
The Spirit of Hope

A sermon by the Rev. Carolynne G. Williams
Proper 12 – Year A

Do you believe in the presence of the Holy Spirit? How do you know that the presence of God is within you? What do you do, personally, when circumstances prevail, persist, and pull at the very fabric of your beliefs?

Has your faith ever been shaken?

I am not speaking of any circumstance that you are directly responsible for because of your will being against God's will. I am speaking of life's events. Events that capture the attention of humanity one way or another.

We, as members of the human race are connected. Despite our many similarities, as we focus, cling to and raise up and display our differences, we as Christians have a common identity. We, as major contributors play an integral part of being a part of the common good and have as a part of our identity, a love for God. That is, being connected to all of humanity.

We as Christians are justified by our faith. Our justification is based on the Trinitarian revelation of God in our Gospel. They are not separated. They are Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Three in one. Not separated.

Your image of God and who God is in your life, is important. Being an active participant within humanity and being enabled by the Holy Spirit to be who you are promotes and calls for authentic living. When we live authentically, then God can and does work with us and through us.

Also, the Holy Spirit allows for me to be who I am.

All of us being created by and in the image of God, says that we individually are enough. We, as a community are connected by the presence of the "Holy One," God, in our lives. God in Community.

Putting God first is incorporating the first of the two greatest Commandments.

(1) "You shall love the Lord Your God with all of thy heart, and with all of your soul, and with all of your mind."

(2) The greatest commandment is, "Thou shall love thy neighbor as thy self."

(Matthew 22:27-28)

The two of those together take a life time. I am convinced of that possibility.

This is why it is such a relief to me to know that the Spirit, with a capital S intercedes for us in our weakness.

Some Christians see God as being present through a thick cloud. Or, other Christians see and believe that God is in the distance. And still others do not believe or acknowledge the presence or necessity for God, at all.

Wherever you may be, this morning in your mind, body soul and spirit, God is present. Especially in the distance.

Do we have faith that surpasses all understanding? After you pray, do you truly stand within your faith by trusting that your prayers have been heard by God?

And if not, what do you do in your moments of weakness that are apparent only to you?

Our Epistle reads: "The spirit helps us in our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what the mind of the Spirit is because the spirit intercedes for the saints, and knows the will of God."
(Romans 8:26-27)

The Spirit knows the will of God.

When we observe and engage in the world around us, there is always the potential for a crisis to come upon us. There is the potential for a crisis to seep into our bones, if we, as Christians, who have faith, are not alert and vigilant.

What do we have to be attentive to? We have to be attentive to our thoughts, we have to be aware of how we enter the world, wherever that may be each day. We have to be awake and aware of everything that we take unto ourselves, especially our inner consciousness. The words that we speak to one another always carry some measure of weight. The words that we hear often need filters and our three other senses; tasting, smelling, and feeling are constantly being penetrated. This affects the spirit. This creates a spiritual hunger within us. "Also, people hunger for a release from oppression, boredom, and lifelessness."

"The spirit plays a decisive role in building up the body of Christ, the church."

"It was in one spirit that all of us, whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, were baptized into one body. All of us have been given to drink of the one spirit". (1 Corinthians 12:13) The Creed, pg. 236. "Paul emphasizes that the spirit is the principal of unity within the Christian community, making all of its members one in Christ without destroying their individuality."
Hope for the World, Pg. 236.

The letter to the Romans tells us that we are being led "by the Spirit of God" into our true identity as "Children of God" (Romans 8:14). "The journey toward our true identity is not a solo spiritual pilgrimage."

In the words of Joanna Adams, retired Presbyterian minister, in her essay: "Hope as the Intractable Resolve of the Spirit", says this: "Mutuality, not individuality, lies at the heart of the Christian promise for this world and the world to come."
Hope for the World, pg. 63.

"Hope" is at the center of all that we have for ourselves individually and for the communities of all descriptions where we live and move and have our being.

Romans reads, "If God is for us, who is against us?" Well, it depends upon who you listen to. It depends upon what day of the week you are listening to the news or speaking.

The bottom line of all that is happening in this complex world, is this:

We are not in this world alone, and yet we have a responsibility as one human being to another to be vigilant, be awake and continue our involvement in all that you and I are involved in, but the utmost action is to PRAY.

Pray within community, pray within oneself, pray into eternity, because the Spirit will and does intercede.

According to Dr. Adams: "The function of the spirit is not now and never has been to give us what we want or to whisk us away from this wretched, wretched world; it is to fit us for life and witness in this world, for which the Son of God lived and died."

The spirit teaches us to ground our hope in the new reality that is renewed every day though our faith in God.

Hope gives us a newness through our refreshment, intention of spirit and love.

A spirit of love makes a tremendous difference in our lives. If you don't know it try it sometime. Even when you are not in the frame of love to care or to be in community, try moving to a place of gratitude. That works wonders especially when it is difficult to love.

Summer time brings about all manner of evil but more importantly good prevails because the mindset is usually one of rest and hope.

Having gratitude each day empowers us to be present and aware of the spirit within us which enables us to strive to serve Christ daily in our tasks and to live joyful lives, even as we watch for God's new heaven and God's new earth.

The love of God through all of our days proposes a hermeneutic of trust. Not a casual or shallow trust of any person or proposition that comes along, but a deep trust and hard won trust, a knowing that is born of being loved and of loving in return.

Paul has said to us in Romans, that the love of the one true God, "this love cuts across the dark intervals of meaning, this love reaches into the depths of human despair, this love embraces those who live in the shadow of death or the over bright light of present life, this love challenges the rulers of the world ... and looks at the world with, literally, a clear faith and embraces the future with hope and understands that GOD is GOD above all Gods."

His son Jesus is the Messiah and the Holy Spirit prays for us with sighs too deep for words. God searches the heart and knows the mind of the spirit, because the spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Nothing can separate us from the love of God. Absolutely nothing!!

Amen.