

# Want to read more about the Holy Spirit, and how he helps you in your faith life?

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## DWELLING IN BELIEVERS

- **Ezekiel 36:27:** <sup>27</sup> And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.
- **John 14:16-17:** <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, <sup>17</sup> even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.
- **1 Corinthians 3:16:** <sup>16</sup> Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?

## WORKING THROUGH BELIEVERS

- **Joel 2:28:** <sup>28</sup> "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions."
- **Matthew 3:11:** <sup>11</sup> "I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."
- **Luke 11:13:** <sup>13</sup> "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"
- **Acts 1:8:** <sup>8</sup> "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."
- **Acts 2:38:** <sup>38</sup> "And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

## HELPING US BELIEVE

- **Romans 8:16:** <sup>16</sup>The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.
- **Galatians 4:6:** <sup>6</sup>And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"
- **1 John 3:24:** <sup>24</sup>Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.
- **1 John 4:13:** <sup>13</sup>By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.
- **1 John 5:6:** <sup>6</sup>This is he who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

## LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

- **Romans 8:1-2:** <sup>8</sup>There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.<sup>2</sup>For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.
- **Romans 8:5-6:** <sup>5</sup>For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. <sup>6</sup>For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.
- **Romans 8:9-11:** <sup>9</sup>You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup>But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup>If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.
- **Romans 8:15-17:** <sup>15</sup>For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"<sup>16</sup>The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,<sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.
- **Romans 8:26-27:** <sup>26</sup>Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. <sup>27</sup>And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

## **“CHRIST’S UNIVERSAL CHURCH - WHY BELIEVE?” SERMON**

Every year in the early spring I lose my mind a little bit. March Madness has afflicted me yet again! It's college basketball tournament time; so I fill out my bracket, I turn on the TV, and I find myself cheering crazily for teams I know nothing about, and rooting passionately for players I've never seen before! Many of you know exactly how this works. It's not that we're genuine fans of the California Irvine Anteaters, or faithful followers of the Coastal Carolina Chanticleers. But, when March Madness hits, we suddenly find ourselves all charged up about basketball teams we know nothing about!

Maybe it was March Madness that caused the crowds on Palm Sunday to cheer for Jesus. They chanted “Hosanna!” They waved palm branches. They went crazy for Jesus!

These Palm Sunday fans were in the right place, and they were saying all the right words. But did they really know who they were cheering for, and understand what Jesus was actually all about? Or was it just March Madness? You have to wonder, when just a few days later the crowds turned against Jesus, and cheered for his death.

Fast forward to 2015. Here we are, a crowd of people gathered around Jesus, on this Palm Sunday. You and I are in the right place today. You and I are saying all the right words, too. But is that what makes us true believers in Jesus, and faithful followers of the Lord? Is it your church membership, your church attendance, your church contributions? Is it your Bible knowledge, your ministry participation, your ability to make palm crosses?

I want to talk with you today about what it is, in the end, that makes a person a member of Christ's true, universal Church.

What did you or I ever do for Jesus, that he would suffer and die for us, and call us his own? What is it that can possibly make poor, miserable sinners like me and you worthy to stand in the crowd of true believers?

My best efforts can't make up for my sins. Your best efforts can't make up for your sins. Nothing we do can heal our brokenness, and atone for all the nasty stuff that bubbles up in us sometimes.

What makes a person a part of Christ's true Church, then? It's not what we do. It's what God does in us. It's what God does with us, and through us.

And this, friends, is where the Holy Spirit comes in. The Spirit is the person of the Trinity that works in us, with us, and through us. Over the past five weeks, we've been looking at the different sections of the Apostles' Creed. Today we get to the part of the Creed where we say, “I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church....”

What we're really confessing in those words is that it's the Spirit that brings us to faith. I can't be part of the holy Christian Church because of what I do. It's the Spirit that

helps me believe in Jesus. It's the Spirit that moves you to respond to Christ's invitation, empowers you to live the life of faith, and assists all of us in hanging on to our faith even on those days when it seems like we're hanging by a thread!

When we proclaim, "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church," we're acknowledging that it's not what we do or say that makes us true believers. What we're really saying is that it's the Spirit, dwelling in our hearts and working on our spirits every day, that makes us part of Christ's true Church.

Do I really need the Spirit to be a true fan of Jesus? I do. Do you really need the Spirit's help to put your faith in Jesus today, to welcome him rightly on this Palm Sunday, to honor him and glorify him in your day-to-day living this week? You do.

We all do! The Bible teaches us there's no one who's ever truly believed in Jesus without the Spirit's help. Romans 8:9 says, "*Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.*" The Scriptures are clear on this, over and over again. Our sinful nature pulls us away from God. But God sends out his Spirit to do in us what we can't do on our own. He turns us around. He calls us to faith. The Spirit helps us become and remain true believers, not just March Madness superficial fans.

Because it's not just about coming here to church and keeping your favorite pew from getting dusty. It's not about saying the right words. It's about being broken and helpless before God. It's about turning with humble faith to Jesus. That's what the Spirit helps us do. And that's what makes us part of Christ's true, universal Church.

This week, Holy Week, we think about Jesus washing the feet of his disciples, teaching his Church to serve others. So ask the Spirit this week to give you that same servant heart.

This week we recall Christ's prayer in the Garden, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup of suffering from me. Yet not my will, by yours, be done." Pray the Spirit to help you to know and to follow the Father's will in your life and in his church.

This week, Holy Week, we ponder the betrayal by Judas, the hypocrisy of the crowds, the cruelty of the soldiers, the spinelessness of Pontius Pilate. Ask the Spirit to help you truly repent of your own betrayals, your own hypocrisies and cruelties and spinelessness, for you, too, caused Jesus to be crucified.

And this week remember the thief hanging on the cross next to Jesus, and how he knew so little about Jesus, yet moved by the Spirit the thief cried in humble faith, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Ask the Spirit to turn you today, and all the members of his church – to turn us, broken and helpless, without any merit or worthiness – turn us to the mercy of Jesus.

Thank God for what the Spirit does! And thank God that's what makes you part of Christ's true Church! Amen.