

## I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

Well right at the start of this talk this morning I need four children who don't mind pretending to be Jesus' disciples. Here are the obligatory tea towels. Now we've got to name you... Peter, Andrew, Mary and Martha.

Now I'm going to tell the story of Jesus and the disciples with the help of some pictures up there on the screen... you watch and when I describe an emotion the disciples had you have to show it... so let's have a bit of a practice... (disciples practice being **amazed**, **scared** etc)

Once upon a time there was a man called Jesus who appeared and started calling people to follow him, people that he called disciples – people like Peter and Andrew, Mary and Martha. When Jesus did some miracles like healing people they were **amazed**. When he did other miracles like calming a great storm they were really **scared**. But the disciples nonetheless kept on following him. Jesus' taught the disciples which they found really interesting but sometimes that teaching left them rather **confused**. Overall, however, the disciples were really **happy** spending time with Jesus because he had given their lives a sense of meaning and told them that they would have a really important role in the spreading God's rule over his world. Then one day Jesus was taken away from them and made to die on a cross and that made the disciples feel really **down and sad**. But an amazing thing then happened! Jesus came alive again, God raised him from the dead and the disciples were **really, really happy** firstly because they knew that God's rule had really come and secondly because they knew that they really could help spread that rule of God over the rest of the world and tell people about Jesus. But don't do it just yet, Jesus said just before he ascended into heaven – stay here in Jerusalem until you receive something special that you're going to need to do it with. And after Jesus had ascended that left the disciples **wondering** what that special thing would be...

Now this is where I need another four volunteers this morning... The disciples have been told by Jesus to stay where they are, haven't they, so they had better do that. You carry on **wondering**. But what I want is for you four to wander around the church and look for four boxes, one for each of these disciples. Because in these boxes we're going to find *clues* about what the disciples were told to wait for before they went out to change the world for Jesus.

*Volunteers hunt around the church and bring boxes back to the disciples*

*Unpack boxes. What have we got in them? Remember that we are looking for clues of what these disciples were told to wait for before they went out to change the world. A toothbrush, a Nintendo DS, a Mobile Phone and a Video Camera*

Now what have all these things got in common? Well it's this: they all have to be charged up in order to work, don't they they, they all have to be regularly plugged in, using these sorts of things (*hold up chargers*) to receive the power that they need to be able to work and do the things that they are intended to.

And as I say, all these things are clues of is that thing that the disciples were told to *wait* for. Before they went out tell the nations of the world all about Jesus and the forgiveness he came to bring, Jesus himself said '...stay in the city until you have been clothed with *power* from

on high'. The disciples, in other words, couldn't start doing all the things that Jesus wanted them to do until they had received this power.

And the name that the Bible gives to that power is the Holy Spirit. After Jesus' ascension into heaven the disciples did indeed wait in Jerusalem for that power that Jesus had said he would send on them. And then, after forty days, on the Day of Pentecost it came when through a mighty wind and tongues of fire we're told that the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples.

So the Holy Spirit was God himself coming to live within each one of the disciples and bring them the power to do things that they otherwise couldn't. And it's not just true for not just those original disciples but us as well. And after we have sung our next hymn we'll think a bit more about what those things might actually be.

### **Part Two:**

OK well before we sang that hymn I said that the Holy Spirit is God himself coming within us to help us to be and do things that we couldn't do otherwise.

But what might these things be? Well I want to ask people here to be a bit honest now. As people here try and live a Christian life, what are the things that you find most difficult about that?

*Roving mic to ask people the things that they find difficult about living a Christian life...*

Well thanks for those. And the thing that we need to understand this morning is that God knows about how difficult all of those things that have just been mentioned and that's precisely why he has given us the Holy Spirit: to be the power to help us cope with those things and do things that we couldn't do otherwise.

So let's go back to our four objects that were brought up earlier, the objects that all needed charging up with power in order to work and see what further light they shed on what things the Holy Spirit comes to actually help us do.

### **The Electric Toothbrush: The Power to be Clean**

So first the electric toothbrush. Well what this shows us that the Holy Spirit comes to give us the power to be clean. Particularly once we get older, it's difficult to make an ordinary toothbrush do a proper job of making our teeth clean, isn't it, and that's why many of us these days have an electric toothbrush which has the power to do this much better. And in the same way, if we just try and clean up our lives by ourselves we'll find it really difficult and probably won't get very far which is why God sends us his power to help us clean up the bad things in our lives. The Holy Spirit is called the Holy Spirit because he brings the power of God to make us less selfish and nasty and much kinder and patient to others (*pick up also on personal weaknesses that people have shared earlier*) and this power to clean up of our lives is one of the most important things that the Holy Spirit comes to do.

### **The Mobile Phone: The Power to talk to God**

What about this – the Mobile phone? Well that a reminder of the truth that another of the reasons that we are given the Holy Spirit is so that we can possess the power to talk to God.

A lot of those problems that were mentioned earlier were pretty major ones, weren't they? And if we were just left alone with those problems to sort them by ourselves we'd be pretty stuffed. But one of the most wonderful things that the Bible says about the Holy Spirit is that once he enters us we are caught up in that communication or conversation happening within the one God of Father, Son and Spirit and that enables those prayers that we say not just to be heard better by God but to bring about real change in this world and our lives because those prayers are being prayed by God's Spirit alongside our own.

### **The Camera: The Power to see things more clearly**

So that's the toothbrush and the mobile phone, what about this – the camera. Well that's a reminder of the truth that the Holy Spirit gives us the power to see things more clearly than we would otherwise. Again some of the problems that people mentioned earlier were connected to being confused and unsure, weren't they, and all of us can feel a bit like that sometimes in our lives can't we? A bit unsure about what we should be doing or where we are going. But if we think back to that passage from Joel 2 we had earlier it talked about the Spirit enabling people to see visions didn't it? To 'see visions' and 'dream dreams'. And that indicates that one of the most important things that the Holy Spirit is given to us to do is to guide us to see the decisions that we need to take both as individuals and as families and as a church to take us in the right direction.

### **The Nintendo DS: The Power to do amazing things**

And the Nintendo DS? Well this one is a bit more contrived but that can remind us of the way that the Holy Spirit is given to bring us the power to do really amazing things. It is amazing the power that one of these things contains, isn't it? And the games that you can play with them are really amazing as well, aren't they – most of us grown-ups when we were kids wouldn't have believed they were possible. And that's a picture of another crucial role of the Holy Spirit which is to work through us to do amazing things that we couldn't do otherwise. Because one of the really important things that the Bible says about the Holy Spirit is that he gives us special gifts or talents to enable us to get through life better by learning to use those gifts to serve God.

So the Holy Spirit – God's power coming into us just like those early disciples so that we can make a difference to this world by living for him. The Holy Spirit comes to give us the power to clean up our lives, talk to God, see more clearly how we should live and do the most amazing things for God. But just like all these gadgets needing to be plugged into their chargers what we've got to make sure is that we continue being regularly plugged into God to make sure that the power of his Holy Spirit keeps coming into our lives. That's one of the reasons why we come to church here on a Sunday and its one of the most important reasons that we pray. So let's make sure that we do believe in the Holy Spirit and keep asking him to come and make his power a reality in our lives.