

WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT

→ “Now, I’d like you to find someone else in the room that you don’t know very well and take it in turns to talk for two minutes about yourself!” *Pause* How many of you have just broken out in a cold sweat? Yes, I’m not surprised. It’s just the kind of “ice-breaker” activity that we’re often invited to take part in when we attend a seminar or a workshop and although many of us will have done it many times, inside perhaps we groan, either because we don’t like talking to people we don’t know, or because we don’t like talking about ourselves or because we know what follows – we’re going to have to stand up in front of everyone and introduce the person we’ve just been talking with to everyone else in the room!

.....It’s not an easy thing to do is it? Talk about someone that you’ve only known for a little while? Or sometimes you may find yourselves in the position of having to publicly introduce someone that you’ve never met before. You’ve maybe heard of them but suddenly realise that actually you know very little about them at all. You may know what they do, but not know much about them as a person.

.....I think that’s the way that some of us may feel about the Holy Spirit. We know about him, or we know what he does, but how would we really introduce the Holy Spirit to someone else? What would we say? How would we describe him? Jesus introduced the Holy Spirit to his friends with words like this, “When, however, the Spirit comes, who reveals the truth about God, He will lead you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own authority, but he will speak of what he hears, and will tell you of things to come. You can read that in John 16 v 13.

→ So, who is the Holy Spirit? What do we know about him already? How have we experienced him in our lives? What would you say about him if you had to introduce him to a friend? Well, God’s word has quite a bit to say about the Holy Spirit but this morning as we begin this series, we’re going right back to the beginning to uncover three basic truths about the Holy Spirit which we can find in God’s word.

.....First of all, the Holy Spirit is all-powerful. I think that sometimes when we are celebrating Pentecost and the coming of the Spirit in all his fullness, we can forget that the Spirit has always been around. As we read those words right at the beginning of the Bible in Genesis 1, we see the effect and the power of the presence of the Holy Spirit at that mysterious and awesome moment of creation. The writer of Genesis says that “the earth was formless and desolate. The raging ocean that covered everything was engulfed in total darkness.”

.....But, the part of God’s person that the Bible calls the Holy Spirit was there “hovering over the waters.” The original word that has been translated into “hovering” means “brooded” which describes the action of a mother bird sitting on her nest of eggs. So, in a similar kind of way to the bird hatching the eggs, the Holy Spirit drew life out of the chaotic earth and brought light and order and everything else that was “good” into the situation.

.....That in itself was an amazing, powerful and creative act, but that same Holy Spirit now continues to “hover” over our lives that are sometimes dark and chaotic

and lacking in purpose and seeks to bring life out of death, light in the darkness and refreshment to the dry areas. The Holy Spirit is all-powerful. He has always been around and that same creative, transforming power is available to us in our lives today.

→Secondly, the Holy Spirit is all-wise. Because the Holy Spirit is a person he has intellect just like you and me! He knows. But, wonderfully, He knows all there is to know about God. When Paul wrote his second letter to the church in Corinth he said this, "But it was to us that God made known his secret by means of his Spirit. The Spirit searches everything, even the hidden depths of God's purposes. It is only a person's own spirit within him that knows all about him; in the same way, only God's Spirit knows all about God."

.....Just a few days ago, Leslie and I spent a couple of hours at Laura's school talking to teachers about subject options for next year and as we moved from teacher to teacher, Laura usually had something to say about how she rated the particular teacher that we had just seen or were about to see. Sometimes she would tell us they were really strict, or good fun, but usually she had something to say about whether they were any good at getting her interested in the subject. And teachers are generally successful in getting kids interested if they really know their subject and if they're passionate about it themselves. That's what we look for in a good teacher isn't it? Someone who knows their stuff and is well able to pass that on!

.....Well, the Holy Spirit knows all there is to know about God and it's the Holy Spirit that helps us to learn more about God and to know God himself. When we read the Bible it's the Holy Spirit that helps us to understand what we read and it's the Holy Spirit that helps us to see how what we read applies to the lives that we live every day. Having the Holy Spirit is like having a built in teacher who is always ready to help us with the difficult stuff and make things more clear to us.

→ And thirdly, the Holy Spirit is absolutely everywhere! He is a constant presence that inhabits every space and place where we may find ourselves. The passage that we heard this morning from Genesis spoke about water covering everything until the act of creation began and other things began to take shape and form. Water, which is the symbol that we have for the Holy Spirit here this morning, was everywhere and there are many poor people across our country who have been experiencing flooding of late and who know just what that feels like. Water seeps into every nook and cranny and in much the same way, the Holy Spirit is everywhere present.

.....Now, for some of us that may be a very comforting feeling. For others of us it may make us feel quite the opposite. It's like the whole subject of CCTV. Some people find it quite reassuring to know that we are being watched a lot of the time because it helps them to feel more safe and secure, whilst others somehow feel that it's a real invasion of their privacy and their private space.

.....The few verses that we heard read from Psalm 139 reminded us that the Holy Spirit observes us everywhere we go and that he is sensitive to our every thought and our every action. And there is really no need for us to see that as any

kind of threat, because the fact that the Holy Spirit is present everywhere means that we are constantly within the caring and loving circle of God's concern. Despite all the times when we may rebel or be disobedient, He still continues to watch over us. As the psalm reminds us, if we try to run away from him, he simply runs alongside us and if we try to hide from him, he is waiting for us in our hiding place. There is nowhere that we can go, where God is not already present by his Spirit. What a mind blowing thought! But it's also surely a reassuring thought because the beauty of it all lies in the truth that God never stops gently pursuing us. However much we may try to run and hide, he is constantly looking and longing for us, like the shepherd looking for his lost sheep.

→ So, who is the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is the person within our community God who hovers over and around us, longing to bring shape and meaning to our lives. The Holy Spirit is the one who reveals more and more of God to us as we allow our eyes and ears to be opened, and the Holy Spirit is God's constant presence in our world and in our lives, even at those times when we are not even aware of him. God came into the world in the person of the Holy Spirit to be a constant source of courage, strength and refreshment. The Holy Spirit is all-powerful, all wise and present everywhere, so what is there for us to fear when we have a teacher, a guide and a friend like that, constantly available to us. May we, over these coming weeks, know more and more about the Holy Spirit, but also become more aware of what the Holy Spirit is doing and longs to do in us so that we might be better able to introduce him to others.