God created them,
male and female God created them.

The skies were made by the LORD's word,
all their starry multitude by the breath of his mouth.

He gathered the ocean waters into a heap;
he put the deep seas into storerooms.

All the earth honors the LORD;
all the earth's inhabitants stand in awe of him.

Because when he spoke, it happened!
When he commanded, there it was!

Observation

In Biblical Hebrew, the word *rûaḥ* meant spirit, wind, and/or breath. "In the OT the spirit (*rûaḥ*) of Yahweh is God's power in action. Yahweh's spirit is God himself present and at work, as are his 'hand' and his 'arm'....A term for both breath blown out and wind blowing (wind is viewed as God's breath, Is. 40:7; Ezk. 37:9), *rûaḥ* has vivid and awesome

associations when used of God's energy let loose. It is so used in nearly 100 of its nearly 400 OT appearances. Yahweh's spirit is said to...shape creation, animate animals and mankind, and direct nature and history (Gen. 1:2, 2:7; Jb. 33:4; Ps. 33:6, 104:29-30; Is. 34:16)." Long before anyone had thought about the word "Trinity," Genesis 1's poetic creation liturgy said the one God created humans in "our" image, made to be like "us" in character. It described God's *rûah* (see note above on this Hebrew word) moving over the waters of primordial chaos. Psalm 33 was a later passage that also portrayed God's spirit as fully involved in the work of creation. Like Jesus (John 1:1-3), the Holy Spirit already was, at the very beginning of the Bible's big story.

Application

We sometimes think the Holy Spirit didn't show up (or maybe even exist) until the day of Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection (Acts 2:2-4). However, the Bible described God's Spirit existing before, and at work during the creation of the world. Open your heart and ask God to guide your reading this week, expanding and deepening your understanding of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer

Holy Spirit, you are the spiritual air I breathe. Help me to grow more aware of the inner strength and vitality you offer me as I make you the "oxygen" of my life with God. Amen.

Tuesday, July 4

Scripture: Ezekiel 37:1-14; Zechariah 4:6

The LORD's power overcame me, and while I was in the LORD's spirit, he led me out and set me down in the middle of a certain valley. It was full of bones. He led me through them all around, and I saw that there were a great many of them on the valley floor, and they were very dry. He asked me, "Human one, can these bones live again?" I said, "LORD God, only you know." He said to me, "Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, Dry bones, hear the LORD's word! The LORD God proclaims to these bones: I am about to put breath in you, and you will live again. I will put sinews on you, place flesh on you, and cover you with skin. When I put breath in you, and you come to life, you will know that I am the LORD." I prophesied just as I was commanded. There was a great noise as I was prophesying, then a great quaking, and the bones came together, bone by bone. When I looked, suddenly there were sinews on them. The flesh appeared, and then they were covered over with skin. But there was still no breath in them. He said to me, "Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, human one! Say to the breath, The LORD God proclaims: Come from the four winds, breath! Breathe into these dead bodies and let them live." I prophesied just as he commanded me. When the breath entered them, they came to life and stood on their feet, an extraordinarily large company. He said to me, "Human one, these bones are the entire house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope has perished. We are completely finished.' So now, prophecy and say to them, The LORD God proclaims: I'm opening your graves! I will raise you up from your graves, my people, and I will bring you

to Israel's fertile land. You will know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and raise you up from your graves, my people. I will put my breath in you, and you will live. I will plant you on your fertile land, and you will know that I am the LORD. I've spoken, and I will do it. This is what the LORD says."

He answered me:

"This is the LORD's word to Zerubbabel:
Neither by power, nor by strength,
but by my spirit, says the LORD of heavenly forces."

Observation

Ezekiel's "dry bones" vision wasn't as much about bones as about God's power to bring life even to hopeless exiled Israel through the divine "spirit" or "breath." Scholar N. T. Wright noted, "The words for 'wind', 'breath' and 'spirit' are the same (this is true in both Hebrew and Greek). This wind is the healing breath of God's spirit, come to undo the long effects of primal rebellion." Today's readings (and other prophetic verses like Joel 2:27-29) showed how Israel's prophets honored God's life-giving Spirit.

Application

Ezekiel, speaking to Israelites in exile with their nation destroyed and helpless, reported a vision showing that God offers hope even in situations that look hopeless to our human eyes. When have you seen God bring life to a situation or person that seemed beyond hope? Who do you know who needs hope? How can you carry the news of God's life-giving hope to them?

Prayer

Lord God, through your Spirit give me the courage and responsiveness to make the world better in whatever ways, large or small, you call me to. Amen.

Wednesday, July 5

Scripture: John 7:37-39; Matthew 28:18-20

On the last and most important day of the festival, Jesus stood up and shouted, "All who are thirsty should come to me!

All who believe in me should drink!

As the scriptures said concerning me,

Rivers of living water will flow out from within him."

Jesus said this concerning the Spirit. Those who believed in him would soon receive the Spirit, but they hadn't experienced the Spirit yet since Jesus hadn't yet been glorified.

Jesus came near and spoke to them, "I've received all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I've

commanded you. Look, I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age.”

Observation

At the yearly Festival of Tabernacles, priests drew water daily at the Pool of Siloam and poured it out in the Temple, reciting Isaiah 12:3: “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.” It was against that backdrop that Jesus dramatically invited all who believe in him to drink “living water.” Lest anyone miss the point, John directly pointed out that Jesus’ words showed the Spirit’s life-giving power, not only for the spiritually barren places in Jesus’ day but for all time.

Application

Israel was observing an annual public ritual, which could become just “going through the motions.” But Jesus’ call was personal. “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me ...” Are you personally drinking the water of eternal life Jesus offers by keeping your life open to the Spirit’s presence? If not, what is blocking you from accepting Jesus’ offer?

Prayer

God in three persons, blessed Trinity, I am grateful for all the ways you reveal yourself. You save and forgive me, quench my inner thirst and guide me in all my steps. Amen.

Thursday, July 6

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 3:3-6

You show that you are Christ’s letter, delivered by us. You weren’t written with ink but with the Spirit of the living God. You weren’t written on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. This is the confidence that we have through Christ in the presence of God. It isn’t that we ourselves are qualified to claim that anything came from us. No, our qualification is from God. He has qualified us as ministers of a new covenant, not based on what is written but on the Spirit, because what is written kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Observation

The apostle Paul wrote 2 Corinthians to a group of Christians almost all of whom had come to faith through his preaching of Jesus. Yet he made it clear that something far beyond his power had been at work. As scholar William Barclay put it, “the work of the Spirit changes a [person’s] very heart...only the Spirit can change human nature.” Paul said the Holy Spirit is the divine being who makes real the new covenant promise found in Jeremiah 31:31-34.

Application

In Roman times, you couldn’t Google a stranger, or call someone in a distant city who knew the person. So, people would carry written letters of introduction with them. Paul made the

remarkable, challenging claim that the Spirit made Christ-followers like living letters of introduction for Jesus. In what ways do those who know you learn an accurate, appealing image of Jesus from you? Are there any ways in which you want the Spirit to shape you to better represent your Lord?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, it's a new day, and again today I bear your name into a world that urgently needs to know you. Fill me with your Spirit, that I may show others your goodness and glory. Amen.

Friday, July 7

Scripture: John 14:16-18, 26-27

I will ask the Father, and he will send another Companion, who will be with you forever. This Companion is the Spirit of Truth, whom the world can't receive because it neither sees him nor recognizes him. You know him, because he lives with you and will be with you. "I won't leave you as orphans. I will come to you.

The Companion, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I told you. "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you. I give to you not as the world gives. Don't be troubled or afraid.

Observation

In Biblical Greek, the word *paraklētos* (like the Hebrew *rûaḥ*) had multiple English equivalents. There is no single English equivalent to the Greek word *paraklētos*...a variety of English words are used to translate John's use of "Paraclete" when referring to the Holy Spirit, which reflects the elasticity of the Greek term. English translators most commonly use the words Helper, Advocate, Comforter and Counselor. It is rendered as "Companion" in the Common English Bible, with "Advocate" a footnoted alternative. The disciples had been with Jesus for three years. It must have been impossible to imagine Jesus' ministry going on without him present. But Jesus stressed that he was not abandoning the disciples. He promised them the Holy Spirit as the "paraclete" (see note above), a Companion who would fill the role Jesus had filled, different yet the same. The Spirit's presence would bring Jesus' peace to their hearts.

Application

Jesus did not forget or desert his first disciples or us. He promised to be with us constantly through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not replace Jesus, but rather, in a way beyond our full understanding, is Jesus' presence with us, now and until the end of time and space as we know it ("forever"—verse 16). What word or phrase in today's verses about the Holy Spirit speaks most to your heart? When have you most sensed Jesus' presence with you?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you promised, "I won't leave you as orphans, I will come to you." Thank you for always being my Companion and Comforter, even when my circumstances seem the hardest. Amen.

Saturday, July 8

Scripture: John 16:12-15

"I have much more to say to you, but you can't handle it now. However, when the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you in all truth. He won't speak on his own, but will say whatever he hears and will proclaim to you what is to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and proclaim it to you. Everything that the Father has is mine. That's why I said that the Spirit takes what is mine and will proclaim it to you.

Observation

John recorded Jesus' teaching about "the Father," himself and "the Spirit," not as three separate beings, but one God in three persons. The greatest theologians can't articulate this concept in ways that the human imagination can process. The three persons of the Trinity are close in a manner that goes beyond the closest human relationships we know. The Holy Spirit is the third person (which in no way means inferior or subordinate to the first and second person) of the Trinity, who functions as God's continual presence on Earth, especially after Jesus' ascension to heaven. The Holy Spirit resides in us, sustaining, nudging, rebuking, and reshaping our humanity.

Application

Jesus was direct with the disciples: "I have much more to say to you, but you can't handle it now." However, the Holy Spirit would continue his work of teaching them (John 16:13). Have you faced times when you weren't ready to handle the full truth of a medical, relational, or spiritual situation? Are you grateful that God doesn't insist on "cramming" the whole truth down our throat when we're not ready, but that the Spirit works patiently with us as we learn and grow?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, guide me by your Spirit each day. I ask for a teachable spirit to know more about you and your will for me. Thank you for being patient with me. Amen.