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 March 12, 2017  
 3rd Apostle's Creed

***The Apostle's Creed: I Believe in the Holy Spirit***  
***Luke 4: 14-21***

**Luke 4:14-21**

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country.

**15** He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

**16** When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read,

**17** and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

**18** "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free,

**19** to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

**20** And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.

**21** Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Today we continue the third week of our Apostle's Creed sermon series.  
 In the next section of our Creed, it says ***I believe in the Holy Ghost.***

Your very first question might be, why are we believing in a ***ghost?***

Well, it's funny—

we all know how the English language has a lot of synonyms, right?

Well ghost and spirit have sometimes meant the same thing,

and they have referred to different things over the years.

In the KJV version of the Bible, Spirit is often translated Ghost.

If you go back to King James days, or even Shakespeare, you find that there was a time when ***ghost meant the essence*** of someone. Even "breath" or "soul" were often used as synonyms of "ghost."

And, strangely to us, ***spirit referred to a dead person.***

As language evolved, people started saying "ghost" when speaking of the vision of a dead person, while "spirit" became the standard term for the living essence, often also for "soul."

So ***"ghost" and "spirit" kind of changed places*** as our language evolved.

Today ***Holy Spirit*** is the term used in the Apostle's Creed, for most denominations.

We Presbyterians are simply using *older language*,  
 while most churches use the more contemporary word Spirit!  
 Kind of like us saying '*quick*' *instead of living*, go figure.  
***Ghost or Spirit*** are referring to the *same person* in the Trinity.

When I say Holy Spirit, ***what images come to your mind?***  
 There are so many different ones in the Bible!

Did you know that Spirit appears ***over 500 times*** in the Bible,  
 over 80 times in the Old Testament,  
 and it refers to ***a person, a manifestation of God's power?***

In the Old Testament, or Hebrew Bible, the word for Spirit is ***ruach***,  
 Which means life-giving breath, or wind.  
 Think about God breathing life into Adam.  
 In the Old Testament, the Spirit gives power to people,  
 like supernatural strength to Samson.

In the New Testament the Greek word ***pneuma***  
 also refers to life-giving breath, or wind.  
 It too is associated with power,  
 like the wind and fire that came into the room at Pentecost,  
 when the church was born—  
 as believers could speak about God in all languages!

The Holy Spirit is also portrayed as a ***dove*** in the baptism of Jesus,  
 and when Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to his disciples,  
 he refers to the Spirit as a ***Paraclete***,  
***which means Advocate, Counselor, or Comforter.***  
 The Holy Spirit is also the Spirit of Truth (see John Chapters 14 and 16).

What ***image*** of the Holy Spirit ***speaks to you today?***  
 Does it help you to think of the Holy Spirit as wind or breath?  
 What about the Spirit as a dove, or as a fire?  
 Did you know that we see ***both of those images*** in our Presbyterian USA logo?

***Who is the Holy Spirit in your life?***

In my life, the Holy Spirit is kind of a ***divine voice***.  
 I know it is the Holy Spirit,  
 when I am ***nudged in my heart*** to reach out to someone in need.  
 I just feel like I need to give something, or pick up the phone, or send a text—and you know  
 it's amazing---so many people have said that right at that moment they were looking for  
 some kind of sign from God.

I hear the Spirit telling me ***what is true according to scripture***—

Like when I'm trying to decide if something is from God.  
 My **litmus test** is always  
*'how does this fit into me loving God or neighbor as myself?'*,  
 If it doesn't, I try to go another way.

Jesus talks about the **Spirit of truth** in John 16:13:  
*When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth...*  
 and in John 14:17: *This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.*

I hear a **voice of comfort** in the Holy Spirit when I am afraid.  
 I remember when one of my kids was being hospitalized,  
 and I feared for their life—  
 it was the Holy Spirit's voice and presence that comforted me.

Jesus calls the Holy Spirit our **Comforter** in John 14:26.  
 The Greek word *paracletos* means advocate, counselor, or comforter.

And did you know that in Romans 8:26  
 it says that the Holy Spirit **prays for us** when we don't have the words?  
 Many, many times my life has been so challenging or scary that I tell God—  
**Dear God, I can't even pray right now.**  
 You take over, please.  
 And I believe the Holy Spirit prays for me in those moments.

At Jesus' baptism when the Spirit descended as a dove the **divine voice** said, *this is my Son, the Beloved, with him I am so pleased.*  
 I have heard similar voices in my life over the years.  
 I remember hearing God affirm to me as a little kid,  
 being teased at school.  
 I heard someone in my heart say that I was ok, just the way I was.  
 I believe that was the Holy Spirit.

Do you ever wonder **where you have the Holy Spirit in your life?**  
 Think about this—

Have you ever had a **nudge in your heart**,  
 that you should call or visit someone?  
 Have you ever been **overwhelmed** by the glory of God,  
 while near the beauty of creation?  
 What about in the face of a **baby**, or someone about to go to **heaven**?  
 Have you been moved by a twinge of **guilt** when you hurt someone,  
 and realize you should apologize?  
 Have you ever felt the power to overcome a **temptation**?  
 Or have you experienced some supernatural **strength** power in a crisis?

Have you ever been moved to tell someone about your *faith*?  
 Have you ever called to mind a *Bible verse*,  
 that helped you through a tough time?

If you said *yes, that's where the Holy Spirit* has been working in your life.  
 You might not have recognized it, but now maybe you can!

There are *traditions that emphasize* the Holy Spirit,  
 like the Pentecostal church.  
 They emphasize outward manifestations of the Holy Spirit,  
 like speaking in tongues in worship.  
 This can be a beautiful thing.  
 I had a mentor growing up who could speak in tongues  
 (and yes, he was a Presbyterian!)  
 But if some of the Spirit's gifts are emphasized too greatly,  
 it can seem like only some people have the Holy Spirit inside of them.  
 Paul tells us that we *all have gifts* of the Spirit.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:19 that *everyone who follows Jesus as Lord* and Savior has  
 the Holy Spirit within them.

In I Corinthians 12 he says that *every person in the church*  
 has been given gifts from the Holy Spirit (which we'll talk about more next week when we  
 look at the church),

and in Galatians 5:22-26 which we heard today,  
 we hear that the *fruits of the Spirit*  
 are all the good things that we see,  
 when we are following the Holy Spirit in our lives!  
*Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, and self-control.*

But the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Living God,  
*does not come by force* into our lives.  
 We have a *choice* about whether to welcome the Spirit's power,  
 and to listen and trust what the Spirit is doing inside us.  
 God has chosen us even before our birth to know and love him (Ephesians 1:4), but *we*  
*choose to welcome* the Spirit's power.

Adam Hamilton, in his book *Creed*,  
 Compares this to using a *cordless drill*.  
 If you leave it off the charger, you can still get your project done—  
 but you'll have a much harder time without the power drill and screwdriver.  
 We want to be plugged into God's power in our lives!  
 Incredible things can happen when we *'plug' into the power* of the Holy Spirit! (Adam  
 Hamilton, *Creed*, Abingdon: Nashville, 2016, pg. 102)

So, **how do you plug into** the Holy Spirit's power?

**For me**, I have to have some time alone with God every single day, and time with the Bible and a devotional.

It's like food for me.

**That prayer time is essential**,

and it continues in little bits as I talk and listen to God all day long, while I work and rest.

When I don't take time for this,

I feel literally drained,

and like I just can't get anything done very well.

What about you?

**How do you plug into** the power of the Holy Spirit in your life?

What if the first step for any of us is to **simply pay attention?**

How **do you pay attention** to the Spirit?

Remember how we talk a lot about **God-sightings** in this church?

A God-sighting is when you see God at work around you, but you have to be paying attention to see it, right?

I was thinking about this at a **restaurant** recently.

You know when you go out to eat and you look around and see so many couples or whole families, and they all have their **heads bowed?**

But they aren't always praying, right?

What are they doing?

They are paying attention to their **phones!**

We have to **put down our phones**

(unless you're using a Bible app or online devotional!)

We have to put down all the things that distract us, and pay attention, right?

Once we are paying attention to God, we **place our trust** in the Spirit.

We say in the Creed, that we **believe** in the Holy Spirit.

What does it mean to **believe?**

What if it means trusting in the Spirit of God, **the same way Jesus did?**

**In Luke 4** we heard how The Holy Spirit filled Jesus with the power to overcome temptation in the wilderness,

and to start his ministry by preaching the words of Isaiah 61, in his very first sermon.

The Bible says in Luke 4 that Jesus went into the wilderness

*'filled with the Holy Spirit'*,

and that after his temptation he returned to Galilee,

*'filled with the power of the Spirit'*.

Then Jesus himself said, '*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,*  
because he has anointed me to bring good news'!  
***Jesus relied upon the Spirit*** for power in his life and ministry!

What about us?

Are we ***relying*** upon the Holy Spirit enough?  
Are we doing more than just saying the Spirit exists?

Are we taking a step towards the Spirit, and ***trusting*** in the Spirit's power?

When we say in the Apostle's Creed,  
I ***believe*** in the Holy Ghost,  
we are saying that we ***trust*** in the Holy Spirit.  
we trust in the power of this person in the Trinity.

And we are affirming our belief in the Holy Spirit, not just in each of us individually, but  
***also in our church family***, as the body of Christ!

Remember ***Pentecost?***

The believers were all gathered together,  
and the wind and fire of the Spirit came into that place and gave them the power to share  
the faith—in all different languages!

The Spirit came into that ***whole body*** of believers,  
And the ***same is true today!***

When we gather for worship,  
and we experience God's power in the ***music and words and silence***—that's the Holy  
spirit—right here in the midst of us!  
Amazing, right?

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:19, *do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit  
within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own?*

The ***you*** in that statement is plural.

Paul was speaking to the church ***as a whole***, not just individuals!  
Together, we have the power of the Holy Spirit in our family of faith,  
and we can and should ***draw upon that power as a church!***

What does that ***mean for our church?***

Just like in our own lives, it means we have to ***pay attention, and listen.***

In worship we do this like when we ***welcome the light*** of Christ,  
or as we sing ***praises***,  
we do it when we ***pray***, and even when we are ***silent.***

It also happens when we ***gather for prayer or Bible study or meetings***—anytime we  
welcome God's presence!

The power of the Holy Spirit in our church also means that we can ***trust in the Holy Spirit, instead of ourselves!***

You know, several years ago I talked about us being a ***sailboat church***—  
A metaphor I learned from former PCUSA Moderator Joan Gray.  
Being a sailboat church means  
you ***let the Spirit fill your sails*** and take you where you need to go.

In contrast, a ***rowboat church*** is just all of us working at the oars, trying on our own power to steer the boat.

Can you guess which is ***easier***?  
And which way is ***better***?

But being a sailboat church, where we rely upon the Holy Spirit, ***can be scary***. We know our own resources,  
we know how many people, how much space,  
and what talents we have in this church, right?  
So it makes sense to work with that, right?

Well, not exactly.  
***Only God knows*** what we have and what we can do,  
and it is the Holy Spirit who can guide us to places we could never dream or imagine, places that do not depend on what we see as limited resources.

We do believe in a Savior who ***fed five thousand*** people,  
with a little boy's lunchbox, right?  
We do believe in the power of ***faith as small as a mustard seed***,  
that can move mountains. (Matt 17:20).  
Well, we also believe in a Holy Spirit  
who brings ***power to people and places we least expect***,  
allowing us to do miraculous things.

As ***Presbyterians***, we are sometimes ***lacking*** in the Holy Spirit department.  
We tend to ignore this part of our Trinitarian God, in our words and actions.  
We tend to lean more on the head than the heart,  
more on intellect than emotions,  
and more on what we can see than what we can only experience.

What if we remembered that ***believing*** in, and ***trusting*** in the Holy Spirit  
is an ***essential component*** of our Christian faith?  
Which is why it is in our Apostle's Creed!

Friends, hear the ***Good news of the Gospel*** for you today:  
The Holy Spirit is God's power at work in and among us,  
and if we pay attention,

we can see that power and place our trust in it,  
instead of just relying on ourselves!  
Now isn't that Good news? Can I get an Amen? Amen!