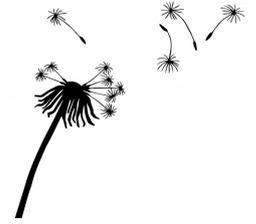


Worship • 18th July 2021

Christchurch, Hitchin (CCLI 7011)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jdY3BP48uV8>



WELCOME

We're so glad you could join us at Christchurch, Hitchin, and hope you will be blessed by our time together. Leading our worship this morning:

Reflections: Katherine Harris
Music: Andy Searle, *vocalist:* Cath Edmonds
Prayers: Alison Bryan
Technology: Tony Edmonds

This morning we will be focusing on the Holy Spirit – God's personal presence, creative energy, and transformative power. God's Spirit is neither predictable nor controllable. Yet, through the Holy Spirit, God changes the world, bringing life, order and beauty.

So let us praise and bless the Lord – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – with our first song: *10,000 Reasons* by Matt Redman.

HYMN

Bless the Lord, O my soul (10,000 reasons) (Matt Redman)

*Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul
Worship His Holy name
Sing like never before, O my soul
I'll worship Your Holy name*

2 You're rich in love and You're slow to anger
Your name is great and Your heart is kind
For all Your goodness I will keep on singing
10,000 reasons for my heart to find.

1 The sun comes up
It's a new day dawning
It's time to sing Your song again
Whatever may pass and whatever lies before
me
Let me be singing when the evening comes.

Bless the Lord, O my soul...

3 And on that day
When my strength is failing
The end draws near and my time has come
Still my soul will sing Your praise unending
10,000 years and then forevermore.

Bless the Lord, O my soul...

Bless the Lord, O my soul...

SETTING THE SCENE

They say a picture is worth
1,000 words.

So what about this one...

(A tall, once-grand room is now dilapidated and badly in need of refurbishment. The floor-to-ceiling windows are open, allowing a breeze to blow through the curtains, bringing in a breath of fresh air. The dark and dingy, empty room lies in stark contrast with the bright, sunlit trees outside, seen through the window.)

What does this image say to
you?



Could this be an analogy for some aspect of your life?

- ... or community?
- ... our society?
- ... or the church?

What might God’s Holy Spirit be saying to you through this image?

Take a moment to pause and reflect.

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HYMN

There must be more than this (*Songs of Fellowship* 1547)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1 There must be more than this:
O Breath of God, come breathe within.
There must be more than this:
Spirit of God, we wait for You.
Fill us anew, we pray;
Fill us anew, we pray.</p> | <p>2 Come like a rushing wind,
Clothe us with power from on high.
Now set the captives free;
Leave us abandoned to Your praise.
Lord, let Your glory fall;
Lord, let Your glory fall.</p> |
|--|---|

*Consuming fire, fan into flame
A passion for Your Name.
Spirit of God, fall in this place.
Lord, have Your way,
Lord, have Your way with us.*

Consuming fire...

FOCUS ON GOD’S WORD

The Bible was originally written in the Hebrew and Greek languages. The Old Testament (Hebrew) word for the Spirit of God is *ruakh*, which can be translated as breath, wind, spirit or mind. The New Testament (Greek) word is *pneuma*. The Holy Spirit is involved in the life and ministry of Jesus, and brings the presence of God and the resurrection life of Jesus into the life of his followers – past, present and future.

In this short video from The Bible Project, Dr. Tim Mackie explains a bit more about ‘what it means that God’s Spirit is personally present in all of creation ... revealed in Jesus, and sent out into the lives of his followers to bring about the new creation.’

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/holy-spirit/>

GOD’S SPIRIT BLOWS WHERE IT WILL



Remember this image?

Reflect on it again for just a moment – the *Holy Spirit* is that fresh breeze blowing through.

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God’s Spirit blows freely, so it is with those who are born of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is God’s personal presence, creative energy, and transformative power – neither predictable nor controllable – but life giving and empowering.

Nicodemus, a Jewish religious leader and Pharisee, discovered this in a conversation with Jesus one dark evening. Jesus spoke to him about entering the Kingdom of God – being ‘born of water and the

Spirit.' Nicodemus gets the wrong end of the stick. Being 'born again' is a phrase which some Christians get quite worked up about... almost a spiritual badge of honour.

Jesus is talking about being spiritually transformed, renewed, sanctified (to use a religious term). He says:

"The wind blows where it wishes and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it is coming from and where it is going; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." John 3:8

We know about the wind. We have experienced its gentle breeze, blustery gusts, its terrifying power.

We can understand how this analogy applies to the Holy Spirit. Maybe we have even experienced its gentle whisper, or times of insight and guidance, or the Holy Spirit's transformational power.

But this analogy *also* applies to those followers of Christ who fully trust and rely on the Holy Spirit.

"The wind blows where it wishes and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it is coming from and where it is going; so it is with everyone who trusts in the Holy Spirit." [rephrased]

Is this your experience?

No??

Trust is hard. It's easy to mistrust someone you do not know. Developing a deeper intimacy with Christ is the first step.

Trust is hard. It's even harder when you are afraid. Have you ever been frozen in fear when somebody then says, "It's OK... trust me."

I know we spent some time with a young friend. While playing, she climbed up on top of a treehouse and then was petrified. Frozen. She couldn't move. "It's ok. Trust us. You can put your foot there and climb down." She was frozen in fear. Someone had to clamber up, rescuing her and carrying her down to safety.

When you're afraid, it's hard to trust.

What might happen if we really trusted God? If we truly followed Christ, where would He lead us?

Trust in and rely confidently on the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own insight or understanding. In all your ways acknowledge and recognise Him, and He will make your paths straight and smooth [removing obstacles that block your way]. Proverbs 3:5-6 AMP

'freedom day'

PM Boris Johnson has declared tomorrow [19th July 2021] 'freedom day' — the day when remaining COVID-19 restrictions are removed in England. It's a day many have been longing for and many have been dreading. But I think this day has been misappropriated.

You'll find your true 'freedom day' is the day you decide to fully place your trust in God, believe in Christ, and rely on the Holy Spirit. Give it a try, and see where it takes you.

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Psalm 51:10-12

To find true freedom:

Don't just let in the fresh air, go out and immerse yourself in it.

vision

Alison Bryan will be leading our prayers in just a moment. As she was praying before starting to prepare them, the Lord showed her three clear pictures and some interpretation, although the pictures are pretty clear in themselves. These are her words:

a swirling eddy

The Lord showed me a picture of an 'eddy'. This is a circular motion of water, air or smoke.

When a wind hits a solid, immovable object, like a mountain top, there is turbulence and a whirl of air [eddy] is formed on the other side of that object. So, I asked the Lord if we the church... as a whole or individually... are in any way an immovable object standing firm against the prevailing wind of the Spirit. Are we causing turbulence by not moving?

The Lord then showed me two contrasting pictures.

leaning into the wind

Firstly, I saw a figure facing into a very strong wind. He was leaning into the wind, his collar was up and he was holding onto his hat so as not to lose it. He was not making any progress forward, just leaning into the wind and trying not to get blown over.

dancing with the wind

Then immediately I saw another figure. This time the figure was dressed in a flowing dress with her hair down. She was fully submitted to the wind coming up behind her and all around her. She was being blown along in the direction it was going and was dancing and swirling as she was moved along. It was clear that she was revelling joyfully in the freedom of movement and there was no sense of fear.

I was then reminded of the scripture from 2 Corinthians 3:17. 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom'.

As a church corporately, or as individuals, we all can at times find ourselves resisting the move of the Spirit... often being unaware that we are doing it... trying to hold onto things we think we need. Maybe even causing unnecessary turbulence around us.

At other times we can go with the Spirit's flow and find ourselves moving joyfully in freedom with Him.

Will we let the Spirit of God carry us along, even though we don't know where He is taking us?

Let us prepare our hearts for prayer.

HYMN

As we seek Your face (*Songs of Fellowship 30*)

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 As we seek Your face,
May we know Your heart,
Feel Your presence, acceptance,
As we seek Your face. | 2 Move among us now,
Come reveal Your power,
Show Your presence, acceptance,
Move among us now. |
| 3 At Your feet we fall,
Sovereign Lord,
We cry 'holy, holy',
At Your feet we fall. | |

 verse 1:

As we seek Your face,
May we know Your heart,
Feel Your presence, acceptance,
As we seek Your face.

PRAYER, part 1

Life-giving, creative, restoring, empowering Spirit of the Living God...
Blow afresh through our world this day.

Spirit of Wisdom and Truth...

Move among those who lead us

...in our countries.... our local government...our communities.... and our church.

Enable them to know Your presence and inspire them with the wisdom they need.

Where there is resistance, let Your truth break through.

Creative Spirit...

Bring new ideas and innovative solutions to those who can impact others' lives for good...

... individually ...whole communities ...and countries.

Spirit of Life...

Where there is darkness in our communities and homes, bring light...
And where there is chaos, bring order and life.

Spirit of love and comfort...

Move among those whose lives have been devastated by natural disasters...
...in particular, meet the needs of

- all impacted across the world by Covid
- those affected by the flooding in Western Europe. Inspire and resource those individuals and groups that can bring the support and rebuilding that's needed.

Spirit of God...

Blow Your refreshing, healing and restoring power into the lives of those who have little hope...
...whose lives are surrounded by darkness and pain.

We think of those known to us now who need your life-giving, restoring power...

Move among us now ... come reveal Your power.



verse 2:

Move among us now,
Come reveal Your power,
Show Your presence, acceptance,
Move among us now.

PRAYER, part 2

Life-giving... refreshing... empowering Spirit of our living God...
Spirit of Jesus...

Come to us now as Your church and as individuals.

Help us to recognise Your presence as You are moving in, through and around us.

Let us welcome and dwell in Your presence more and more in the coming days
and learn how to move with You in freedom.

Show us anywhere that we may be resisting and immovable...
and help us have the courage to let go of all that hinders us.

Empower us and fill us with the willingness and courage to move where You direct.

Refreshing, life-giving Spirit of the living God...

We now take a moment to be still...
to release to You all that is weighing us down....

Help us to have empty hands in this moment
to receive more of Your life-giving, healing, transforming power...

Lord Jesus, we welcome Your presence by Your Spirit...
fill us anew we pray...

[short pause to receive]

Spirit of the Living God...

Spirit of Jesus...

Whose life fills and renews us...
draw us deeper and deeper into knowledge of, and intimacy with,

God our Father...

and God the Son...

that we may fully know we are sons and daughters who are fully accepted and fully forgiven.

Sovereign Lord God...

we offer You these prayers
and our heartfelt worship at Your loving faithfulness to us.

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord...

God of power and might...

Heaven and Earth are full of Your Glory.



verse 3:

At Your feet we fall,
Sovereign Lord,
We cry 'holy, holy',
At Your feet we fall.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven
hallowed by Your Name.

Your Kingdom come.
Your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.

For the Kingdom,
the power
and the glory are Yours
now and for ever.

Amen.

FINAL THOUGHTS

So, Boris Johnson may have declared tomorrow as 'freedom day'.

But I declare to you — today is freedom day:

Believe in God's goodness.

Fall in love with Christ.

And see how the Holy Spirit transforms your life.

BLESSING

In the Name of our Lord Jesus of Nazareth

I bless you with His presence.

May you know God's peace and love — today and in the days ahead.

And may you begin to trust more and more the Holy Spirit.

May you open more and more of your lives to the Spirit's life-giving and transforming presence.

May this be true for you, for your family, and for our church.

Amen.

HYMN



To God be the glory! (*Singing the Faith 94 • Songs of Fellowship 559*)

1 To God be the glory! great things He has done!
So loved He the world that He gave us His
Son,
Who yielded His life in atonement for sin,
and opened the life-gate that all may go in:

*Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the earth hear His voice!
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father, through Jesus the
Son;
and give Him the glory — great things
He has done!*

2 O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
to every believer the promise of God!
And every offender who truly believes,
that moment from Jesus a pardon receives:

Praise the Lord! ...

3 Great things He has taught us, great things
He has done,
and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
but purer, and higher, and greater will be
our wonder, our rapture, when Jesus we see:

Praise the Lord! ...