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**TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
IHOP BIBLE STUDY**

2 Topic: "Experiencing the gift of the Holy Spirit" – with commentary

Acts 1: 12 - 26, "Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas;" Acts 2: 1 - 13, "The Holy Spirit Comes At Pentecost."

The purpose of the Book of Acts is to record the activity of the Holy Spirit in the Vision and Ministry of Peter and Paul. **Today's study is the 2nd of 20 lessons.**

A contextual statement:

Interestingly, *The Interpreter's Bible* makes the following observation. In the book of Acts, "The Lord is not returned, but in the meantime the word of God is being carried on by the church. The Gentile mission is itself the eschatological action of God." (*The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1971. p. 730.)

This I want to affirm as our perspective. **We will study this book from the perspective of the in-breaking of the Holy Spirit.** This puts us out on the cusp of a deep and foreboding spiritual hole that is eternally deep. The Holy Spirit is that intuited presence within us that urges us to "Jump." "Jump!" To take this leap of faith means to surrender ourselves to the eternal deeps. The discovery, to which I can personally testify, is that this deep, dark, mysterious hole is the place where God lives within us. As we lose control of everything— our-selves, our relationships to neighbor and to God— then we can discover that God really does sustain us. But the experience is like falling, and it is not entirely comfortable. But it works.

Now, to work.

Read the assigned scripture.

I. Acts 1: 12 - 26, "Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas."

There is lots of food for thought here, but you must dig to get at it. The danger is its familiarity; we know the story too well. There are two parts to examine. The first is the background Peter points to concerning the need to replace Judas. The second is what happens to Judas. The rationale Peter uses is based on Psalm 109. This lays the ground work for both the election of Matthias, and Judas self-treatment.

Turn now to **Psalm 109** and read it out loud. Remember, the Psalms are art-forms that are transparent to the work of the Holy Spirit. Fill in the following reflection:

After you have read it out loud –

1. What words or phrases stood out? To whom is the Psalm addressed?

WS: Vs.4b—"I am a man of prayer." Vs. 5---"Repay me evil for good." Vs. 14b---The sin of his mother never blotted out. Vs. 22b—"My heart is wounded."

2. What are the emotions?

a. of the Psalmist—

WS: Anger, hurt, betrayal, supplication

b. what are your emotions are you read it—

WS: Frustration in sympathy for the psalmist.

3. What is the Psalm about?

a. What's going on—

WS: The Psalmist is being betrayed. In vs. 22, he speaks of "his heart" which makes me wonder if this isn't a spiritual betrayal, and the images relate to his spiritual struggle. Several in the IHOP study agreed with this analysis.

b. Why does Luke choose this bit of history to repeat and hold up for our examination—

WS: Luke uses this example to mirror history, to understand the suffering of Christ and his betrayal as a travesty of history. In this way the present and the future are understood in light of our past. The mirror is a reflection that Judas is the betrayer, in the same way that David (as the Psalmist) was betrayed.

4. How does our examination of this Psalm help us to understand what is going on in Peter's mind?

WS: Peter holds before us the Big Picture of how to build a movement on the foundation of history. We understand the necessity that organizations apply the symbolic number of 12, representing the twelve tribes of Israel, to that of the twelve Apostles. Consequently, the 12th member needed to be elected to replace Judas Iscariot. The IHOP spoke of the twelve as the creation of the New Israel.

II. What happens to Judas?

A. What do the words in vs. 18 suggest to you? (With the reward he got for his wickedness. . .)

WS: My axiom "The reward for the deed is found in the deed itself" is applied here. Judas' guilt for betrayal brought his to suicide.

III. Vss. 23 – 26: Describe the process used for choosing the new member of the twelve. How does this method demonstrate the use of the Holy Spirit?

WS: There is a three-fold process at work here: 1) they prayed; 2) they cast lots; 3) they concluded the "short straw" was the will of God. This process is an interesting speculation. 1) In praying they centered themselves in their Spiritual Oasis. 2) The act of casting lots is an act of surrender. 3) The last step is rather illuminating. It is the "act of our choosing" that infuses our choice with the Holy Spirit. I highlighted this statement because I experienced this as a new insight into this passage. Also, it confirms for me that the work of the Holy Spirit takes place in every choice we make.

IV. Acts 2: 1 - 13, "The Holy Spirit Comes At Pentecost."

Again, the danger in reading this passage is its familiarity. Consequently, examine your own human experience to get a handle on what is describe here by Luke.

A. Describe your encounter with a violent wind. What is the noise it makes? Make this Gut Trip!

WS: Standing on a hillside and actually trusting the wind by laying into it. At times like this, it is the only sound you can hear. However, the application needs to be turned inward. The new wind is blowing through your spiritual innards. The result of experiencing this spiritual wind is that we awaken to a new life.

B. What does it mean that this violent wind "came from heaven?"

WS: 2: 1-4 are words used as similes and metaphors. This "new life wind" comes from the place of Perfect At-One-Ment. The experience of Dorothy and Toto, in the Wizard of Oz, comes to mind during which they change environments are awakened to a transformed reality.

C. Have you personally had such an experience?

WS: Yes, my personal testimony is that on the night I surrendered my life into God's total care, I awakened the next morning as a new creature. This same experience took place at my baptism, and was confirmed by the birth of the Holy Spirit within me.

D. Do you know anyone who has had such an experience? What do they say about it?

WS: The key characteristic of all personal testimonies is that of personal surrender.

If such an experience happened at (to?) an international gathering would each person "understand it in their own language?"

WS: The emphasis here is not on the actuality of language, but on the universality of the experience. Because "these Galileens" were experiencing the wind of transformation, and those out-or-town visitors were experiencing the wind of transformation, it was amazing they were all "speaking the same language."

To get hung up on the "how of things" misses the main point of the "why of things."

If some were watching from a distance, and observed what was going on, could it be concluded that "they had too much wine."

WS: Oh, yes! When this happens to us, and it happens all of the time, it is easy to get drunk on the wine of the Holy Spirit. The danger is that the event is so exhilarating that arrogance can soon replace the experience. We can become "so heavenly bound that we are no earthly good."

If the Holy Spirit is thought of as a Spiritual Alarm Clock, what went off?

WS: The danger in our use of any old Christian code word is that we make it

an object of study, instead of a power to experience. The Holy Spirit is the power to Awaken Us. This is the experience of being awakened to the fact we were once spiritually asleep but now we are spiritually awake.

Alright, folks, talk to me.