

June 9, 2019

Roman 8:5-11

Pentecost

Sculptor Spirit Series: "Renewal: Death and Resurrection"
Pastor Wayne Puls, Senior Pastor at Hope Lutheran Church

So what is the Holy Spirit up to ... in my life? A really good question!

We know from the Bible stories that the Holy Spirit was working in powerful, exciting ways during the early days of the Christian Church. We heard the Pentecost story today, about the Holy Spirit rushing upon the disciples of Jesus. And there's story after story of the Holy Spirit galvanizing and equipping those early Christians to do awesome things in the Lord's name.

But, while all of this is very cool to read, what does the Holy Spirit have to do with us? What is the Holy Spirit up to in the life of Christians today? In your life?

Most of us probably don't have a very good answer. For many Christians, the Holy Spirit is the hardest part of God to understand. No disrespect to the Holy Spirit, but many of us have kind of a "Spirit void" in our understanding and awareness of God.

So what is the Holy Spirit up to in my life? A really good question!

It turns out that the Holy Spirit's work is not just relegated to the early decades of the post-ascension Church. The Bible teaches us clearly that the Holy Spirit is incredibly active in our lives, and ultra-important in our church, in a whole variety of powerful, exciting ways. The Holy Spirit has everything to do with the kind of Christian life you're living day to day.

One way to get to know what the Holy Spirit is all about is to think of a sculptor. Imagine in your mind an artist, working a big lump of clay (that lovely red North Carolina clay). The artist molds the clay, shapes it, corrects and finishes it – taking that shapeless mass and transforming it into a thing of beauty.

Or imagine a craftsman sculptor with a rough block of stone: scanning and surveying it, envisioning a final result, then chiseling away at it, working with a variety of tools and techniques to make a masterpiece emerge from the stone, stroke by stroke, chip by chip.

The Holy Spirit is a sculptor. And you're the clay. You're the block of stone. It's the Holy Spirit's goal to mold you, modify you, chip away at you, and transform you into something truly beautiful. What's the work of the Holy Spirit in you? To sculpt you into the character of Christ. To make you more and more like Christ, every day.

Romans 8:29 says God's plan is that we should be "... conformed to the image of his Son." In other words, the Sculptor Spirit conforms us to be like Christ. And 2 Corinthians 3:18 says, "And we all, with unveiled faces, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." The Sculptor Spirit, working on you, working on me.

Theologians label this work of the Spirit "sanctification:" the life-long process of making us more and more holy, more and more like Christ. And God the Holy Spirit is always working inside you, molding you in different ways, trying to shape Christlikeness in you in multiple ways.

Here's the first one of those ways. We're going to talk about three more in the weeks ahead; but here's the first one. Let's call it **renewal**. The divine Sculptor, the Holy Spirit, is constantly working to bring **renewal** into the lives of God's people. And, Lord knows, we desperately need **renewal**.

Because the sin in our lives -- those sins we confess every week in our worship service, those sins we wrestle with every day -- our sins are deadly. They kill our life with God, and destroy our connection with our Maker. But by calling us to faith in Jesus Christ, by leading us to the crucified, resurrected Lord for forgiveness, the Holy Spirit brings us back to life, renewed life, regenerated life.

See, life in the Spirit is, in a very real sense, a cycle of death and life. Killing the old sinful creature, and raising the new creature in the waters of baptism. The Holy Spirit shapes, molds, and conforms us to Christ's death and resurrection. He works every day to first foster repentance in your heart, and then to lead you to Christ for forgiveness. The Spirit empowers you to trust in the crucified, risen Savior. So, even though, as the Bible says, you are dead in your sins, through faith in Jesus, we are made alive again.

And again, and again, and again. As long as we're in this body, living life in this world, we're never going to be free from sin. So there's this constant need you and I both have for **renewal**. And then **re-renewal**. And then **re-re-renewal**. And the Holy Spirit is continually at work to bring **renewal** to you.

We read about this earlier in Romans 8: "If Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 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” (verses 9-11).

And Jesus talked about this in John 3: “Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit” (verses 7-8).

The Sculptor Spirit brings **renewal** to sinners, brings new life to those who are spiritually dead. And not just **renewal** way back when we were baptized; but **renewal** every day as the Holy Spirit draws you time and again into this cycle of death and resurrection, repentance and forgiveness, penitence and pardon.

As Martin Luther once put it, the old Adam in us, that sinful part of you and me, needs to be “... drowned and die through daily contrition and repentance, and that daily a new person is to come forth and rise up to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.”

So what is the Holy Spirit up to in my life? In yours? A really good question. Our first answer? **Renewal!** The Holy Spirit helps us die to sin and rise up to new life in Christ. Thanks be to God for the gift of his Spirit! Amen.