

The Spirit: The Wind of Mission

We're looking at the nature and character of God. We've considered the mystery of God, the Resurrection of Christ, the Trinity, and this morning, we're looking at the Spirit of God. Instead of taking slices out of the Bible to collect verses on a topic (systematic theology), this morning we're going to pick up a theme and trace it along the grain of the Bible (biblical theology). I invite you to immerse yourself in this story of the Spirit, reflect along the way, and anticipate where it is goes. Above all, join me in asking the Spirit to instruct and change us, on the spot, during the preaching of the Word of God.

The Wind of God

As the story of the world begins, we find the earth formless and void, and darkness over the deep. The cosmos is unformed, uninhabitable, and unmoved, but then something begins to move. A wind, some translators say "a great wind." The word here can be translated as "wind, spirit, or breath." This great wind is most certainly the Spirit of God: "[By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host](#)" (Ps 33:6). The breath of God creates the starts, the wind of God blows over the waters, the Spirit of God begins to hover over the deep. As he does, he begins to form the formless, to create light out of darkness, and the creative power of the Spirit fashions the most stunning work of art ever known—the heavens and the earth. The Spirit is Creator, together with the Father and the Son. The triune Creator begins his tour de force, his opus, and creation is sent off to be perfected and matured over time. Church father, St. Basil remarks: "[With respect to creation, the original cause is the Father, the creative cause the Son, and the perfecting cause, the Spirit.](#)" Creation is a project. After God's work, it has only begun. It has somewhere to go. Adam and Eve step into the garden, given commands to be fruitful and multiply and to rule and subdue the earth. They are to fashion something out of creation, to create, like their Creator. Made in God's image, we too are to make. We are a creative people made to make, not just a redemptive people, made to speak only of redemption. We have warrant to create. This is often called the cultural mandate. Culture, Ken Myers says, is "what we make of the world." Those who cook make something of the world, taking vegetables, oil, eggs, and diced ham you make an omelet. Culture isn't restricted to the arts. We make something of the world every single day. Parents make homes to live in, students make papers, kids make projects, entrepreneurs make new businesses, artists make songs, films, and paintings. Why? Why do we create? Because we were made to make something of the world. **The Spirit of God is given to people of God to make things for God.** This was central to the original mission given to Adam and Eve...but they abandoned the mission of making things for God to taking things to be like god. They wanted to be wise like God, to make, not for God but for themselves. They didn't want God to get the attention for what they would make; they wanted the attention. Fortunately, the Spirit continues to blow. God turns his attention to a new people to accomplish his mission. We see the Spirit blowing, yet again, right through the Red Sea to recreate humanity, to make a new people for himself. "[He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of the wilderness; he encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions](#)" Deut 32:10-11 This people will pick up where Adam and Eve left off.

They will carry his name, his renown, his glory to the nations. In fact, they will be a light to the nations: [“It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth”](#) (Isa 49:6). See, the world has gone dim. Slavery, sexual misconduct, and a lot of self-seeking. Israel will make something of the world, not only in the culture they create, but also in the truth they propagate. They hold up a light in the darkness that salvation may reach all peoples and all the earth. See, we are meant to make something of the world. Why are we here? What is our purpose? Even our creations say something of the world—an omelet, the world is good—a film, the world is filled with suffering. We are meant to make something of the world in a philosophical sense. What do you make of it? What is your work, your culture, saying about the world, God? **The Spirit of God is given to the people of God to accomplish, the now redemptive, mission of God.** But Israel eventually abandons the mission of God for other gods, worshipping culture instead of the Creator. As they turn their backs on God, they are exiled from their land. We’re left to wonder what will become of the mission? Will the light go out with Israel? Will the Holy Wind blow again? Hope peaks out in the latter chapters of Isaiah, where we hear of a future *return from exile*, and that God accompany Israel [“like a rushing stream, which the wind of the Lord drives”](#) (Isaiah 59:19). Then, hundreds of years later, Jesus is born into the world. He is called “the light of the world.” Filled and baptized by the Spirit himself, he gathers a new twelve and says, “Come follow me.” In an unexpected twist, the light of the world dies and comes back to life. Appearing to his shaken disciples, Jesus promises them his peace and says, [“As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’”](#) (Jn 20:21-22). The Spirit is blowing again, this time creating a new Israel, a new community to carry the light of Christ to the nations, for salvation to go to the ends of the earth, for the creation project to continue. What will *they* make of the world? What will keep this people from abandoning the mission? Acts 2: [When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit...](#) The Wind of God is blowing again. Will it be any different? Yes, but how? This time the Spirit doesn’t just blow around them; he enters into them. The Spirit fills them, not just appears to them. Now humanity is remade to remake the world. We discover that in order to enter the kingdom of God, the Spirit must enter you, never to leave. He is the guarantee of things to come, the promise of a whole new creation. Now a new light is burning inside of them, a light that cannot be put out, because the light to the nations is now inside the nations. It is the light of the whole world, the Spirit of God blowing our faith, hope, and salvation into Christ Jesus, the faithful Adam, the true Israel, who never fails, who took the darkness and swallowed it up in the grave to give to the world a new, undying light. In doing this, the Spirit has created a new Israel embedded with the light, a new humanity that can make something of the world *for God*. **The Spirit of God has been given to the people of God to accomplish the mission of God.** How?

1. **Witness to the risen Christ.** Listen to others, ask deeper questions, and look for an opportunity to share with them all the difference that Christ makes in this world,

and how he makes sense of the world. Very often, we'll hesitate when we're prompted to witness about the light of the world. We step out of the Spirit and into pure, fallen reason, where we line up the objections: what if they think I'm preachy, what if they think I'm intolerant. A prompting from the Spirit is an opportunity to step into the power of the Spirit. Just this week my wife was walking the neighborhood and a neighbor we've been inviting over and getting to know stopped and rolled down her window. She told Robie that she needed prayer. Robie prayed with her on the spot, with her arms through the window, on her arms. We're hopeful because God is at work. We're not unduly stressed about it because we know that **we're not called to be effective just faithful**. We can talk to our neighbors but only the Spirit can enter into them, bringing light into the darkness.

2. **Make something of the World.** Remember the Spirit has empowered you to contribute to the perfecting of creation. We are created to create. Make culture fit for a king. Then, *share it with others*. Share it with your community, with your neighbors. Tim & Claire Gillen do this regularly. At their recent birthday party for Calvin, they made grass-fed burgers, with a mustard and chipotle mayo made from scratch, and homemade buns. Plus there were several neighbors there enjoying what the Gillens made, enjoying a community that is also making something of the world in Christ. You can do this with technology, sports, crafting, music, art, writing, etc.
3. **Cultivate Communities of Light.** We all drift to individualism, to self, but the Spirit has always created communities of light. He draws us together to celebrate, serve, love, and edify one another. When City Groups share life together, around the light of the world, we become a display of the gospel to our neighbors and coworkers. This city needs more communities of light that serve our city. The City Group party at our house.

The Spirit of God has been given to the people of God to accomplish the mission of God. He's not just blowing around you; he's entered into you. The creative, redemptive power of God, pointing to Christ, the light of the world.