



***Theme: A Better Life in the Holy Spirit***  
***"The Power and Presence of the Holy Spirit"***

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber, September 6-7, 2025, at Summit Church, Durango

**Weekly Memory Verse:**

***8a But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.***

— Acts 1:8a

**VIDEO                      Sermon Intro**

**SLIDE                      "The Power and Presence of the Holy Spirit"**

This week is the anniversary of September 11, 2001, and I found myself thinking about the experiences I had as a pastor around that event. I was at a Bible study at an office building that one of our members wanted to start for the people in his business and someone said we needed to turn on the television set. We watched as the second plane went into the second building and the tower began to crumble, and it seemed surreal. It was clear that we needed to plan to do something as a community of faith that evening and so we had a prayer event at the church and got the word out to invite anyone who wanted to join us.

One of the people who came was a woman named Jenny whose brother and his wife were in the first tower. She was a friend of

someone in our church, and she didn't ever go to church. It was a new experience for her to come and to be a part of a community that lifted her and her family up in prayer. Over the next few weeks, people brought her meals and spent time with her. One person even travelled with her to her brother's funeral back in New York. Jenny began attending worship and it was a privilege to baptize her a few months later. She had tears streaming down her face as we placed the water on her head and prayed the prayer of the Holy Spirit, laying hands on her, and inviting her to feel the power and the presence of that Holy Spirit.

She told me leading up to that experience of baptism how she had a dream in which she found herself being carried by a presence, something she couldn't explain. She and her brother were close, and she wondered how it is she was going to get through that experience, and it wasn't until she looked back, she could see how there was something at work she couldn't even name. It was after her baptism she could name it as the Holy Spirit which gave her strength she didn't know she had and the people who came around her brought her a presence she didn't even know she needed until she was in the middle of one of the darkest moments in her life.

Have you ever had a moment where you wondered how you were going to get through something? Maybe it was a health scare or a relationship issue or something with your employment or with one of your kids. There are moments that come into every one of our lives where we wonder how we are going to make it. It's a natural part of what it means to be human since we are finite and mortal and fragile, and sometimes life isn't fair.

## **SLIDE                      Is religion a crutch?**

You may have heard people say at times that they feel religion is a crutch. I often find that amusing because my answer is that of course religion is sometimes a crutch. When you have a broken leg, you need a crutch. When I had my hip replaced, I needed a walker and a crutch and

a cane and a walking stick, all at different times of my recovery. These walking sticks became my best friends for a time because they kept me from toppling over and they enabled me to get stronger until I could walk on my own. The good news is that I didn't have to buy any of those things because our church has a whole garage full of things that people have donated that we call loaning love. If you ever need something like any of these items, just give us a call in the office and we'll be happy to loan them to you.

## **GRAPHIC          Loaning Love in Garage**

Just like when something in our body doesn't work and we need a crutch or some assistance, when we have a broken heart, we sometimes need a crutch, and we need something more than ourselves to get through. Is religion a crutch? Yes, and I think that's a good thing, and as people who follow Jesus, we believe that the crutch is something we call the Holy Spirit.

Today, we want to continue this series of sermons we've been doing on the Holy Spirit by talking about the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit and how we can call upon that and what it looks like in our lives. We began this series by talking about the baptism of the Holy Spirit and what it means to have that moment where water surrounds us, understanding that image is meant to help us know that we are made clean and new and that we are never alone. We talked last week about how we can discern whether what we are hearing is truly the Holy Spirit or if it's just our own opinion or bias or prejudice seeping in.

There is an interesting movement about this idea of the Spirit that we see in the scriptures. The first book in our Bible is genesis and we read these words.

## **BIBLE**

**1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup> The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of**

**the waters.**

From the very beginning there is this idea of the spirit of God being present over everything. Then, as we continue to read throughout the Old Testament, or what we call the Hebrew Bible, we find this idea of the spirit being sent to individual people on many occasions. There is not this idea of the spirit being available to everyone, but rather that God sends God's spirit to specific people at specific times. God's spirit comes to those who need strength, like when the Red Sea is parted and a powerful wind comes to do that work. God comes to those who were building the temple in Jerusalem and gives them specific gifts to do that work. We find the spirit comes upon Sampson who was a judge, before they had kings in the Hebrew Bible and the story of the Israelites, so that he could defeat a lion. The spirit came upon a shepherd boy named David so he could lead an entire nation when he had no experience or skills.

When we get to the end of the Hebrew Bible, we find that the spirit takes on a broader role than just coming to specific people at specific times. The prophet Joel, which is one of the last books of your Old Testament, writes these words in chapter 2.

## **BIBLE**

<sup>28</sup> **“Then, after doing all those things,  
I will pour out my Spirit upon all people.  
Your sons and daughters will prophesy.  
Your old men will dream dreams,  
and your young men will see visions.  
<sup>29</sup> In those days I will pour out my Spirit  
even on servants—men and women alike.**

As those of us who follow Jesus get to the New Testament, we find the Holy Spirit takes on a deeper role because the Holy Spirit is now God himself coming into our lives to accomplish God's purposes and to be a presence that will always be with us. The Holy Spirit is the

presence of God living inside of us when we follow Jesus, giving us gifts and being a crutch when we need it.

## **SLIDE                      Humility and the Holy Spirit**

I want to again remind us that there is nothing wrong with needing a crutch. I would suggest the beginning of experiencing the power of the presence of the Holy Spirit is having some humility, recognizing that we can't do life on our own. What would have happened to Jenny if she had said “no” to her friend inviting her to church that night? What would have happened if she hadn't admitted that she needed some help and some support during one of the darkest experiences anyone can imagine? She told me on more than one occasion that she didn't know how she would get through that without people that were acting on behalf of the Holy Spirit, as well as the Holy Spirit working in her life when she eventually needed to bring her brother's children into her home and be a sudden single mom.

I remember reminding her in that moment when she was gripped with fear about how that was going to work that there was a young woman named Mary at the beginning of our gospels who was a bit fearful about bringing a child into her life as well. In the story of the conception of Jesus we have the Holy Spirit at the center not only bringing this child into being but then being with Mary as she dealt with the inevitable hardships of getting pregnant before she was married. She was told not to be afraid by the Angel because the Holy Spirit would be with her. It was Mary's humility and willingness to accept the crutch of the Holy Spirit that enabled her to not only give birth to the one we call Messiah but also be with him up until his death on the cross.

The cousin of Jesus was John the Baptist and when we read the baptism story of Jesus in Matthew's gospel, we find that John describes it with these words in chapter 3.

## **BIBLE**

**<sup>11</sup> “I baptize with water those who repent of their sins and turn to God. But someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I’m not worthy even to be his slave and carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.**

We did our river baptism service a few weeks ago and more than 20 people got in the river and as each one of them came out, we prayed the prayer of the Holy Spirit upon them. We do this whether it is an infant where we place water upon their head here in the sanctuary, or a youth which we will do as part of our confirmation class in November, or adult who will have another opportunity in November when we have our portable baptistry set up here in the middle of the sanctuary. We lay our hands on you, and we pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, recognizing that this makes you part of God's family and you are set apart for God and God's work.

Even infants receive the Holy Spirit, and we pray that the Holy Spirit will work within them which is why we baptize infants and your children when they are younger. We read in Luke's gospel that when Mary who was pregnant came to see Elizabeth who was pregnant with John the Baptist, the child leapt for joy in her womb because he was filled with the Holy Spirit.

## **VIDEO     2025 River baptisms**

When we baptize people in the river, we wanted them to feel the presence of the water around them, symbolizing the presence of the Holy Spirit that surrounds us. It was cold in the water and the river was moving and there was evening lightning and Thunder not far away to remind us how powerful this moment is meant to be, and how quickly we should get in and out of the water. People stood on the bridge and they applauded and when you're in the river you can feel the movement of that water which is so powerful and again a reminder of the power of the Holy Spirit.

We'll be doing a baptism service in November and the good news about that experience is that the tub is heated and will be much warmer! We provide that experience so that we can all remember our baptism and be thankful. If you want to stand next to the tub, then we will place water on your head and that is an appropriate way to be baptized as well. I also have water from the spring at Philippi in Greece where the first people were baptized in Europe by the apostle Paul. We put some of that water in our baptism tub to remind us of the connection we have throughout the centuries to those who are part of the family of God.

After the baptism of Jesus, which begins as public ministry, we read some powerful words in Luke's gospel about what happens next and the role the Holy Spirit can play in our lives in terms of being present with us and bringing us a sense of power. Luke 4 begins.

## **BIBLE**

**<sup>1</sup> Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan River. He was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, <sup>2</sup> where he was tempted by the devil for forty days. Jesus ate nothing all that time and became very hungry.**

There is this powerful idea that the Holy Spirit leads us and goes with us and before us when we go through difficult moments of temptation and times of wilderness in our lives. We learn a few verses later that Jesus is then filled with the Holy Spirit that carries him back to the Galilee, to his hometown where they had tried to kill him, to begin his public ministry.

A few chapters later, and Luke 11, Jesus is teaching about prayer, and he gives us the words to the Lord's prayer. He then talks about the importance of seeking God and the Holy Spirit in our time of prayer, again recognizing that we need to humble ourselves to acknowledge that we need something more than ourselves to get through moments that are difficult and challenging. He then goes on with these powerful

words to drive this point home.

## **BIBLE**

**<sup>9</sup> “And so, I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. <sup>10</sup> For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.**

**<sup>11</sup> “You fathers—if your children ask for a fish, do you give them a snake instead? <sup>12</sup> Or if they ask for an egg, do you give them a scorpion? Of course not! <sup>13</sup> So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.”**

Jesus is teaching us to have the humility to ask for the Holy Spirit, acknowledging we can't do life on our own. In the time of Jesus, there were many who believed that if you couldn't do life on your own because of some sort of physical or mental affliction that couldn't be explained medically, it was because the demon was afflicting you or it was because you or your parents did something to cause this. So Jesus casts out demons and doesn't cast blame on parents or individuals because of blindness or the inability to walk or the inability to think clearly.

This irritated the religious leaders, and they began to spread fake news and used artificial intelligence to tell lies about Jesus. Well, they didn't really use AI, but you get the point. The main thing they said was that Jesus was casting out the demons because he was using the spirit of Beelzebul, or the devil. Jesus then challenges the religious leaders and says, “Who are you casting out demons in the name of? You believe they are healed by your prayers and what power is doing that for you? If you say it's the prince of demons for me, maybe it is for you as well?”

He finishes with these words in Matthew 12 to drive the point

home about who really has the power.

## **BIBLE**

**<sup>28</sup> But if I am casting out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has arrived among you. <sup>29</sup> For who is powerful enough to enter the house of a strong man and plunder his goods? Only someone, even stronger—someone who could tie him up and then plunder his house.**

When the Holy Spirit is working, the Kingdom of God has come. The Holy Spirit has the power to defeat darkness and evil and is stronger than the strongest man, who was called the prince of demons and the prince of darkness in the time of Jesus. The Holy Spirit can tie him up and plunder the house because the Holy Spirit is the one that's in charge.

Jesus describes this more in depth than John's gospel, on the last night of his life, where he talks about the Holy Spirit more than any other place in the gospels. That night Jesus will be arrested, and he will be crucified the next day. He is preparing his disciples for the fact that he will not be with them in the flesh anymore but instead there will be something else that will come to be with them. Here are his words in John 14, just after he gives them the new commandment to love one another as he has loved them.

## **BIBLE**

**<sup>15</sup> “If you love me, obey my commandments. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. <sup>17</sup> He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn’t looking for him and doesn’t recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you. <sup>18</sup> No, I will not abandon you as orphans—I will come to you.**

When we live in to the commandments of Jesus to love one

another sacrificially by serving one another, we receive this gift of the Holy Spirit which comes to live inside of us. We believe the Holy Spirit is God's very presence dwelling inside of us. It is all around us so that we know we are not abandoned and we are not orphans, no matter what is happening in our earthly families or relationships. Jesus goes on with these words a few verses later, words that we read last week and that I read yesterday at a memorial service.

## **BIBLE**

**<sup>26</sup> But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you.**

**<sup>27</sup> “I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart.”**

Jesus is reminding us that the Holy Spirit not only leads us and guides us but also will give us a sense of peace. That word peace is Shalom which means wholeness. We don't have to live in fear or in darkness because the light will always win.

**SLIDE      Parakletos = Advocate = Helper = “called to one’s side”**

The image of this advocate, what we call the Holy Spirit, is a helper who comes alongside when we can't make it on our own. We sprain our ankle, and we picture somebody coming up under our arm and helping us to be able to walk again. It is literally a crutch. It is the idea of someone coming alongside us, to carry us when we can't walk on our own. I think of the four men who brought their friend on a mat to see Jesus and lowered him down through the roof so he could be healed. The man couldn't make it on his own and he needed advocates and helpers who would come alongside. They were physical representations of the Holy Spirit. We all need that, which is why I often ask you a question.

**SLIDE      Who will carry you to Jesus when you can’t make it on your own?**

We believe the Holy Spirit is the one which will be there when it feels like the whole world has abandoned us. Sometimes the Holy Spirit sends people to be the answer to our prayers and sometimes the Holy Spirit comes around us and covers us. The big idea is that we all need someone to come alongside us in our darkest moments. This is a picture of the Holy Spirit work in our lives. We need the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit dwells within us to guide us and comfort us and give us power and strength. The Holy Spirit longs to give us peace and help us know our lives have meaning and purpose. The Holy Spirit longs for us to know that the worst thing is not the lasting and the darkness will never have the final word. We need the Holy Spirit to come alongside us and be our advocate, our helper.

This month is suicide prevention month and it's important for us to remember that many will feel so low that there is no reason to go on. In the Bible we find several biblical characters who prayed to God to die. That can happen to us when we get to a dark place and then there is a straw that breaks the camel's back and we feel overwhelmed. We think we can't go on because of the loss of someone that we loved dearly and we can't imagine life without. We have a breakup or a divorce that feels devastating. We lose a job or financial independence. We get a dire health diagnosis. We have feelings in dark moments where we feel like we can't go on, and this is not an uncommon experience in life.

According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention \(AFSP\)](#), the number of suicides in the U.S. remains high, with over 49,000 deaths in 2023. After a brief decline from 2018 to 2020, the overall suicide rate rebounded to its previous peak in 2022 and held steady in 2023 and 2024.

Key statistics from 2023 include:

- **Total deaths:** 49,316 Americans died by suicide.

- **Rate:** The age-adjusted suicide rate was 14.1 per 100,000 people.
- **Leading cause of death:** Suicide remains the 11th leading cause of death overall in the U.S. and the 2nd leading cause for individuals ages 10–34.
- **Suicide attempts:** There were an estimated 1.5 million suicide attempts.
- **Men:** The suicide rate is significantly higher for men, who accounted for nearly 80% of suicide deaths in 2023, about four times the rate for women.
- **Adults over 85:** This group has the highest suicide rate (22.66 per 100,000 in 2023). This is especially driven by older men.

I believe the Holy Spirit longs to speak to us in these moments where we feel the lowest. The scriptures tell us that the devil is a liar and he will speak into our ears words like, “It’s not worth going on. Go ahead and quit. Give up. It’s never going to get better.”

The Holy Spirit longs to be that still small voice which tells us that these words are lies and untrue. There is still value in your life. Your life has meaning. I see you and I love you. I made you to love you. The darkness will not last forever. The light will come. I believe the Holy Spirit will speak these things into our lives if we are willing to listen and allow ourselves to be immersed by the spirit.

Sometimes, we need other people who are being led by the Holy Spirit to speak into our lives because we can't hear it on our own. We need someone to be our advocate and help her on behalf of the Holy Spirit. During this month, I want to remind you of the suicide prevention hotline which was set up in 2020. This short video helps us see the importance and the power of this resource.

**VIDEO                      988 Suicide Prevention Hotline**

**GRAPHIC                988 Hotline**

You are not alone and when you call 988, and you reach somebody, that person becomes a physical and visible reminder of the holy spirit's presence in your life. God is with you and there will always be hope. We can make it through the darkness but sometimes we need to talk to somebody, and we need that pinprick of light. This next week on September 10 you can go to the good fight boxing gym which is led by our own Katy Kopek who leads our serving and hospitality ministry.

### **GRAPHIC The Good Fight**

You may have seen this article in the paper about a free Class which is open to all ages and focuses on exercise, resiliency, and building community. I've discovered that physical activity is one of the most helpful things if we're working through a time of darkness or difficulty so take this opportunity to be with people who want to encourage you because there are people out there who are guided by the Holy Spirit and long to surround you with that Holy Spirit.

### **GRAPHIC Safe TALK - Tell - Ask - Listen - KeepSafe**

- **Tell as clearly and directly as possible thoughts about suicide.**
- **Ask directly: Are you thinking about suicide?**
- **I am listening period this is important. Don't dismiss.**
- **We need extra help. I want to connect you with someone who can help you keep safe.**

We also have resources here at Summit Church such as caring ministers who are trained in **safe talk** which is aimed at being aware of those who might be struggling with suicidal thoughts or ideations and how to respond. We have these little cards which we keep in the Commons, and we've put out for you today if you're interested in one of them. They remind us of how we can talk about suicide in a safe manner with these phrases and learn to ask directly if someone is having suicidal thoughts.

## **GRAPHIC      Tips-for-talking-about-suicide-safely**

- **Attempted suicide instead of failed or unsuccessful.**
- **Died by suicide/took their own life instead of committed suicide.**
- **Someone is thinking of suicide/has experienced suicidal thoughts instead of someone is suicidal.**
- **Someone is experiencing or living with a mental illness instead of suffering from mental illness or emotionally disturbed.**

These phrases are important to learn and to know because they help us treat people like human beings instead of problems. We have caring ministers who would love to come alongside you, and we have resources on our website like two different sermons I've preached on surviving the grief and trauma of suicide which talks about how we might as people of faith connect with those who are survivors or who have experienced it with friends and family. We also have a counselling fund, and we can provide up to four sessions for free for anyone, but especially young people, we need to see someone, and they are going through a dark and difficult time. We work with the grief center to provide support for those who have family members or loved ones who have taken their life.

If you find yourself going through one of these dark times and you need support, I hope you will reach out to us or just call 988. It is never God's will that we take our own lives. God sees what we can't see beyond the mountain that is in front of us and the darkness that feels like it's overwhelmed us. The darkness will lift, and the light will come and the Holy Spirit wants to remind us of that in those dark moments. The Holy Spirit longs to guide us into truth and help us understand God's will for our lives so that we know we are never alone. The spirit longs to give us power and shape us into the people that God longs for us to be, letting us know we are loved and there is a reason for our existence. The Holy Spirit longs to work through others to help us and it begins with inviting the Holy Spirit to come in and change us and shape

us.

### **GRAPHIC Shower Tag**

I shared with you that we also have these shower tags that I use each day when I get in the shower. If you don't have one already, I hope you'll grab one, and if we run out, we are ordering more. It's a way for us to start the day by praying the Holy Spirit will be part of our lives and opening ourselves to the presence and power that it brings. *Lord, as I enter the water to bathe, I remember my baptism. Wash me by your grace. Fill me with your spirit. Renew my soul. I pray that I might live as your child today, knowing that you made me to love me, and honoring you in all that I do.*

Jesus said the Holy Spirit is available to anyone who asks, so all we need to do is ask. I would like to invite you to invite the Holy Spirit to fill you, making you fresh and new today. If you're a follower of Jesus, you already have the Holy Spirit living inside of you. This is about paying attention and opening ourselves up to the mystery and the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit, allowing it to speak to us and through us to others.

I want to invite you to put your hands on your lap, with your palms up. Close your eyes and be in an attitude of offering yourself up, whispering this prayer under your breath or in your heart.

### **SLIDE Prayer**

*Come Holy Spirit. Fill me afresh and anew... with your power and love... form me and shape me... guide me and lead me... empower me and use me... may I feel your presence to day... help me to know your love deep in my bones... In Jesus' name... Amen.*

## **September 6-7 Order**

1. David welcome people.
2. “You Deserve it All”
3. “My Lighthouse”
4. Jeff welcomes people:
  - a. QR Code and Connect Card
  - b. Invite people to greet each other, however comfortable and be seated.
5. Sermon
6. Prayer
7. Offering (**Suicide Prevention**)
8. Med Moments
9. “Holy Spirit”
10. Prayer and Lord’s Prayer
11. Care Ministers
12. Connect with Us
13. **Ministry Fair**
14. Closing Prayer