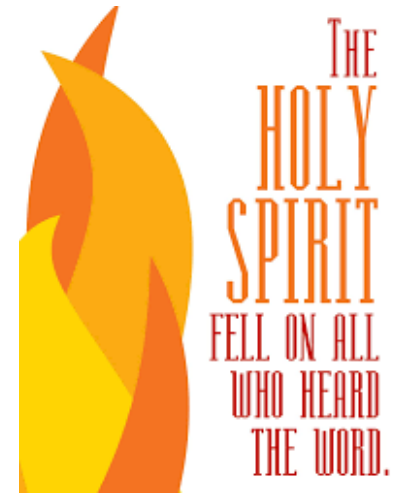


Connections Newsletter with Pastor Mark Manning

While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, “Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” Acts 10:44-47

Ah yes...the old “which came first, the chicken or the egg?” question. Exegetes have been tossing this egg back and forth for centuries, trying to not drop and break it; it’s a bit harder chasing down the chicken. The more you explore this question, the more complicated your arguments become, and the “answer” to it becomes that much harder to come up with. Which comes first: baptism, the Holy Spirit, or are they synonymous? Let me go into detail a bit more then.

The biblical record of baptism includes John the Baptist’s ritual for the public repentance of sins, as well as the unusual baptism of Jesus, and the baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch who asks for it, and today’s account of those who already show the gifts of the Holy Spirit, then receiving baptism. The biblical account of the Holy Spirit’s presence includes Jesus giving it to the disciples, as well as the miracle of the Day of Pentecost, and today’s account of Peter’s witness and the Holy Spirit falling upon those present. At some point in time, the early church began baptizing people, believing that the Holy Spirit would accompany them in the moment.



[\(click here or the image above for a short video message\)](#)

At the same time, it become apparent that when people exhibit the Holy Spirit’s presence they seek baptism. If there is anything for certain, it’s that you can’t pin the Holy Spirit down and shove her in a box to come out and play at your will. And if there is anything for certain about baptism, it is that the church came to regard it as something connected to the Holy Spirit’s presence, but also something that connects the baptized with other believers and the church. Some commentators explain it, and put forth that at the time of writing his gospel and Acts, Luke lived in a time where practicing baptism and the movement of the Holy Spirit were much more fluid, and in this complicated mix, the church began using baptism as a way of proclaiming that, in a world full of many spirits, in Baptism and the Word we could trust that the Holy Spirit would be found and present. There may be examples of the Holy Spirit working apart from baptism, and examples of baptism where it took time for the presence of the Holy Spirit to emerge, but in Baptismal Water done in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit we can faithfully believe in the Spirits’ presence.

Prayer: God of the rushing wind of Pentecost, move over the waters of baptism, that we may come to see and know you in Word and Deed, Gospel Promise and Watering Presence. Amen.

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Questions for Discussion/Reflection:

- 1. What do you think of the Holy Spirit just “falling on people”? Does that take away our freedom of will? Does that mean God is just waiting to “jump us” in a weak moment?*
- 2. What leads the insiders (circumcised Jews) to be “astounded” that the outsiders (Gentiles) should receive the gift of the Holy Spirit? What do you think the interaction between these two groups is like?*
- 3. Peter asks a good question (though it may merely be rhetorical): “Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” **Can** anyone without the gift of baptism? **Do** we withhold the gift of baptism from people? **Should** we or **should we not** do this? Why or why not?*
- 4. How and when do you think baptism should be performed so that we do it in a manner that is respectful and in good order in the church? Are there things we should avoid in baptismal practice? Are there things we could add to our baptismal practice?*
- 5. How do you explain what baptism is and why we do it, to non-believers?*