If you have got your Bible this morning, I am going to read to you from the book of Acts and Chapter 2.

Now if you were here last week we began to look into the book of Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament. I am going to go back to that next week, but today in the Christian calendar, is the Day of Pentecost.

Now it’s very likely most of you were unaware of that. We make a lot of Christmas, when we commemorate the birth of Jesus. We make something of Easter, the occasion on which Jesus was crucified when, as our substitute, He was made to be sin for us, was buried and then was raised again from the dead on the third day.

And we have national holidays, which accompany those two events. And so that gives them a high profile. But Christmas and Easter didn’t, in themselves, at the time, change anybody, because those made possible the Day of Pentecost, which was the moment at which the Holy Spirit of God came to indwell the lives of all those people who were in a right relationship with God.

And it was on the Day of Pentecost that the life of God (that Adam had lost in the Garden of Eden) was restored into human experience.

Now of course we can’t break up the birth of Jesus, the life, the death, the resurrection of Jesus, the ascension of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit and eventually the Second Coming of Jesus. It’s one story with different ingredients in it.

But that which makes the Christian life experiential, that which gives you and I the ability to go out into a world with confidence, is that the essence of the Christian life is that the life of God is restored into human experience, and we are equipped and empowered by the Holy Spirit of God.

The Day of Pentecost, you see, was an annual festival, one of several annual festivals in the Jewish calendar. In the Old Testament it is known as the Feast of Weeks or the Day of First Fruits. It was like a Jewish thanksgiving that accompanied the end of the barley harvest.

In the New Testament it is called Pentecost just because that is a Greek word that means literally 50th day (it takes place 50 days after the Passover).
Jesus was crucified the day before the Passover – that was on a Saturday. And 50 days later, seven weeks after Easter Sunday, we have the Day of Pentecost in which the Holy Spirit was poured out and made available to any man, woman, boy or girl who, on the basis of recognizing that Christ has died for their sin and confessed their sin that He had risen again as the grounds of their justification, would now become the recipients of the very Spirit of God.

I don’t care how much you believe about Jesus Christ - if you do not know what it means to live in the power of the Holy Spirit, you haven’t begun to enjoy the Christian life.

And I want to read just the first four verses of Acts Chapter 2. (And actually these verses have been printed in the bulletin if you don’t have access to a Bible – there are some in the pews, but it is in the bulletin this week as well – these four verses.)

“When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together”

The “they” by the way, go back to the previous chapter, was 120 men and women, including the disciples of Jesus who had been waiting for 10 days since the ascension.

“…they were all together in one place.

“Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.

“They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.

“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”

And then the rest of the story goes on to describe the impact made on the city of Jerusalem as a result of that.

I was speaking at a conference of missionaries on one occasion when a lady told me that she had been in conversation with her four-year-old granddaughter. And they were talking about God. And the granddaughter asked her grandmother, “Is God lonely?”

And then before the grandmother could think of a good answer, she said that the little girl thought for a moment and then answered her own question. And she said, “Well, I know He has a Son and that bird that He sends down on people.”
Well I am going to talk to you about that “bird” that He sends down on people, because she was referring, of course, to the day when Jesus was baptized and the dove – the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove – descended upon Him.

And a dove has become the symbol of the Holy Spirit from that event. And there are many aspects we could talk about. The fact there was this blowing of a violent wind – that is a very graphic image that we need to understand if we are to understand the Holy Spirit.

These tongues of fire – another graphic image – that they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. As a result, they began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit enabled them.

Now all of these different aspects we could spend one service looking at and not even hardly scratch the surface of the meaning that is contained.

I am going to select one phrase from there. The phrase in Verse 4:

“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit.”

What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? It’s not enough to believe in the Holy Spirit, to have Him as an item line on your creed and your doctrines that “I believe in the Holy Spirit, co-equal with the Father and with the Son within the Trinity of God.” It’s important to believe that. It’s not enough.

It’s not enough to have simply received the Holy Spirit, which is the grounds on which any person may claim to be a Christian. If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, Romans 8:9 says, He does not belong to Christ.

It is not enough to receive the Holy Spirit. We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. And it is one thing to have received the Holy Spirit; it’s another thing to be filled with the Holy Spirit. It is possible to have been a Christian for many years and not know what it is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. It is possible to engage in Christian service and yet know nothing of the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

You can be a pastor of a church, you can be a missionary on the field, you can be a teacher of a Sunday school class, you can be an elder, a deacon; you can be involved in music ministry. You can do all of this and not know what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

It is vital that we know, not just doctrinally that we can put in a box and check the box. But that we live a life where the only valid explanation for that life we live is that the Spirit of God is reigning within our hearts.

Now this phrase, the fullness of the Spirit, or to be filled with the Spirit, or to be full of the Spirit, is a phrase which occurs 14 times in the entire New Testament –
4 times before Pentecost when Luke records about John the Baptist being full of the Spirit in his mother’s womb - his mother Elizabeth, his father Zachariah. And then Jesus, at the time of His baptism, full of the Spirit, was led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Those are the 4 references in Luke’s Gospel, the only references in the New Testament prior to Pentecost, to being filled or full of the Spirit.

And then after Pentecost there are 10 times this phrase occurs – 9 of them in the Book of Acts, one of them in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians.

Now most of you know that Luke is the author of the Gospel of Luke and also the Book of Acts. And so Luke, 13 times, is responsible for this phrase out of the 14 times that this phrase occurs.

And that’s interesting because Luke writes as an historian. He writes as an observer of things that are going on. And in observing what is going on, he says the only valid explanation for this or for that or for the other is that they were full of the Holy Spirit or they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

That’s why, by the way, you and I will be the worst judge of whether we are living in the fullness of the Holy Spirit because you will know that inside your heart there rages a civil war.

The flesh fights against the Spirit to keep you from doing what you would. You know – everyone of us here; you may have been a Christian for 50 years; you may live in the fullness of the Spirit – that there are temptations that bombard your mind and bombard your heart and bombard your conscience.

And if somebody says to you, “Hey, are you feeling spiritual today?” you will say, “Not at all.” Because it’s a battle we’re in, it’s a warfare that we are part of.

And we are told that in Ephesians 6 about standing firm in the Lord because principalities and powers as well as the old nature within us are fighting against the things of God.

So I don’t think there would be any honest, conscientious Christian here this morning who would say, “You know, I am filled with the Spirit because I look like it.”

That’s why it takes the historian, the observer, Luke, to use this phrase.

It wouldn’t be smart to ask you if you are filled with the Spirit; better to ask your wife if you are filled with the Spirit – she’ll know. Or your husband about the wife. Or maybe ask your kids. Don’t you – somebody else ask the kids.
The question is not is he/she/they perfect, but is there something about their lives that is inexplicable apart from the fact that God is at work within them.

Now in the 9 occasions in the Book of Acts that this term is used, there seem to me to be three different contexts in which it is used. They are all related contexts. I am not going to give you all the verses – I did in the morning, in the first service this morning and was told off for it being like a lecture with too much information. So I took the telling off and I am going to generalize a little bit. (But if you want to buy the CD from the first service, you will get the full thing and you will go to sleep probably, listening to it).

Three contexts in the Book of Acts; one context in Ephesians. The three in the Book of Acts is it was a crisis, it was a condition, and it was a continuing process. I will explain those three things to you.

It was a crisis. By that I mean that something happened where, up until that moment the people’s lives were one thing and then they were filled with the Holy Spirit and from that moment on their lives were something different. It was a crisis.

That is true here in Acts Chapter 2. When they were all together in that one place and the Spirit of God came on them, they were filled with the Holy Spirit; they spoke in tongues.

It created confusion and amazement in the city. Peter got up and addressed what was going on. 3,000 people were added to them that day, it tells us, by the end of Acts Chapter 2.

Now prior to this, when Jesus had ascended 10 days before, He had said to them, “You are going to receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you. You are going to be My witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the ends of the earth. But in the meantime wait until you have been endued with power from on high.”

In other words, He said, “I am giving you the commission, but Peter, if you go running out into Jerusalem now and preach the gospel, nothing is going to happen because at the moment you do not have what it takes; you do not have the power. Wait.”

And after 10 days, on this Pentecost morning, 9 o’clock in the morning, the Holy Spirit came. And Jerusalem, as a result, was turned upside down. It was a crisis moment.

Saul of Tarsus, when he met with Jesus on the Damascus road, was blinded; went down into Damascus. A man called Ananias was sent to him. Ananias came to pray with him two things: that his sins might be forgiven and that he might be filled with the Holy Spirit. (We read that in Acts 9:17).
And so for Saul of Tarsus, it was a crisis moment when, as a result of his sin being forgiven and the Spirit of God came to live within him and to fill him, he was never the same again.

Now, neither the apostles in Acts Chapter 2 nor Saul were Christians until that moment in the full sense, because what makes a person a Christian is that they have the Spirit of God within them.

And Jesus had said to them in the Upper Room the day before He was crucified, He said about the Holy Spirit, “He lives with you and will be in you.” That’s the difference that the death, resurrection of Christ, His ascension and the gift of the Holy Spirit is going to make. That the Spirit, who is with you, alongside you, will actually be in you.

Now if your understanding of your relationship with Christ is simply He is alongside you, He is with you (those are adequate metaphors to use) but it goes further than that: He is in you.

I met a lady this morning in the first service from Melbourne, Australia, here for a medical conference, going back to Melbourne this afternoon. And she came here because she said, “My husband and I have been Christians for years and we had gotten disillusioned; we were giving up. And my husband” she said, “found Living Truth on television there in Australia and so we started to watch it.”

And she said, “You said one day, ‘Christ is in you.’” She said, “I probably heard that before but it never made sense and suddenly it did.”

And she said, “I can’t tell you how our lives have changed.” And she said, “These last two years we have enjoyed a different Christian life because we realize that Christ, by His Spirit, is in us.”

And she was here for this conference and stayed on over Sunday to come here this morning.

This is intended to be the normal state of the Christian that we are living in the fullness of the indwelling Spirit of God. And when we are not, it is either because of ignorance – we don’t know, we don’t understand, and many people haven’t understood it – or because of disobedience, and in some way we are quenching and grieving and resisting the Spirit of God.

There was also a condition. And I say that because there are three Scriptures, which talk not about people being filled with the Spirit, but about being full of the Spirit.
Choose seven men, they decided in Acts Chapter 6, when they were looking for those to look after the practical needs of the church – choose seven men known to be full of the Spirit.

That is, not known to have had an experience one day, but known to be full. If you meet them in church on Sunday, they are full of the Spirit. If you bump into them on Wednesday, they are full of the Spirit. If you catch them playing tennis on a Friday, they are full of the Spirit. If you turn up unexpected at their home, they are full of the Spirit. It’s a condition of life. It’s not just some thing. (“When were you filled?” “Oh, a week last Friday.”)

But they are full. And by the way, if you are not as consistent on Monday in your place of work as you are on Sunday in a place of worship like this, it’s not the real thing because the Holy Spirit does not indwell us primarily to equip us to do Christian things. He indwells us primarily to live lives that are godly in a godless world.

And there was a continuing experience. And there are several references to that condition of life. You can look them up some time. But it was a continuing experience because several times there were those like Peter and Paul and Barnabas who are men already described as having been filled with the Spirit or being full of the Spirit, who were in a situation when their back is a bit against the wall and they respond. And the writer says, for instance with Peter in Acts 4:8,

“Then, Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said…”

And he is addressing the Sanhedrin Council who had just a few weeks before crucified Jesus or led to His crucifixion, had the right to do the same with him, but he has a boldness and authority. And the historian Luke, the observer, says the only way to describe this, “filled with the Spirit, he spoke.”

And there are several similar references that precipitate something dramatic that Peter, Paul, John, Barnabas engage in.

These are the way in which this term is used in the Book of Acts. And outside of the Book of Acts, only once is this term used again. It’s in Ephesians Chapter 5 and Verse 18.

And if in Acts it is a crisis or a condition or a continuing experience, in Ephesians 5 it is a command to be obeyed.

Let me read you Verse 17 and 18 of Ephesians 5. This is what Paul writes:

“Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.
“Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.”

Now he says, “Understand what the Lord’s will is.” And then he gives two commands. There are two commands here.

First command: Do not get drunk on wine. That is pretty clear-cut, isn’t it?

If later today you feel like going to a local bar and getting drunk, don’t. Pretty clear.

But equally as a command, “But,” he says, “be filled with the Spirit.”

And therefore to not be filled with the Spirit is disobedience and sin.

But the big $64,000 question is: what does this mean? It is always very important that we read and interpret Scripture in its context. Paul wasn’t writing a series of verses when he wrote Ephesians. He was writing a letter and the letter develops.

And if you go back through Ephesians, you discover that Paul already describes a very full work of the Spirit in the lives of the folks in Ephesus before he says, “Be filled with the Spirit.”

And you can look all this up. In Chapter 1:13 he speaks that

“Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.”

You have been, he says, sealed by the Holy Spirit (in Chapter 1).

In Chapter 2 he speaks about being a dwelling place in which God lives by His Spirit. So He is already living in them, both individually and corporately as a communion of God’s people.

He speaks of having access to the Father by one Spirit. That is already something they are enjoying.

In Chapter 3, he writes about that

“He may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being.”

So, “I am praying for you that you will know the power of the Spirit in your inner being.”
In Chapter 4, he talks about

“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you are sealed for the day of redemption.”

So in Chapter 1, “you are sealed with the Spirit,” and in Chapter 2, “you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit.” In Chapter 3, “I am praying you will know the power of the Spirit.” In Chapter 4, “don’t grieve the Holy Spirit.”

And yet he still finds it necessary in Chapter 5 to say, “Be filled with the Spirit” or more literally, in the present continuous tense, “Be being filled with the Spirit.”

Now what does that mean? Well let me be negative and say what it doesn’t mean.

It doesn’t mean you receive more of the Spirit than you had before. You know the language of being filled sort of indicates if this glass, which is fairly full, was not fairly full (I’ll just unfill a bit – there we are – now it’s ¾ full).

If I was to fill this glass, what I would do is top it up, you know, with water. You fill your car with gas; you top it up.

And so the idea sort of comes to us, “well this is about receiving more of the Holy Spirit than I have received before.”

But you cannot receive more of the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit is a person. And you either have a person or you don’t.

Now of course you can have more or less of a person’s trust or more or less of a person’s love, or more or less of a person’s confidence, more or less of a person’s attention. I mean you are physically here this morning so you are all present.

I may not have your attention; some of you may be a million miles away right now (in which case you won’t know I even said that). But you can’t have more or less of the person.

You see, once the Spirit of God indwells you, He indwells you. Now I hear people sometimes praying for more of the Holy Spirit. I understand the sentiment behind that but that is not what the Scripture teaches.

Because, don’t you know, said Paul to a church (the Corinthian church that was messed up in so many ways), “Don’t you know your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and you are not your own? Therefore, glorify God in your body.”

He is saying, “Don’t you know this? It is not more of the Holy Spirit you need; you need to let the Holy Spirit you have loose in your life.”
So it’s not that you need more of the Holy Spirit nor does it mean something, which I heard several times when I was young, that if you are going to be filled with the Holy Spirit, you must first be emptied of yourself.

I remember as a young Christian going to hear somebody speak and he held up a glass of water like this. (He was talking about being filled with the Spirit.) And he said, “Now supposing I wanted to fill this glass with Coca Cola; what would I have to do to fill this glass with Coca Cola?

And I sat there thinking to myself, “If you are going to fill that glass with Coca Cola, you first have to empty all the water out.”

And so having thought that to myself, the preacher said, “I’ll tell you what I have to do to fill this glass with Coca Cola. I first have to pour the water out and empty the glass of water and then I can fill it with Coca Cola.”

And I sat there thinking, “I got that. That’s good. I worked that out.”

So he said this, “If you are going to be filled with the Holy Spirit, you have got to be emptied of yourself.” And it sounded logical because of his glass and the Coca Cola illustration.

So I tried to empty myself of myself. I ran into two problems. One: what is myself? Two: how do you empty it?

Then I discovered things like Galatians 5:17: the flesh, the old nature, the old me, fights against the Spirit. Not empty yourself of that. It will fight against the Spirit until the day you die.

I think the clue to understanding what is meant is understanding what does the word fill mean in other contexts. Now the Book of Acts, as I said, gives more references to being filled with the Spirit.

And in the Book of Acts, the word ‘filled’ is used in a number of other contexts as well. For instance in Acts 2:43 on the Day of Pentecost, it says

“Everyone was filled with awe.”

What does it mean to be filled with awe?

Acts Chapter 3 when a man was healed at the temple gate, it says the people around were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened.

What does it mean to be filled with wonder and to be filled with amazement?
In Acts 5:17, it says of the Sadducees that because of the impact that apostles were having in the city, they “were filled with jealousy.”

Acts 13:45 the Jews in Pisidian Antioch were “filled with envy.” What does it mean to be filled with envy and to be filled with jealousy?

In Philippi in Acts 16:43 a jailer, who was converted, was filled with joy because he had come to know God. What does it mean to be filled with awe, to be filled with wonder, to be filled with amazement, to be filled with jealousy, to be filled with envy, to be filled with joy?

If we understand that, we might have a clue as to what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

What does it mean to be filled with wonder? Does it mean that they kind of went to the side and got emptied of everything else? And wonder, wonder, wonder - wooo, wonder – got filled with wonder?

Now I remind you, Acts is written as an observation; it’s a history book, it’s observing what was going on.

What he was saying was this: that when they were filled with wonder, because of what had happened, their eyes were the size of saucers and their mouth was the size of a dinner plate, and they were filled with wonder, because wonder dominated their personality and determined their behaviour.

To be filled with awe, awe dominated their personality, determined their behaviour – wow! Awe.

To be filled with jealousy, with the Sadducees and later the Jews of Pisidian Antioch, filled with envy. Jealousy dominated their personality; it determined their behaviour. The way they stood around at the back of the crowd, whispering, tittering, muttering, turning people against them. Says Luke; they were filled with envy, filled with jealousy.

And when the Philippian jailer was filled with joy, joy dominated his personality and determined his behaviour.

You see these people didn’t get up and say, “Ladies and gentlemen, I want to give my testimony. I have been filled with wonder.”

No, nobody ever said that – didn’t need to.

What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? It means the Holy Spirit dominates our personality and determines our behaviour. And of course we include the whole of the Godhead in that.
You know in Ephesians Paul talks about being filled with the fullness of God, arriving at the stature of the fullness of Christ and be filled with the Spirit. It is that God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit dominate our personalities and determine our behaviour.

You know it’s very interesting that when Paul wrote this in Ephesians 5, that he gave those two commands – “do not be drunk with wine but be filled with the Spirit” – and you think why in the world does he suddenly talk about being drunk, because that seems to have nothing to do with what he is saying in the passage.

Why does he talk about being drunk? Why does he throw that in? It would be like me in the middle of a message to you this morning suddenly saying, “By the way, don’t break the speed limit when you go home” and then I go back and you say, “What in the world was that about?”

Why does he say, “Do not get drunk on wine but be filled with the Spirit”? I suggest it is because being drunk on wine, to some extent, illustrates what it means to be filled with the Spirit. Because, you may remember back in Acts Chapter 2 on the Day of Pentecost, the first explanation for what was going on is in Verse 13 where

“Some made fun of them and said, ‘They have had too much wine.’”

And such, so strong was the rumour that when Peter got up to speak in Acts 2:15, the first thing he said was,

“These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It’s only nine o’clock in the morning!”

In other words, the bars aren’t open yet. Because they were saying, “they’re drunk, they’re drunk.” And people said, “Yah, I think they are drunk.”

And Peter said, “No, no, no – no, no, we’re not drunk.”

And Paul says, “Don’t get drunk; be filled.

It’s an illustration, you see. How do you get drunk? (I am not giving my testimony at this point.)

Do you get emptied first? Well, if anything, you get emptied afterwards all over the sidewalk usually.

Do you know what makes a person drunk? They have enough intoxicating liquor to dominate their personality and determine their behaviour.
I studied for three years in Glasgow in Scotland – at least I was in Glasgow for three years. And the city of Glasgow, at that point, had the reputation of having the highest level of alcoholism of any city in Europe. Thankfully that is not true now, but that was its reputation then.

And I stayed very close to the downtown city center, just about 200 meters from the central railway station. And if I went out of where I was staying at night, down the street, especially in the evenings, you would almost invariably see somebody who was drunk.

And I say that not because anybody ever told me they were drunk. I never had anybody stand up and say, “Ladies and gentlemen, I am drunk.”

So how did I know they were drunk? There were three give-away evidences.

You see, as you came out of the building where I stayed and began to walk down the street, if there was a man drunk coming up the street, you could tell he was drunk by the way he would walk. He would sort of bounce across to the shop window and bounce back to the lamppost and hope he will hit the shop window next time. And as he meandered up the street, you would say to yourself, “Oh-oh, I think he’s drunk.” You could tell he was drunk by the way he walked.

If there weren’t too many people around and he was looking for some money (which he usually was), he would hold onto a lamppost; as you came close, holding onto the lamppost to keep him on his feet, he would say, “Excuse me, could you give me some money for a cup of tea?”

And it was bad policy to give money. If you had time, take them; give them a cup of tea and a muffin or something. So you didn’t give him money. But you could tell he was drunk by the way he talked. His speech would be slurred.

And then if he saw maybe there is a possibility I can get some money here, he might leave the lamppost and sort of meander across, grab you by the arm, hold onto your arm, breathe into your face and say, “But I haven’t had a cup of tea for a week.”

And as he breathed into your face, you felt your own knees begin to go weak and you could tell he was drunk by the way he smelled.

How do you know a person is filled with the Holy Spirit? I want to suggest three ways: By the way they walk, by the way they talk and by the way they smell.

Now you say, “What are you talking about?”

You know there are several passages in Scripture that talk about things like this:
“Walk in the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:16)

“Walk in love.” (Ephesians 5:2)

“Walk in the light.” (1 John 1:7)

These are all verses that talk about walking. That is, as you go through life, there is something about your life that is characterized by the Spirit, which will be characterized by love, which will be characterized by the light (that is honesty).

This is not about an event; this is about the way you move through life, the way you go about your business, the way you pay your bills, the way you talk to the neighbors, the way you talk about the neighbors, the way you treat your wife and your kids and your husband and your family.

And the first evidence of being filled with the Holy Spirit is not what a person might stand up and claim in a meeting, but the way they walk through life Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday.

The second is the way they talk. Jesus made this statement in Matthew 12:34:

“Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.”

He said, in effect, if you want to know what is going on in a person’s heart, hang around long enough to listen to what comes out of their mouth. Not just when on their best behaviour of course – we can all say the right things.

But as you spend time with folks, when they are relaxed, when their guards are down (if they have any guards to put up in the first place), what comes out of their mouth will give you evidence of what’s going on in their hearts.

And it is very interesting how that I think in all but one of the references to being filled with the Holy Spirit in Acts and Ephesians, something happens to the mouth as a result.

On the Day of Pentecost they spoke in other tongues in such a way that 15 nationalities present in Jerusalem heard in their own language the wonderful things of God.

Those from Libya heard in Libyan, those from Crete heard it in Cretan, those from Athens heard in Greek, and so on.

And then you find “full of the Spirit, Peter said,” or “Paul, full of the Spirit, said.” Here in Ephesians 5,
“Be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” etc.

It is interesting how often, almost always, when a person is filled with the Spirit, something happens to their mouth. And what happens to their mouth is not about them. It’s about God doing something.

You can tell by the way they walk, you can tell by the way they talk; you can tell by the way they smell. You say, “Well, where did you get that from?”

Well, 2 Corinthians 2:14 says this:

“Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere” (listen to this) “the fragrance of the knowledge of him.

“For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.

“To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life.”

Now says Paul, through us, Christ spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of Him. In other words, we smell of Christ. That is the very atmosphere of our lives speaks of Christ, points to Christ.

It’s not always a comfortable thing, by the way, because he says, to those who are believers, it is the smell of life, the fragrance of life. To those who are unsaved, it is the smell of death.

It is totally predictable that people would dislike the Spirit-filled Christian because the smell of life, which has all kinds of implications, they will hate it. It will expose their own smell of death.

It’s always a wonderful thing to meet somebody who you don’t know and know nothing about them, but you sense the aroma of Christ. That is, you sense this person may be a Christian, but you don’t know them.

Many of you have had that experience I am sure, as I have done.

The first time I went to India, which was about 30 years ago – it was 30 years ago this year – I had been speaking at some meetings in the city of Bangalore and my next meetings were down on the very southern part of India in the state of Kerala.

I had a plane ticket but somebody said to me, “Why don’t you go by train and experience real India?”
And when I looked into the train times and tickets, I discovered it was much cheaper than going by air, and I always like to travel the cheapest way, and so I bought a third class ticket, which was very cheap.

It was an overnight; I have forgotten how long, how much beyond just overnight, but certainly overnight into the next day.

And I boarded the train about 8 o’clock at night in Bangalore and when I got to the compartment, I realized why it was so cheap. And the seats were like wooden benches and the sides were open (you were glad they were because you needed the breeze).

It was a cross between a cattle truck and a train compartment – that’s what it felt like. And it was very full.

I was the odd person there because most visitors to the country were travelling up in second or first class. And I have since travelled first class on Indian train when, with my good friend Ravi Chandler and we were going to speak at a university and we took an overnight train to get there in time for my speaking. And it was a lovely bed, comfortable; woke up with a cup of tea in the morning, so it was beautiful.

But third class is different. And, looking around the faces that were sharing the compartment with me, there was one face that was different to the others. It wasn’t its shape; it was within reason; the same shape as everybody else’s. It wasn’t the clothes he was wearing; he was wearing what everybody else was wearing.

But there was something about his eyes that was different. Basically, when you looked into his eyes, it looked as though somebody was at home. There was life there.

And in the course of the journey, he and I got into conversation. We had sort of wooden slats you could pull down – three tiers – and lie on them. And he lay on one opposite to me and I said, “Excuse me, do you speak English?”

And he said, “Yes, I do speak a little English.”

I said, “Would you mind if I ask you a question? Are you are Christian?”

And his face lit up. He said, “Yes, I am.”

And actually he had been in Bangalore because he was helping with the translation of part of the New Testament into a small group that lived in the Nilgiri Hills area. And he was from that area, and so he was a consultant to them.
They brought him up and said, “How does this sound? Does this sound right?”
And he wasn’t especially educated but he was able to help them in this process.

And so he was a lovely guy. We had a lot of things to talk about. But I thought it
was a wonderful experience just seeing, in a sea of faces, somebody whose face
was different, who I sensed smelt of Jesus.

My only disappointment with that meeting was that when I told him I was a
Christian, he was surprised. So it didn’t work both ways I am afraid.

You see this is not talking about some kind of sizzle down your spine. Should
you have that, that’s absolutely fine, nothing wrong with that, unless you make it
an idol, of course. But that isn’t what the business of the Christian life is about.

The business of the Christian life is about a life that exhibits Jesus Christ.

You look at all the references to the effects of the Holy Spirit. “You will receive
power when the Holy Spirit comes. You will be My witnesses. (That is, your life
will tell about Me.)

The fruit of the Spirit is character – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,
gentleness, self-control. The gifts of the Spirit, which have one purpose: to
equip us to serve and minister to others and bring Christ to others.

Now you say, “How does the Holy Spirit dominate my personality and determine
my behaviour? How do I live in the fullness of the Holy Spirit?”

Do you know you can go through the Scriptural teaching and there is no simple
formula that says, “do this, this and this, and this is the result.” There are
different things that happen at different times. If there was a formula, we might
just check the box and say, “Okay, done that,” but no spiritual experience, no
reality.

But I will tell you what is involved, and many of us need to get alone with God –
it’s usually in the secret place that the deep things of God are wrought in our
lives. Get alone with God. And we need to be repentant, we need to declare and
confess and acknowledge our sin and know the cleansing of the blood of Jesus.

We need to surrender to His lordship in our lives. Now a lot of us find that
difficult because we are letting go, but we need to let go and surrender to Him as
Lord.

Somebody else told me this morning, after the first service, that for years they
fought against surrender because she had a particular ability and skill and she
feared if she gave that to God, He would take it away. And it was more important
to her than Christ.
And it was through many tears caused by holding on to that very thing that eventually she came to a point of surrender. And actually God didn’t take it away; He actually endued that particular area of her life with a fresh power and use in that area.

We need to ask, we need to seek, we need to knock; those are things Jesus said we should do. In the context of saying that, He said, “How much more will My Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”

We are not talking about giving the Holy Spirit initially - unless you are not yet a Christian, then you need to come in confession, repentance and receive the Spirit of God into your life.

But as a believer, who, so easily we may grieve the Holy Spirit (Scripture warns of that), we may quench the Holy Spirit (Scripture warns of that), we may resist the Holy Spirit (Scripture speaks about that), or we yield to the Spirit of God.

And as a result, in confessing our sin and putting our trust and faith entirely in the kindness and goodness of Jesus Christ and seeking and asking and knocking for His fullness and surrendering everything to Him, there will begin to be things about your life that are inexplicable apart from the fact the Spirit of God is alive in you.

And I am going to ask you to respond this morning by singing together a chorus that is known to many of us. It is a prayer that says,

_Spirit of the Living God,_
_Fall afresh on me._
_Spirit of the Living God,_
_Fall afresh on me._

_Melt me, mould me,_
_Fill me, use me._
_Spirit of the Living God,_
_Fall afresh on me._

We are going to sing this just prayerfully, remaining seated. And we are singing this as a prayer that invites the Spirit of God to fill us afresh.