

which explained perfectly what was happening, probably surprised him as much as the crowd. He found himself and the others doing a "greater thing" as Jesus had said they would. It would get greater still when the crowd responded and wanted to seal their belief in baptism. If we truly love Jesus, and are open to His Spirit working in us, we will find ourselves doing what He would have us do - to our surprise.

QUESTION *What are the limits of what you could do for Jesus and by His Spirit? Who is defining those limits, and why?*

Romans 8:14-17 – Life in the Spirit is knowing who we are in Jesus

The Spirit reveals how we are children of God through unearned adoption

14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.

15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by Him we cry, "Abba, Father."

"Adoption to sonship" – a big theme in the post-resurrection NT. By spiritual rebirth through faith, we become "new creations" with a new identity in Christ. We have a new, unearned spiritual status being adopted as children of God, no less.

• *For further study, read 2 Cor. 5:17, Galatians 4:4-7, Gal. 6:15.*

16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

"We are God's children" – in the Greek-Roman world, formal adoption conferred the rights, and inheritance, of a natural child. Caesar Augustus was the adopted son and heir of Julius Caesar.

17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs - heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.

"Co-heirs with Christ" – everything belongs to Christ but by grace we get to share what is His. We also get to share mockery, ridicule and worse in a world dominated by sin.

IN PRACTICE Jesus promised the disciples the sending of the Spirit - the Encourager. At Pentecost, that became a reality for the 12 and the 120 and as faith rose in the crowd, for three thousand others. Now, some decades later, Paul teaches an important aspect of the life of the Spirit of Jesus. Whatever we feel, it is about who we are in our new, redeemed, saved, transformed identity. This is the part that for most of us is the hardest to grasp. How do we pray prayers with the authority we see in Jesus, Peter and Paul? It is by allowing the Holy Spirit to teach us that we are co-heirs and partners with Christ through rebirth, which brings with it new life and all the rights of adoptions. We become family - and we have an important say in what goes, and what does not go.

QUESTION *What is a big prayer you have felt unable to express up till now?*

PRAYER Thank You, Father, that You did not leave us alone when Jesus returned to glory by Your side. And thank you that by the Spirit of Jesus we can know Him like those first disciples, so close He is a part of us. How we value the help of the Helper! Amen.

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The Living Word

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The Bible readings for Sunday, June 9, 2019 with commentary notes

Revised Common Lectionary readings for **June 9** in Bible order

Prepare for Sunday by reading the Bible passages beforehand - read again to reflect on Sunday's teaching

Theme Pentecost - the Church is born in the power of the Spirit

John 14:8-17 – The Holy Spirit, one with the Father and the Son

Acts 2:1-21 – The Spirit of God comes with roar of wind and flames

Romans 8:14-17 – Life in the Spirit is knowing who we are in Jesus

Read also: Psalm 104:26-37

John 14:8-17 – The Holy Spirit, one with the Father and the Son

Jesus explains how in the Trinity He is the representation of the Father

8 Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

"Show us the Father" – Philip didn't grasp that in Jesus, He was seeing the very embodiment of God.

9 Jesus answered: "Don't you know Me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

"Such a long time" – three years of close relationship

10 "Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in Me? The words I say to you I do not speak on My own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in Me, who is doing His work.

"The Father living in Me" – Jesus will go on to explain how the Holy Spirit brought to reality the remarkable claim He made at Hanukkah, "The Father and I are one", John 10:30, which continues to bring bitter opposition today, John 5:18.

11 "Believe Me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves.

"Believe Me" – complete and mutual indwelling, which defies human logic, as does the concept of distinct persons within the Trinity. Faith requires us to believe and receive who Jesus is and His oneness with the Father – and then with the eyes of faith we see how it works.

12 "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in Me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

"Do the works... and greater things" – because Jesus was going to Father, then to send the Holy Spirit. Now Jesus' works would be continued by regular people, empowered in this new era of life in the Spirit. Pentecost set the scene with more believers added in one day than during the whole of Jesus' earthly ministry. Later Acts and the Epistles tell how Jesus' works continued and spread.

13-14 "And I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask Me for anything in My name, and I will do it.

"In My name" – not adding on the words, but praying prayers in faith that Jesus would pray – and can intercede for us in heaven. "Name" stands for the person and their values i.e. in line with Jesus' purposes and kingdom.

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15 "If you love Me, keep My commands.

"Keep My commands" – first to love God and love others, Matt. 22:37-39. Loving Jesus and loving His way are inseparable.

16-17 "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate to help you and be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows

IN PRACTICE At first sight, to "keep My commands" seems to set the bar high. Doing the works of Jesus, and more than Him, seems quite out of reach. But Jesus wouldn't set us an impossibility. And, as He goes on to explain to His bewildered disciples, they will have supernatural help. While present, Jesus was getting His disciples to see that following His way was the goal of the law – righteous living rather than religious living. Now, preparing them to carry on without Him being physically present, there is another shift from righteous living, to relational living: with Him and the Father, enabled and empowered by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of Jesus would become their spiritual coach.

QUESTION *How does the Holy Spirit have us doing Jesus-like things we know we could never attempt on our own?*

Acts 2:1-21 – The Spirit of God comes with roar of wind and flames

The gathered crowd hear the disciples praising God in many different dialects

1-2 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.

"Pentecost" – Fifty days after Passover, and with Shelters, one of the three great pilgrimage festivals.

"Together" – physically assembled but particularly one in mind and spirit through being engaged in prayer together as Jesus told them to.

"Wind" – breath or wind is a symbol of God's Spirit, Ezekiel 37:9, 14, John 3:8.

3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.

"They saw..." – the public beginning of this new fellowship of unity, power and witness brings supernatural phenomena, including storm sounds, the appearance of fire, the infilling of the Holy Spirit

Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you."

"Another Advocate to help you" – the first of an important series of passages in John about the imminent sending of the Spirit. Advocate is a legal term but broader than defence barrister e.g. Counsellor, Comforter, Encourager.

• **For further study**, John 14:26, 15:26, 16:7-15, 1 John 2

and speaking praise in unlearned languages.

4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

"Fire" – a symbol of divine presence, as the burning bush in Exodus 3:2, but also associated with judgment, Matt. 3:12.

"All of them were filled" – a dramatic transformation for the 12, and probably all of the 120.

"Began to speak in other tongues" – the infilling of the Spirit comes in various ways but gaining a 'heavenly' prayer and praise language is typical.

5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.

"God-fearing Jews" – the more devout Jews were drawn to make pilgrimage for Passover and Pentecost from time to time.

6-8 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language

being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language?"

"Each one... their own language" – the dispersed Jews knew Greek and Aramaic, with their local languages.

9-11 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs – we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!"

"Visitors" – from Persia to Egypt to Rome. There was a big population of Jews in Alexandria, and also Rome.

12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

"Made fun of them" – even astounding miracles can bring out mockery in some.

14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.

15 These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning!

"Nine in the morning" – or the third hour. Jews at a festival would fast until mid-morning at least, so the accusation was ridiculous.

16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

"Spoken by the prophet Joel" – literally, "this is that...". Peter's sermon, the first of about 30 speeches

IN PRACTICE Peter, who failed but was publicly reinstated, has the qualities of a leader who has learned hard lessons, but public speaking and teaching from the Scriptures was not something that came easily to a fisherman. Now he is in front of a huge crowd in the temple courtyard, questioning what they are seeing in the outpouring on this smaller group, and hearing them praise God – "declaring the wonders of God" – in words and accents they would normally only hear back home and far away. Peter's deft "this is that" use of references to Scriptures,

in Acts, begins with explaining how the miracle was an initial fulfilment of Joel's prophecy, which was well known to the Jewish hearers.

17 "In the last days, God says, I will pour out My Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.

"In the last days" – this marked the inauguration of the era of 'last days' in which we also live. In 'former days' by contrast, the Spirit of God came on certain prophets, priests and kings for an anointing of their role at that time. What Joel saw (other prophets also) was the Holy Spirit being conferred more generally on all kinds of people.

18 'Even on My servants, both men and women, I will pour out My Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

19 'I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke.

20 'The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

"Before the... Day of the Lord" – Joel's prophecy also extends to the final return of the Messiah in judgment, concluding the end time era that Pentecost introduces.

21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' "

"Everyone who calls" – all people are summoned to recognise their sins and independence and turn to God through faith in Jesus Christ. This same message, taken up by Paul also, was repeated consistently throughout the Mediterranean world.