

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND WORSHIP
By Pat Keady from *emmanuelworship*

Easter is a time when we bask in the glow of the risen Jesus. The time of fasting is over, the sun has risen! But as good as it is, it's not over yet: now is the time the Church asks us look forward with anticipation for the third and final act of the Jesus story: *Pentecost*.

"Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." *(see footnote)

Acts 1:4-5

Wow. If I was the disciples I would be seriously excited! What did Jesus mean, being 'baptised with the Holy Spirit'? Pentecost was when things really took off for Jesus' disciples. I mean, they saw their leader walk through walls, rise through the clouds & put their fingers in his hands, but until the Spirit was poured out upon them at Pentecost they lacked the spiritual power they needed to proclaim the message of life.

Isn't that what we do when we worship? Every time we worship we 'proclaim the message of life' through the words of our songs, our melodies, guitar strums & cymbal swells, communicating with the universal language of music. Just like on the day of Pentecost, music crosses borders and has the power to communicate the message of faith to 'every tribe, nation and tongue'. Read carefully what happened that day:

"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. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them...

When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. Utterly amazed, they asked: "... how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?"

Acts 2 (verses 1-4, 6-8)

Cool hey? The Spirit moved and lives were changed. I believe there is a similar connection between the Holy Spirit and *life-changing worship*. Without one you cannot have the other. As I wrote in 'Worship: the Activity of Disciples':

"Where you find one you always find the other. Worship brings life for the Spirit brings life. Worship is a river of love for the Spirit is a river of love. They are 'partners in crime'."

Being filled with and led by the Holy Spirit is essential to leading others into effective and life-changing worship. Anything else feels like eating dry biscuits; a lifeless 'repetition of words' without any heart behind it. Let's explore this connection between worship and the Holy Spirit from scripture...

1. The Spirit of Jesus

"At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth..."

Luke 10:21

Did you see that? Forget what Jesus was going to say next, because you'll miss something important right there. Who made Jesus 'full of joy'? The Holy Spirit. And look what it led Him to do – freely and openly 'praise the Father, Lord of Heaven and earth'. When the disciples saw Jesus do this it must have been cool to watch, hey. This is what we're called to do too before the people we lead. When a worship team are 'full of joy through the Holy Spirit' it naturally leads to praise, and that's just infectious to be around. You can't fake this. It's only convincing when it overflows from the heart; a heart - like Jesus - that is 'baptised' in the Spirit of God.

2. Relationship with the Father

"Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons and daughters of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

Romans 8:14-15

How important this is. Do you ever find yourself just 'singing the songs'? Going through the motions? We so easily forget that *the whole intention of worship is to draw us into a relationship*, not a routine. This relationship is with God as our loving Father is something the Spirit helps us to experience. If we don't know this relationship, it's hard to convince those we're leading that we do. Worship could be compared to a 'love song': it is our love song to God and God's love song to us.

I also like how this scripture addresses 'the spirit of fear'. Do you ever worry about who is listening or critiquing you in the congregation? Go timid behind the microphone or freeze in front of large groups? When the Spirit of God leads you in worship all that stuff falls to the ground. You 'enter the zone' and begin to catch a glimpse of the face of God. That's when our spirit cries out 'Abba, Father'. The connection has been made and we remember *whose we are*. We are a son, a daughter, of the Father. When you are led by the Spirit, worship is easy... and awesome.

3. Dependence on the Spirit

"When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say."

Luke 12:11

Let me paraphrase that for musicians: 'When you are brought before congregations to lead worship, do not worry about how you will sing, what chords to play, or what to do in-between the songs, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what to say.' There is a *dependence on the Spirit* required when leading worship, just as much as in preaching before crowds of strangers. It's not that much different! This is when we need to trust and follow the voice that prods and gently whispers, 'Change to this song next... repeat that chorus... stay in this moment for a bit longer...'. Jesus

said, "If you know the Shepherd, you will recognise his voice". Make it your aim to know the Shepherd, and you will hear His voice.

4. The Anointing of Worship

"While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God."

Acts 10:44-46

Did you read that? The Spirit was poured out upon the listeners '*while Peter was still speaking*'. In other words, there he was, getting carried away proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus, when something bigger than Peter began to happen among those listening. They were moved to praise God aloud and began to worship with the gift tongues. OK now that was new! When the Holy Spirit chooses to move supernaturally during a time of worship or preaching, that's what's called 'an anointing'. There is a special grace flowing through the person who is ministering in that moment, in this case St Peter (aka the first Pope). You don't have to be the Pope to have an anointing; just an openness to flowing in the Spirit while you use your gifts for the Lord. It's up to God do the rest. I have experienced personally after times of anointed worship how lives have been changed, conversions to faith in Jesus have happened, and people have experienced a tangible presence of the Holy Spirit. That's something you don't want to get in the road of! If God wants to do something supernatural through your worship, let's not only make room for Him to, but pray earnestly that He would. A bit more supernatural in the Church today couldn't hurt I reckon. Either way, big or small, the results are up to him.

5. God is Spirit

"Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

John 4:23-24

It may sound simple, but it's worth repeating what Jesus said here. '*God is spirit*'. Those of us who worship the Father 'must', he says, worship in spirit and in truth. This is a good reminder for us. Jesus is 'the Truth', the way to worship the Father. But if our worship is not "in the Spirit" (as St Paul encourages in Ephesians 6:18) it is like us sitting on a 3 legged chair with a broken leg – it will topple over. The third Person of the Trinity must not be left out of our worship! He must not be left out of our churches. Let us altogether "wait for the gift which the Father has promised" along with those first disciples in Jerusalem. That through us and through our worship the message of life may be proclaimed 'to the ends of the earth'. Amen.

NB: For a fuller explanation and understanding of the '**Baptism in the Spirit**' refer to the book '*Sober Intoxication of the Spirit*' by Fr Raniero Cantalamessa O.F.M Cap. Fr Cantalamessa is preacher to the papal household of Popes JP II and Benedict XVI. (*Published by Servant Books, distributed through St Anthony Messenger Press*)