

Today, I will preach part 6 of our sermon series -- Sent to Proclaim the Gospel to the Nations. Just to quickly review so we can set the context of our passage,

The Book of Acts centers around The work of the Holy Spirit in the church, spreading the Gospel in Jerusalem and to Judea/Samaria and to the ends of the earth (to the nations).

And this is given to us in a prophecy found in Acts 1:8, which is the theme and outline of Acts. In Acts, 1

Jesus makes an amazing prophecy in Acts

“... **you shall receive power** when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you shall be my witness in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

“to the ends of the earth”

When will His prophecy be realized?

When can we say that Jesus’s prophecy has been fulfilled?

When it goes to all the nations.

“... to the ends of the earth.”

Now this prophecy is amazing!

We moderns today take the amazingness of this prophecy for granted, but if you were to go back 2000 years ago – when there were only 120 disciples. Today, Christianity is the largest religion in the world with well over 2 billion Christians. Wow! How do you go from 120 to 2 billion followers throughout the world? If you are a skeptic – a doubter of the truth of Christianity, how can you explain this prophecy coming to fruition. If you know anything about history, this is impossible. Can you imagine starting a new movement and predicting that in every nation would

have a follower of your ideology? Trust me, it's never been done – even the most powerful of rulers who tried to spread their ideology had to use fear, force, and fortune – yet they all failed. But here you have a poor, weak, carpenter, who has a message about believing in one who will die a dishonorable, torturous death -- a death penalty reserved for the worst of criminals and who would be raised bodily for the forgiveness of sins of those who killed him. How would you reach the world with that message? Especially considering the context of the situation – for the Jews, it would be scandalous, for the Gentile, foolishness. And the spreading of the message would entail persecution and even death. This is an impossible mission! For man, at least, it's impossible, but through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Gospel would go from Jerusalem, to Judea/Samaria and to the ends of the world. And that is what we are seeing today. We are seeing the work of the Holy Spirit today in the world – look around – the work of the Holy Spirit is even evident in your life today and in the church till this day. Praise God!

Now, 2000 years ago – in Acts 1 – to the unbeliever, this prophecy seemed impossible. There were only 120 Jews who believed the Gospel and they were concentrated in one place – namely, Jerusalem – and the glories of God were declared in the Holy Tongue -- Hebrew. How could it reach all the nations if it is only in one place, and in one tongue?

The only way the Gospel can go to the nations is if disciples GO and PREACH the GOSPEL to other nations in OTHER tongues – other LANGUAGES.

Sounds easy or difficult?

Well, 2000 years ago, they didn't have planes, trains and automobiles, nor did they have Youtube or google translate.

So,

The only way the Gospel can go to the nations is if disciples GO and PREACH the GOSPEL to other nations in OTHER tongues – other LANGUAGES.

And this is why someone like Paul – the greatest missionary of all time – had an advantage reaching the Gentiles. Paul was multilingual/ (Remember He says I'm so glad that I speak more tongues than you) – he spoke Aramaic and Greek like a native – and as a top seminary student, he was an expert in Hebrew. So languages – or tongues – was necessary to reaching the nations with the Gospel. And that is why you see the mention of tongues throughout the book of Acts.

So to reach the world, we Christians have to speak many languages.

Do you know **how many languages are in the world?**

This number is debatable because there is a large grey area between that which constitutes a language and that which constitutes a dialect.

Nonetheless, many experts in language say approximately **6800 languages.**

Now do you see the impossibility of the task? But Jesus says,

“With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” Mark 10:27

You see only through power of the Holy spirit can we fulfill the

Great commission: Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit Matt. 28:19

So where do they start making disciples?

God pours His Spirit from Heaven to Jerusalem (the centre of the world) onto 120 disciples in Acts 2 and they powerfully declare the glories of God in their language.

Throughout the book of Acts, God's Spirit is in mission of (working in) the Church

- Jerusalem (Acts 1–7),
- Judea and Samaria (Acts 8–12),
- The ends of the earth (Acts 13–28)

Now that we have set the context, let us go to Acts 19. Where does Acts 19 take place? Ephesus

Ephesus is located in present-day Turkey

Ephesus holds a special place in my heart because the ancient city is the first Biblical site I've ever visited and it sparked my love for and interest in Biblical archaeology. You can actually walk on the footsteps of where Paul walked if you visit that city.

Description of Ephesus

- One of the greatest seaports in western Asia minor
- A centre of travel and commerce
- Population around 250,000, 4th largest in Empire
- A free city
- Three major roads from the Ephesus seaport:

1) one road went south to the Meander Valley

2) went east towards Babylon via Laodicea

3) went north via Smyrna.

- A worldly & wealthy city

Ephesus was the gateway to many places, especially the Barbarian nations, so it was a strategic place for the Holy Spirit to be poured and for disciples to speak in tongues – namely the Barbarian tongues – and to be sent to the nations.

Acts 19:1

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples

And who were these disciples? They were John's disciples, not from Jesus' 120.

Paul asks these disciples,

“Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” So Paul asked, “Then what baptism did you receive?” “John's baptism,” they replied. Paul said, “John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” (Acts 19; 2-4)

You see John the Baptist purpose was to prepare people's hearts for the Lord – they would repent – of their sins so that they would believe in Jesus – the lamb of God --- for the forgiveness of their sins.

When you hear the Gospel and come to saving faith in Christ – as a sign and a seal – you get baptized.

On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all. (Acts 19:4-7)

Now in this passage it mentions the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues. Although Pentecostals and Charismatics if they believe in Christ for their justification are our brothers, in my last few sermons, I have given you cogent reason from the Bible and from history that what they believe is tongues – that is, speaking jibberish in an ecstatic state -- is a misinterpretation of Scripture. I won't go into tongues any further because I spoke about tongues in my last 3 sermons, but I would like to talk about the Holy Spirit, who I feel our Pentecostal brothers also mischaracterize.

Often times our misguided brothers **False portray the Holy Spirit as some kind of mystical force – like in Star Wars – Use the Force --** if you can just learn – like the Gnostics – the secret to harnessing that magical energy, you can use it to give you power – much like a super hero.

You know, we all love power, we all want to be special – to be a super hero – we all love mysticism. Human beings like mystical, magical things – that is why Disney is worth 130 billion dollars today, albeit none of Disney stories or movies are based on truth. Disney characters are all fictitious characters in fictitious movies.

Also popular today are mystical religions. And even Christians love mystical powers. Knowing this, we should be careful what we believe and what we accept as truth.

In defense, my Charismatic and Pentecostal friends will often say to me – oh don't be so uptight, just free yourself. "Let go of control. Just let go and let God!" they say.

And sometimes they will criticize Reformed and Presbyterians because we are too stiff, too rigid in our beliefs. And they accuse us of putting the Holy Spirit in a box.

What do the Pentecostals/Charismatics mean when they say that we Reformed and Presbyterians put the Holy Spirit in a box?

Putting the Holy Spirit means limiting God, preventing Him from defining what the Holy Spirit can and cannot do.

- Not letting the Holy Spirit give us esoteric experiences beyond what we see in Scripture.**

Are the Charismatics right? First of all, I want say this, the Holy Spirit can do whatever he wants, as long as it is within His character.

And to answer their accusation of putting the Holy Spirit in a box, to their accusation I say, **Yes we do put the Holy Spirit in a box.**

You are right, but what is this box. The box we put Him in is the Bible.

We believe in Sola Scriptura, so God's Word -- not our personal, subjective experience -- dictates for us who the Holy Spirit is and what He does for us.

I have a friend who is very religious, but not a Christian. He loves mysticism and he told me once that God spoke to him while He was on some drugs one day in California. He told me he had a vision, while doing some drugs. He saw God in the heavens and he was flying in the heavens and he saw rainbows and multi-colors and so forth and then he flew back to earth and God said to him, "All people are the same,

all religions are the same, we just need to get along and love each other.” Kum ba ya! That’s what he said.

But that’s your personal experience – not what it says in the Bible. The scary thing is he wants to start a new religion based on that experience. No wonder so many cults and heresies begin with mysticism.

Here is what one of my favorite theologians says.
Michael Horton on the Holy Spirit:

Domesticating the Spirit to an individualistic mysticism, the Holy Spirit becomes one’s inmost voice. But again, this is a distortion of a truth. The Holy Spirit is the person who works within us, even to the point of indwelling us and interceding in our hearts. But the Holy Spirit is not our spirit, and his voice is not to be confused with our own.

Ironically, I would say that Rather the Pentecostals, Charismatic. They are guilty of putting the Holy Spirit in a box – their box is their subjective, personal experience.

Defining God through your personal experiences is dangerous. What you are saying is that you – your personal, subjective experience – is the determiner of all truth, reality. Brother and Sisters, our personal, subjective experiences are unreliable and tainted by our sin. We need to trust in something out of us – something objective -- to tell us who the Holy Spirit is.

I say, let go of mysticism. Just let God, be God. Let’s let God speak and tell us who the Holy Spirit is and what He does for us.

Having said that, let’s look God’s word reveal who the Holy Spirit is and what He does.

The Holy Spirit is not a force or a principle of nature or a part of God or mode of his existence. The Holy Spirit is a person—a teaching ([Luke 12:11-12](#)), speaking ([Acts 13:2](#)), interceding ([Rom. 8:26](#)), grieving ([Eph. 4:30](#)) person—distinct from the Father and the Son.

Although He is distinct from the Father and Son,

The Holy Spirit is eternal God ([Heb. 9:14](#)).

The Holy Spirit is fully divine, his name being used interchangeably with the name “God” ([Acts 5:3-4](#); [1 Cor. 3:16](#); [6:19](#)).

The Holy Spirit is active in our salvation along with the Father and the Son ([1 Peter 1:1-2](#)).

The Holy Spirit in Greek and Hebrew is wind – and the wind goes everywhere and anywhere. In the same way,

The HOLY Spirit is Everywhere

Where can I go from your Spirit?

Where can I flee from your presence? [Psalm 139:7](#)

“He is everywhere” does not mean the Spirit is everything or in everything – pantheism. No, but rather that there is nowhere we can go where the Spirit isn’t also present

The Holy Spirit is a Comforter ([John 14:16 KJV](#)).

- *paracletos*
- “Helper” (ESV)
- “Counselor” (NIV)
- “Advocate” (NRSV)

God comforts his people by the Holy Spirit.

Another work the Holy spirit does is The Holy Spirit glorifies and points to Christ

He [the Holy Spirit] will glorify me [Jesus]... ([John 16:14](#)).

... the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me [Jesus]. (John 15:26 ESV)

The Holy Spirit has a spotlight/flashlight ministry because He points to Jesus, He glorifies Jesus, He testifies to Jesus according to John 15:26 and John 16:14. Let's pretend it's dark – it's night. All of a sudden, the lights all go out and we can't see anything. So what do we do, we turn on our smart phone and we turn on the flashlight to look for the light switch or maybe the fuse to turn on the lights. But we don't look at the light directly. We might even go blind. We are trying to find – through the light – the switch, or maybe entrance to the door or what have you. Or another analogy, you've seen lights on Christmas trees. In the dark, the lights on the Christmas trees make the tree very beautiful. But we don't go to the individual lights and stare at it and say wow this is beautiful. No! We look at the entire Christmas tree and admire it. The lights make the Christmas beautiful for us. In the same way, the Holy Spirit does that for us. The Holy Spirit makes Jesus beautiful for us. He glorifies Jesus. We don't look individual at the light – the Holy Spirit. We look and adore Christ. That is the work, the purpose of the Holy Spirit.

One does not stare into the light but beholds the Savior by that light. You can, therefore, be sure where **The Spirit is active wherever Jesus Christ is held up as the Savior of sinners. Even when we turn the spotlight on the Spirit, we find him engaged always in something related to Christ.**

The Holy Spirit is doing this, pointing, “Look at Christ! Look at Christ!”

If you go to a church – and I've been to many Pentecostal/Charismatic churches (I was once a Charismatic myself) you will hear them talking much about the Holy Spirit. “The Holy Spirit told me..., The Holy Spirit

is leading me ... The Holy Spirit wants you to ... The Holy Spirit ..., Holy Spirit ..., Holy Spirit” If you really think about what the work of the Holy Spirit is, it’s not to glorify or point to Himself. It’s to glorify Christ!

So if you go to a church that just talks incessantly about the Holy, then probably Holy Spirit is probably not there, but if you go to a church that talks about Christ, but let me tell you – the Holy Spirit is there! He has done His work! The Holy Spirit is here as we point to Christ. As we testify to Christ, the Holy Spirit is with us today.

The focus of most of our churches is on Christ and not the Spirit, because that’s the focus of the apostolic gospel, the New Testament, and the Holy Spirit himself!

And whether we realize it or not, we are very intimately connected with the work of the Spirit, because whenever we are drawn to Christ as Savior, led to worship Christ as Lord, made to behold Christ as glorious, we are being operated on by work of the Holy Spirit. Let me introduce you to one of the most important people of Protestantism.

John Calvin

- the “theologian of the Holy Spirit.”
- One of the fathers of the Protestant Reformation
- One of the fathers of Presbyterianism

I want to encourage you to read his books. One of the books I want to encourage you to read is the **Institutes of the Christian Religion** (Perhaps the most influential book to Protestant Christians beside the Bible.)

- defining book of the Reformation
- a pillar of Protestant theology.
- argues for the majesty of God and for justification by faith alone

Since Calvin is considered the theologian of the Holy Spirit, let us hear what John Calvin has to say. This is a **Paraphrase of John Calvin on the Holy Spirit,**

The Holy Spirit will be present with us by His Spirit. Christ commits every believer “to the protection and guardianship of the Spirit.” Thus He is our Comforter. True, the Spirit’s method of comforting is different from Christ’s: Jesus comforts us by showing us that He has appeased the wrath of God by atoning for our sins and redeeming us from death to give us the free gift of His righteousness, but the Holy Spirit comforts us by making us “partakers, not only of Christ Himself, but [also] of all His blessings.” (Commentary on John 14.17)

I would like to conclude by leaving you with **The promise Christ, Comfort from the Holy Spirit:**

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate [the Holy Spirit] to help you and be with you forever. ([John 14:16](#)),

This promise is very good news because now with the pouring of the Holy Spirit, we have Christ all the time and His benefits forevermore. Praise God!

Let us pray!