

The promise of the Spirit

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[0 : 00] Good morning again. Good to see all of you here. Now as you know, you have seen in the bulletin this morning that we are starting a new series on the Holy Spirit.

And it's the first time that I've attempted to preach a doctrinal series. I've taught doctrine in the classroom and I've done one-offs, but I've never done a doctrinal series.

So I just ask you to just bear with me as I'm still trying to work out how to best teach and preach through this series. And thanks in advance as well for your prayers for me.

And I also appreciate if you will be patient and I'll try my best as we embark on this series. Also just to say that for today, just to keep the flow of the sermon smooth, many times I won't be directly quoting verses today.

There will be some verses that will be directly quoted and that will appear on the PowerPoint, but there will be quite a few that won't be directly quoted. But every single verse reference that informs the sermon this morning is on your outline in the bulletin.

[1 : 14] And so please feel free to go back and to check all those references for yourselves, just to make sure that you can see that everything I say is coming from the Bible and that it's not being unfairly twisted.

So I've tried to be as responsible as possible in my handling of scripture. Let's pray. Father, you know that like Paul, there is a sense that I come today in weakness and with fear and trembling.

But Father, I pray that you would use this sermon to introduce people to your Holy Spirit as he truly wants to be known and to demonstrate the Spirit's power through your word.

All this we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen. Now what do you think is the most useless part of the human body? There are a few candidates, aren't there?

The appendix has to be top of the list. It's this organ between the large and the small intestines. So you might think it's got a role to play in the digestive process. But as far as I know, and I'm not a medical researcher, it has no purpose whatsoever.

[2 : 27] It's just there. And you hope that it will never burst because otherwise it's going to be very painful. Then there's wisdom teeth. They don't seem to serve any practical purpose, do they?

They're just there. Right there at the back of your mouth. And neglected until they have to be removed. Costing us a lot of money and pain in the process.

And maybe the profits for the dentist as well. And if you think about it, what use are toenails? Anyone?

I suppose they have a protective function. But otherwise they are just there. And if any one of these things, the appendix, the wisdom tooth, the toenail, have to be removed, well, we can still get on with our lives.

They're not life-threatening. And so we don't even think about them. We know they exist. That they're part of us. But I doubt very much that you spend much of your day thinking about your appendix.

- [3 : 35] What about the Holy Spirit? As a Christian, we know he exists. And if we're Christian, we know that he even lives inside of us.
- But sometimes, in our experience, he's just kind of there. We're not sure of his practical purpose. Although once in a while, we might find somebody getting excited about the Holy Spirit apparently causing somebody to fall down or something like that.
- And in truth, many of us don't spend much time thinking about him. And in one sense, that's not a bad thing. As we'll discover over the next few weeks, the Holy Spirit doesn't want you to be thinking about him all the time.
- But in another sense, that's a real loss. Think of it this way. In John chapter 3, the Holy Spirit is described as the one who gives Christians new birth.
- And so to not know him is like not knowing your mother who gave birth to you. That's considered a real loss, isn't it? And he's extremely important.
- [4 : 56] You see, if you remove your appendix from your body, you will still be okay. You can still live a healthy life. But if you remove the Holy Spirit, you will die.
- I don't mean, of course, that your physical heart will stop pumping blood. But that before God, you are spiritually dead. Your very life depends on the Holy Spirit.
- And we'll see that later on. But who is the Holy Spirit?
- Well, the first thing to remember about the Holy Spirit is that he's not just energy, or a life force, or a good experience. He is a person.
- Now, when we think about the first and the second members of the Trinity, it's fairly easy to think of them as persons because of their name, Father and Son.
- [6 : 01] But the name Holy Spirit doesn't quite sound so personal. After all, spirit is associated with things like wind and breath, not very personal things.
- And yet, in the Bible, we're told that the Holy Spirit speaks. He teaches. He reminds. He intercedes.
- He is grief. He's clearly a person. A he, not an it. And so, as a person, he's someone to be known in relationship.
- And the second thing to remember about the Holy Spirit is that he's God himself. He's a person to be worshipped.
- Let's consider how the Holy Spirit is described. In Hebrews 9, verse 14, we are told he is eternal. In Psalm 139, he is present everywhere.
- [6 : 58] In 1 Corinthians 2, he knows everything. He's described in exactly the same way as God. Indeed, in Acts chapter 5, the apostle Peter can accuse a couple, Ananias and Sapphira, of lying to the Holy Spirit, and then three sentences later say that they have lied to God.
- In his mind, they are the same thing. And of course, his very name is not just Spirit, but the Holy Spirit.
- And holiness is the essence of God's identity. Think of the angels the prophet Isaiah once saw in a vision, who cried out, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty.
- That's where the emphasis lies. And so it's no surprise that if the Holy Spirit is God, well, his very name stresses his holiness.
- So we want to get to know and to relate well to the person of the Holy Spirit. But how do we get to know a person? Well, we don't do it by reducing the person to just one thing.
- [8 : 16] Let me explain. Imagine this scenario. Imagine that you're someone who's just returned from studying overseas and you're visiting people during Chinese New Year.
- And you keep getting these comments. Oh, this one. Jeremy, right? Dr. Eng San, oh. Wow, so big, Liao.

And every single comment that you get is related purely to your status as so-and-so's child. So by the time you get to your 10th house, because your parents just love visiting, and you've heard the same comment for the 100th time, you're probably screaming inside your head, Stop reducing me to the son of so-and-so.

There's so much more to who I am than just being the anak, you know? What about my own life history, my schooling, my many different interests, my unique abilities, my quirky interests, my fashion sense, and so on?

You will be annoyed because you want to be truly known. Not just known solely as the doctor's son. And yet, subconsciously, that's what we often do to the Holy Spirit.

[9 : 36] As soon as we hear Holy Spirit, we go, Oh, that one! The one who makes people speak in tongues! And we reduce the whole person of the Holy Spirit to this one thing.

Whether that's speaking in tongues, or spontaneous worship, or something else. We reduce him to a Bible verse or two. Maybe Acts 2 and Pentecost, or 1 Corinthians 12 and spiritual gifts.

We pigeonhole him. We can only think of him in relation to tongues and prophecy, or warm, buzzy feelings during worship. And that's it.

We have no sense of who the Holy Spirit is other than that one thing. But, what if someone took the time to carefully listen to who you are?

They don't just pigeon you as the doctor's son, or the retired teacher, or the young pastor. They listen to the story of your life, or at least the big themes within it, and the events that matter to you.

[10 : 47] They let you tell your story. And if they do so, they will see you differently, wouldn't they? They'll get to know dimensions of you that they didn't know before.

And in a sense, that's how we're going to begin this sermon series. That's why we're not starting with a common Holy Spirit passage like 1 Corinthians 12, or Romans 8, or even this morning's Bible reading, Acts 2.

We will get to Acts 2 later this morning. But to understand its significance, we need to listen first of all to the Holy Spirit's backstory as he tells it to us.

And then we'll get a much more deeper sense of who he is. And that means, of course, listening to how the Holy Spirit sees himself fitting within the big story of the Bible.

Because the Holy Spirit is God, remember? And the Bible is his big story. Now, there is more than one way to tell the story, of course, and time is limited.

[11 : 55] So let me explain my approach. One of my friends is currently involved in making a documentary about GE14, and more specifically, the role about Dr. Mahatheo.

He's shown me the trailer. And to tell me the story, he needs to show what the problem is before he can introduce the promised saviour. And so the trailer shows people lamenting about how entrenched rivalry and corruption is in our country, how the country seems to be spiralling out of control, before he introduces the unlikely and flawed hero, a politician in his 90s.

And in telling the story about the Holy Spirit, well, I'm going to be doing the same thing. I need to briefly show you what the problem is, and then only then shall I introduce you to the Holy Spirit and the difference he is going to make.

So let's begin with the problem, which I'm going to summarise under three Ps. Here's the first P. No presence.

The Bible begins with the creator of heaven and earth being present in the garden with those he has created in his own image. And the Bible ends with that marvellous picture of a garden city where God's people live in the immediate presence of God.

[13 : 21] And so being in God's presence is how God originally intended it to be. And being in God's presence is the destination that God is working towards. This is what you and I were made for, to live face-to-face with God forever.

Now, presence is a beautiful gift, isn't it? Have you ever gone to an amazing concert or enjoyed a beautiful sunset? Did it make a difference if you were with someone else or you were just alone?

If you're alone, often you say, oh, I wish so-and-so were here with me. You long to have that loved one present with you. And so God created this world with the gift that we would enjoy him being present with us.

But the problem, of course, is that as a result of sin, the Lord has to throw us out of the house. Genesis 3, verse 23. So the Lord banished him from the garden.

The no vacancy sign in Eden goes up and the Lord puts an angel as the security guard to prevent Adam from re-entering the garden. It's like a restraining order that the court issues against someone, preventing him from going within 500 meters of a certain person.

[14 : 48] We are separated from God's presence. Second P, no power. Now, God is all-powerful, isn't he?

He created the world just like that. And just as we enjoy the gift of God's presence, so we enjoy the gift of power.

Power can be described as the capacity to shape and influence something. And God gives Adam the capacity to name the animals and to utilize the garden's resources.

In Genesis 1, 29, God says to him, I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth. Humans have the power to shape the environment, to cultivate it, to take care of it.

It wasn't a monkey or a dolphin that invented textiles, the printing press, or the steam engine. Humans alone had the power, the capacity to do that and to change the face of the earth.

[15 : 59] But when sin comes, our power to shape the world is compromised. Genesis 3, 17-19 tells us, Cursed is the ground because of you.

In pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground.

And so the earth now resists the power of humans. When Adam plants, fruit won't automatically appear. Weeds and thorns might instead.

And the things we create can even end up having power over us. Just think of our addiction to smartphones. We can't even control ourselves.

Never mind the world. Third P. No pulse. When Eva Perron, the popular wife of the Argentinian president, died of cancer in 1952, her body was embalmed so well that for 16 years it was put on public display.

[17 : 15] She looked alive, just sleeping. But if you were to take her hand, you wouldn't feel a pulse. If you were to feel her chest, it wouldn't be rising and falling.

She may be lifelike, but she definitely has no life. And that's our ultimate problem. In Genesis 2, verse 7, we're told that God himself breathed into man the breath of life.

But just imagine that God's breath himself is the one that causes us to come alive. But as Romans 6.23 tells us, we sin, and the wages of sin is death.

Spiritually speaking, we are like Eva Perron, lifelike, but actually dead. So that's the problem we face.

No presence, no power, no pulse. And I wonder, even as Christians, who are meant to be so alive, do you sometimes feel like that still?

[18 : 31] Perhaps today, there are some of us right now who feel spiritually dry. Our Christian lives are like vast, empty deserts with no signs of growth.

We feel unfruitful, unmotivated, unable to pray, unable to read the Bible, unable to live in God's way. Our hearts do not delight in God.

We are numb to divine things. We might even say we feel dead, lifelike, but without a pulse, without power, without God's presence.

And you wonder if you're doomed to a joyless existence like this, even as a Christian. And so today, God wants to reintroduce you to the Holy Spirit.

For when we get to know Him, we realize He's the answer to this problem. Look at His backstory. We will find it in the Old Testament.

[19 : 42] And this is what the Holy Spirit tells us about Himself. Firstly, He's the source of life. The first place we find the Holy Spirit in the Bible is actually not where many Christians expect to find Him.

but just look carefully at Genesis 1, verse 2. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

And so the Spirit is there right from the beginning, pulling the strings, bringing things to life. Now this is confirmed by the psalmist who tells us, when you, that's God, send your spirit, they, that's the creatures, are created and you renew the face of the earth.

Similarly, Job testifies, the Spirit of God has made me. The breath of the Almighty gives me life. The Holy Spirit is just as intimately involved in creation as the Father and the Son.

His Creator Spirit, not our normal picture of it, of Him, is it? But that's who He is.

[21 : 05] That's why the Nicene Creed calls Him the giver of life. And if the Spirit has always been the source of life from the beginning, the opposite must also be true.

There is absolutely no life without the Spirit. If He withdraws, all life collapses. Without Him, everything returns to dark, formless emptiness.

And if He's involved with creation, it's no surprise that He is involved with recreation. If the Holy Spirit is involved, new life is involved.

And that's what lies at the heart of a vision that God gives the prophet Ezekiel in Ezekiel 37, the one that we read this morning. In this vision, the prophet sees a valley of dry bones, an army full of dead men, a battlefield-turned graveyard.

It's a picture of the state of Israel, helpless, hopeless, lifeless. and God asks him, can these bones live, Ezekiel?

[22 : 23] The logical answer is, of course not. But God then instructs Ezekiel to speak to these bones and to the wind. And before we know it, these bones have muscles and then skin put on them and most importantly, breath enters them and they live.

And in Ezekiel 37, verse 14, God draws out the point of this vision. I will put my spirit in you and you will live, he declares.

Resurrection is not beyond me, he says. This is my solemn promise to the people of God. The Holy Spirit will bring about resurrection life.

He's creator spirit. He's the giver of life. Secondly, he's the one who empowers.

Well, if the Holy Spirit is the one who creates and sustains the universe, if he can bestow life on dry bones, well, he's clearly all-powerful. The statement of the prophet Micah is representative.

[23 : 41] I am filled with power with the spirit of the Lord and notice how the spirit is associated with power. And in the Old Testament, when the Holy Spirit comes upon people, they can do extraordinary things.

In Exodus 31, the Lord views Babilio, a craftsman, with the spirit and gives him the ability to build the tabernacle and to furnish it. In the book of Judges, he feels off-kneel and Samson with the spirit and enables them to defeat the enemies of Israel.

And actually, you might know, when the spirit comes upon Samson, he can tear a lion apart with his bare hands. Imagine that. And in 2 Samuel 23, the spirit empowers David to speak God's words.

What man lacks in power, the Holy Spirit is able to more than make up for it. He empowers weak people. Thirdly, he's God's very presence.

Over and over again in the Old Testament, we see God determined to come and dwell with his people, even outside Eden. In Exodus 25, verse 8, and 33, verse 14, he declares that a tabernacle is being built so that he can go and dwell with his people.

[25 : 14] When King Solomon builds a magnificent temple during the golden age of Israel, we're told that God comes and fills the temple. And the Psalms repeatedly show that the Old Testament people of God saw the temple as a place of prayer and to know that God's presence is with them.

Just read Psalm 84 on your own later, for instance. But here's the important thing. This divine presence is specifically equated with the Holy Spirit.

The prophet Isaiah, recalling Israel's past, especially the time of the Exodus, says this in Isaiah 63, verse 11 to 14.

Then his people record the days of O, the days of Moses and his people. Where is he who brought them through the sea with the shepherd of his flock?

Where is he who set his Holy Spirit among them, who sent his glorious arm of power to be at Moses' right hand, who divided the waters before them, to gain for himself everlasting renown, who led them through the depths?

[26 : 33] Like a horse in open country, they did not stumble. Like cattle that go down to the plain, they were given rest by the Spirit of the Lord. This is how you guided your people to make for yourself a glorious name.

And so Isaiah thinks of God's presence with them as God's Holy Spirit being with them. So as we start to get to know the Holy Spirit, we're getting excited.

He sounds great. He brings new life, new power, God's presence. But wait a minute. When we look a little bit closer in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit seems like a celebrity on Twitter, doesn't he?

We feel like we know him, we feel connected to him, but actually access to him is still pretty restricted. Take the issue of empowerment, for instance.

Sure, he empowers, but in the Old Testament, we discover that he only empowers certain people.

[27 : 45] We read that he empowers Babilio, Samson, David, but not many others besides. in the book of Numbers, Moses himself wishes that more people had God's spirit.

And not only that, in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit only sticks around for a certain time. He comes and then he goes. None of these people had the spirit with them always.

And it's the same with his presence. Sure, he feels the tabernacle, he feels the temple. But not anyone can just arrange coffee with the Almighty.

There's all sorts of buffers and barriers within the tabernacle and temple itself. And once again, he doesn't stick around. In Ezekiel chapter 8 to 11, we read of the Lord's presence leaving the temple, although the temple is still physically there, because of idolatry.

And that's where we come to the heart of the issue. Why do we have no pulse, no power, no presence ultimately?

[29 : 06] Because we have hearts of stone, to use Ezekiel's language. In other words, we are still hard-hearted, stubbornly refusing to follow God.

God. And that's why King David cries out in Psalm 51, created me a clean heart, O God, and cast not your Holy Spirit from me.

Because we can't change ourselves. All these people, David, Samson, and so on, they had sinful hearts, just like us.

So there's one more thing that the Holy Spirit has to reveal about himself. Fourthly, he's an agent of change.

For he alone can reach down to a place no one else can reach, our hearts. Look at what God has to say in Ezekiel chapter 36, verse 26 to 27.

[30 : 09] I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

And I will put my spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. That is the promise of the spirit.

Change hearts so that new life, new power, and the presence of God with us is all made possible. And the spirit is no lone ranger.

For the promise of the spirit doesn't come on its own. The promise of the spirit goes hand in hand with the promise of a spirit filled king.

We don't have time to look at this today but just to take one example, just look at Isaiah chapter 11 verses 1 to 3. Isaiah says, A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse, from his roots a branch will bear fruit, and the spirit of the Lord will rest on him.

[31 : 20] The spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of might, the spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord, and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.

And so the Holy Spirit will come to rest on this promised king so that he can carry out his mission and so that the Holy Spirit himself can come.

And so the Holy Spirit has given us his back story. And we are now finally in a better position to grasp the difference that the Holy Spirit makes without pigeonholing him.

We are better equipped to grasp the significance of Acts 2. So let's go there now. It is 50 days since the events of the last Passover when Jesus died and rose again.

and so the crowds are gathered in Jerusalem for the festival and they come from many nations and they are astonished as they hear the wonders of God being declared in their own languages.

[32 : 35] They heard all these people, the disciples of Jesus, standing up and declaring those wonders. So what's happening? Well, the apostle Peter then stands up and he gives a speech to help us understand what's going on.

And this is how he begins. Jesus was killed, he says. You know it. But he has risen. That's chapter 2, verse 23 to 24.

And not only that, that is what King David foresaw. And guys, you know what? It's been fulfilled. Acts chapter 2, verse 31 to 32.

Peter says, seeing what was to come, he, that's David, spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay.

God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. And in other words, we don't have time to explore this today.

[33 : 43] But in other words, the spirit-filled king, Jesus, has completed his mission. He's died. He's risen again, and he's now reigning. And if he is reigning now, what does that mean?

Well, Peter goes on to tell us, verse 33, exalted to the right hand of God, he, that's Jesus, has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit, and has poured out on you what you now see and hear.

And so here is the good news of Acts chapter 2. The promised Holy Spirit has arrived. And everyone can know him.

It's no longer like the Old Testament days. He's not just for a few people, for a short period of time. Peter says in Acts chapter 2, verse 17, that in the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

And we know that from Acts chapter 2, verse 32 and 33, as well as places like Hebrews chapter 1, verse 2, that the last days simply refer to now, the time between Jesus' first coming and his second coming.

[35 : 01] You can look at Hebrews chapter 1, verse 2, or ask me more about that if you're not sure about that. But it means today, right now, there's not going to be a trickle, there's not just going to be a few drops, but there is an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

And verse 18, even the lowliest servants can enjoy the Holy Spirit. Man and woman, slave or free, young and old, can have a permanent special relationship with him.

That's the main emphasis of verses 17 to 21. Notice in verse 17 how it talks about how Peter begins by talking about all people, and then he ends the quotation from Joel by saying that everyone can call on the name of the Lord, and then in between those verses 17 and 21, he keeps naming different categories of people, man and woman, young and old, and so on.

all can prophesy. In other words, all can proclaim God's word and God's gospel.

You see, in the context of Acts chapter 2, remember what's happening? The disciples are declaring to the gathered nations all the great things that God has done.

[36 : 29] And then Peter stands up and he says, this is the fulfillment of Joel chapter 2, that all will prophesy. And so the context tells us that prophecy in this case must include that aspect of proclaiming what God has done as a major element.

Although we will see in other parts of the Bible that prophecy does have a broader range than that. Now if all that is confusing to you, don't worry, we'll have time to explore it again, I think, in some of the coming weeks.

But the important thing for now to get is that the promise of the Spirit is being fulfilled here and is available to everyone.

This marks an extraordinary turning point in world history. So in other words, as Christians today, we live in the best time.

We live in the age where the promised Holy Spirit has now come. You see, when we feel spiritually dry, sometimes we might wish, oh, wouldn't it be nice if I lived during the time of Moses and I saw all those miracles?

[37 : 52] I experienced what the Israelites did. Wouldn't it be nice if I lived during the time of Jesus and saw what he did? But Acts chapter 2 tells us it's the other way round.

The Old Testament people long for what we now have, the Spirit of God is upon us. for now, today, because of the Spirit, we have life to the fullest.

We have a new pulse. You might feel dead today. You might still be feeling dry. But notice, the reality is, even if you don't feel it now, if you are trusting in Jesus, you are more alive, spiritually speaking, than anyone who isn't.

For the giver of life has made his home within you. And if you care that you are feeling spiritually dry, that is a sign you are alive.

Dead people don't feel thirst. Living people do. But on the other hand, if you are feeling thirsty all the time, well, medically speaking, that is a sign that something is not right with your health, is it?

[39 : 23] And it is the same spiritually speaking. And if that is you, then God especially wants to reintroduce you to the Holy Spirit. For apart from him, death is imminent, remember?

And so he wants you to walk in step with the Spirit, not to resist him, to follow his promptings to come to King Jesus, the Spirit-filled King who can save you and renew you.

He wants you to follow him, follow his promptings to pray, to be kind to that person rather than unkind, and so on.

for today, we also have renewed power. Christians are not just rescued from the penalty of sin, but are given power to fight against sin.

2 Corinthians chapter 3 verse 3 tells us that the Holy Spirit is now written upon the tablets of our human hearts, just as Ezekiel 36 says that God will do.

[40 : 32] And so God has promised us his resources to live his way. Now, living by the Holy Spirit's power does not mean an absence of weakness.

Just look at Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 verse 3 to 5. He says in verse 3, I came to yield, the Corinthians, in weakness and with great fear and trembling.

But, verse 4, he goes on to say, my message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.

And so clearly being weak and knowing the Spirit's power are not in opposition to one another. In some ways, weakness is a prerequisite to experiencing the Spirit's power.

For it is humble dependence that he's looking for. our weakness magnifies his greatness. And as we'll see in future weeks, he empowers us too with various gifts and to witness.

[41 : 43] And we'll get to that in a future week. And through the Spirit, Christ is present with us always and forever.

this year, the kitchen lights in my apartment were flickering for a long time. I keep coming on and off. And so I ended up washing the dishes in semi-darkness for quite a while.

And we've only finally got it fixed recently. So the light is now permanently on. And that's the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant.

In the old covenant, the Holy Spirit came and went. God's presence was flickering, if you like. But now it's God's people in the new covenant.

The light is permanently on. We have his presence permanently. Ephesians 2, verse 22 tells us, And in him, you two are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

[42 : 52] And this verse is not so much addressing us as individuals but as a church. As we gather together, as we hear his word and speak the word to each other, the Holy Spirit is in our midst.

He's here right now. And of course, he is with us individually as well. 1 Corinthians chapter 6 verse 19 calls each believer a temple of the Holy Spirit.

If you are a Christian, if you believe in Jesus, you are now a portable mini temple. God is dwelling within you.

And in the New Testament, there is one more thing that the Holy Spirit tells us about himself. In Ephesians chapter 1 verse 14, he's called the guarantor or the deposit of our inheritance.

in Romans 8.27, he's called the first fruits. And both descriptions are important. They point to two simultaneous truths.

[44 : 00] One, that a new age, an age of fulfillment, where Jesus reigns, has truly arrived. The first fruits are already in.

But two, the full realization of the new age is still in the future, when Jesus comes back. The first fruits is not the entire harvest.

So there is an overlap between the old age and the new age in the meantime. And I've tried to show that in this diagram. I don't know how clear it is. But the bottom arrow there is the old age and the top arrow where it says the age to come, that's the new age.

And so we live in the age in between, in the overlap between the old age and the new age. We have the first fruits but we don't have everything.

And that means two things. It means, number one, we should not expect more than has been promised. For example, the Holy Spirit has given us power to fight sin.

[45 : 07] But he doesn't tell us that we will never sin anymore in this life. The Holy Spirit is God's presence with us. but we can still look forward to an even better day when we see Jesus face to face.

We have the guarantee of resurrection life now. But that is not the same as having the guarantee of complete health. We mustn't expect too much.

But for those of us who are more conservative in nature, we must remember the opposite danger. we must not expect too little. The promised Holy Spirit really has come.

We really do know him. We really are living in the new age and so we can truly live as new living creations. We really can ask him for power to live God's way.

And so the Christian life is not just a grit your teeth and bear everything now. there are sweet moments right now where we can truly enjoy knowing that God is right there with you.

[46 : 21] And so as we finish this morning, let's not think of the Holy Spirit anymore as just being kind of there. Well, let's be eager to know more about him and over the next few weeks hopefully we'll get a sense of what he's actually come to do and how he operates.

But above all, let's thank God that the Holy Spirit is with us right now if we trust in King Jesus. The promised Spirit has come.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you so much that we now live in the age between Jesus' first coming and the second coming.

And in one sense there's nothing left for us to claim apart from waiting for your son to come back. Thank you that the Holy Spirit has come to dwell in us, that he is the one who gives us new birth, that he promises your presence with us, and that he gives us the power to walk in step with you, to show the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and to live for you.

Father, some of us this morning might be feeling spiritually dry. I pray, Lord, that this will encourage them to know that your Spirit is with them. And we pray that that would encourage them to call upon your name and to ask for your resources so that they might live your way.

[48 : 02] And we pray for this as a church as well, that we will not take for granted that we are indeed your temple in which your Holy Spirit has come to dwell in us. And may we live as those who are called your holy people.

All this we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.