



Rekindling of the spirit

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June 4, 2017

The possibilities of God's Spirit have a way of changing and empowering a person's life to influence a movement within a church. Once the Holy Spirit is recognized in a person's life the more the view of the future becomes clearer.

There was a woman named, Cele, in a congregation I served back in Michigan. She was a ruling elder on session, a longtime member of the church and her husband's family were Charter members of the congregation. She was very involved in the church and only wanted the best for the church. She was also very concerned that the church was stagnating, losing the focus on its ministry and mission as well as losing life giving moments.

Cele and I talked at length about what the church had gone through and where the church could possibly go in the future. I could see her frustration about where the congregation was headed especially with others holding on to the past and seeking to control the church's direction. They really didn't want things to change. The negative energy and thoughts were taking hold of her view of the future as she saw a church with uncertain hope. The more she talked, the more disheartened she became.

One of the things that I knew about Cele was that she loved working with children. So in the midst of our conversation, I asked her, "What is your passion? What excites you about your participation in the church?" She gave me this quizzical look similar to a deer in headlights. She wanted to know what I meant by "Passion." I said, "What do you love to do?" In that moment I could see a shift take place in her demeanor and there was a brightness that came to her eyes.

Cele smiled and said, "I love to work with children." So we talked about what she believed the children can learn from her love. Then we talked about where she believed the church ought to be in addressing the needs of children. Needless to say, she was off and running on all kinds of thoughts, ideas and efforts that could possibly happen in the church.

Then Cele stopped and wondered aloud, "Well, Rev. Medina, who is going to do all this?" "I'll tell you a secret, Cele, the rekindling of the fire and the empowering of the Spirit of God's love is in you. In other words, Cele, you are the spark that is going to rekindle the fire of spiritual awakening in this congregation. And you are the one who is going to shake up this congregation with the Holy Spirit of God."

I could see that Cele was uncomfortable with these possibilities in light of the old guard. We both knew that some folks who were steeped in the history of the church and many who were long time members were not going to like what was to be proposed to reawaken the Spirit of God within the congregation.

I reminded Cele of another situation where there was fear of the possibilities for ministry and witnessing in a community. The Pentecost story was one where the disciples were afraid of what others would say or do. They, too, were given the Holy Spirit to rekindle the mission and ministry of Christ in a hostile environment. They were energized with the confidence of God's Spirit to move into the community anyway. Cele was asked to spend a few days thinking and praying about what she believed the possibilities could be in the church.

A few days later, Cele returned with a sparkle in her eyes and a notebook in hand. I knew that this was going to be an interesting conversation. She said, "I have prayed about what we talked about and what I could do. I did a lot of praying for God to choose someone else for this task but there was no way to avoid what I had to do. So, I am ready to get started in looking at the possibilities for our children of all ages.

"I am ready to take on the critics, especially those who want to control the church, and to invite them to join me in the rekindling of God's Spirit in this congregation. I believe God's Spirit needs to move in this congregation or we are just going to be stuck in the same old rut and the same old ideas which will lead to our demise. I believe God is calling me to be the spark plug to ignite the congregation."

Indeed, the Holy Spirit empowered and changed Cele's view of her life and rekindled renewed hope for the future of the church. From that day forward until they called a new pastor, she and I worked together to establish a new direction, a new destiny. Yes, a new destiny for that congregation.

Friends, there is no doubt in my mind that the power of the Holy Spirit can unleash confidence, boldness and wonderful possibilities in each of us and in this church. The rekindling, empowering and unleashing of the Spirit can be frightening as it pertains to your life and my life as well as to the life of this congregation. Unleashing of the spirit!

So I ask you to consider a few questions:

1. What is your passion?
2. What is it that you love about this congregation?
3. If the holy spirit is rekindled in your life, what would God have you do to make your life and this congregation a place of spiritual possibilities?

I also ask you to expand your capacities to see where God is leading this congregation into the future. You and I are being called to be bold in our witness to Christ in our lives. But most of all friends, when we have the Spirit with us we have no fear. Have no fear!

Remember these words from Jesus in Matthew chapter 28 verse 20b, "**And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.**" [Matthew 28:19 (NRSV)] The power of the Holy Spirit is assured in Christ's promise to always be with us and we can rely on it in our daily lives and in the future of this congregation.

The promise of the Holy Spirit opened the disciples to overcome their fearfulness, to willingly risk their lives, and to share the Good News with confidence and enthusiasm. With the giving of the Spirit, the disciples were given permission to go beyond their comfort zones and become who they were called to be. Disciples of Christ empowered by God's Holy Spirit.

The Book of Acts tells the story of the first Pentecost when the Spirit was unleashed upon the disciples and empowered their lives. The giving of the Spirit came in a dramatic scene. Again we hear, **²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.** They were filled with the promised Spirit and were able to speak in different languages. Filled with the spirit.

The disciples, especially Peter, were no longer fearful to speak out to the different cultural groups in Jerusalem as well as the Jewish people. He had confidence in himself. He spoke with boldness. The spirit was rekindled, empowered and unleashed in their lives for the proclamation of the Good News. We too can affirm that we are empowered to confidently move beyond everyday life and beyond our comfort zones to embrace discipleship to the fullest.

My dear sisters and brothers, without a doubt, the Lord reassured the disciples he would pray for them and promised to bestow on them a companion from that day forward. He reassures us as well.

Jesus said, **¹⁵"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. ¹⁷This 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."** [John 14:15-17 NRSV] God's Spirit abides in you.

The Advocate is also called Comforter, Companion, and Spirit. The Advocate would be with the disciples at all times so they could speak with confidence and clarity. This Advocate of God opens up a disciple, you and me, to all kinds of possibilities in ministry, mission and witness. Yes, all kinds of possibilities. So let us be brave and assured in the Holy Spirit to empower us to move forward with confidence and with joy, and yes, with hope. Remember, have no fear! God is with us.

Our closing prayer comes from Christine Sine and her blog called *Godspace*. Let us pray:

Come to us God almighty,
Send your Spirit.
Ignite the fire in our hearts,
Feed your flame within.
Rushing wind blow on us,
Grow the sparks and spread them,
Let your Spirit prepare,
Strength and equip us.
Come to us Lord Jesus,
Send your Spirit.
Let it proclaim who you are,
And multiply your presence,
Throughout the earth.
Ignite its flame to fill us
with generosity and caring.
Come to us Spirit of truth,
Consume us with your fire.
Let your power shape our world,
with love and peace and justice.
Let your love fill our world
with compassion, and joy and hope.
Amen.

Christine Sine <http://godspace-msa.com>
Image: Pentecost by Simon Marsh <http://simonmarsh.org/>



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Supporting Scriptural texts:

Acts 2:1-21 (NRSV)

¹When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—in our

own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." ¹²All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

¹⁴But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: ¹⁷In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. ¹⁹And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. ²⁰The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. ²¹Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

John 15:26-27, 16:4-15

²⁶ 'When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. ²⁷You also are to testify because you have been with me from the beginning.

^{4b}...I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. ⁵But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, "Where are you going?" ⁶But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. ⁷Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ⁸And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgement: ⁹about sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; ¹¹about judgement, because the ruler of this world has been condemned. ¹² I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.