

Showing the Spirit At Christmas

Luke 1-2

By Phillip G. Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2016-12-18

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Introduction

Intro:

We have been looking at the roles of the Trinity in the incarnation. Two weeks ago we looked at the Father's Mission for the Son must also grip our lives. And we looked at the specific ways that we must be missions. Last week we looked at the Son's foundation for our lives. Today I want to look at the role that the Holy Spirit had in the First Advent and what difference He makes in our lives right now. If we have the Spirit, it will show. If we don't have the Spirit, all our Christianity is just a facade. Paul speaks of a Spiritless Christianity as having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof. And because we are covering two chapters, we will just spend a little time on points II through XI.

I. The Spirit of preparation (Luke 1:15-17)

First of all, the third person of the Holy Trinity prepared His elect for Christ. Take a look at Luke 1:13-17: This was months before Jesus was born, and it shows that the Spirit was working in the life of John the Baptist. Luke points out that just as the Holy Spirit raised up a remnant under Elijah, He was doing the same through John. He was preparing the way for Christ's ministry.

LUK 1:13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.

LUK 1:14 "And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. LUK

1:15 "For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. LUK

1:16 "And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. LUK 1:17

"He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

This first reference to the presence of the Holy Spirit emphasizes the disobedience of men and the need for the Holy Spirit's work in their lives before anyone would or could respond to Christ. Some Arminians emphasize man's free will so much that you would get the impression that man's free will trumps God's free will. Nonsense. And here is a perfect illustration of God's sovereignty in grace. Consider that fact that John was regenerated and filled with the Spirit in His mother's womb. God didn't ask His permission;

He just did it. John was passive just as we are passive when we are born from above. And without God's choice of us, none of us would choose Him. Each Gospel account of the incarnation tells us exactly the same thing. Here is how John words it. John 1 tells us that because of man's depravity no one would receive Christ - not even the elect. This means that the Arminian idea that God fore knew who would receive Him does not make sense. John 1:10-11.

He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

Arminians love verse 12, which says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become the children of God, even to those who believe in His name." We love that verse too. It's a glorious promise, but we need to keep in mind that the verses on each side of it show that no one can receive Him; no one can believe on Him until the Holy Spirit regenerates their hearts. Even the elect rejected Christ until the Spirit worked in their hearts. It says, "He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him." Until they are regenerate, they cannot believe. Even His own did not receive Him. John denies that our will has any role in regeneration. It says, "who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." And I have put a chart of Scriptures demonstrating that fact on the back of your outlines. I won't go over it, but it is there for your convenience. The Spirit's new birth prepares our hearts for conversion. No one would otherwise respond.

So here is a worthwhile question to ask: Has the Holy Spirit prepared you for Christ? Verse 17 gives some clues as to how you can tell. Your heart will be turned. It says, "to turn the hearts of the fathers..." In the Scripture, the word heart refers to the mind, the will, the emotions as well as the conscience. If your mind has no more desire for Scripture than an unbeliever's, there is doubt about the Spirit's preparation. If your will is as stubborn and rebellious as ever, you still need the Holy Spirit's preparation. If your emotions have shown no evidence of being warmed to the things of God, you still need the Spirit to turn your heart. And this preparatory work is not only at regeneration when He gives us a new heart, but it is needed throughout our lives.

Verse 17 also says that a turned heart will affect our relationships. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children. It will affect our holiness. He will turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. Does your heart hunger and thirst after righteousness? Does it constantly long for the wisdom of man and the approval of man, or is your heart like David's where he was drawn to the preaching of the word and he said, "Oh how love I thy law, it is my

meditation all of the day.”? Or David’s statements where he longed for the courts of God. The Spirit prepares men. He is constantly moving men to Christ.

II. The Spirit of giving (1:35,32,77)

But points II and following showcase the fact that once the Holy Spirit has drawn us to Christ, given us new life, and filled our hearts, the Holy Spirit will show in ten ways. These are ten ways that the Holy Spirit overflows out of us.

First of all, we will have a spirit of giving. One of the things associated with the Spirit in Luke is His giving. He gives wisdom; He gives joy; He gives other graces. But He was also involved in giving the Son. And since we are nearing the time that we celebrate the incarnation, let me focus on that. John 3:16 tells us that the Father so loved us that He gave us the Son. But look at Luke 1:34-35. The Spirit was also intimately involved in giving the Son:

LUK 1:34 Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"

LUK 1:35 And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.

Though the Spirit gives several other things in these chapters, the ultimate gift was the giving of the Son of God as that Son took upon Himself a human nature. If gift giving at Christmas is to have a Christian character, our motives should transcend the motives of unbelievers. The Holy Spirit can produce within us the grace of giving. He can take away our selfishness and self-centeredness and enable us to give as the Holy Trinity gave. This Christmas let’s ask God for a genuine spirit of giving.

III. The Spirit of joy (1:15,41,44)

Another thing associated with Christmas is joy, and Luke indicates that this too was produced by the Holy Spirit. It’s hard to miss the words rejoice, joy, joy and gladness, great joy, and exceeding great joy that punctuate the nativity story. But I especially like the description of John the Baptist because God alone could have opened John’s heart to rejoice while still in the womb.

Well, first of all, verse 14 describes a joy that was produced in adults: "And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth." And I think that is natural. People like babies. But verse 15 sets the foundation for a joy which cannot be explained by merely outward factors. Verse 15 says, For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink.

He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

Now look at what this Spirit-filled baby does when Mary comes with the child Jesus in her womb. Verses 41-44:

LUK 1:41 And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. LUK 1:42 Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! LUK 1:43 "But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? LUK 1:44 "For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.

This joy is a joy anyone can have who is filled with the Holy Spirit. The difference between the hatred of Herod and the joy of the wisemen was the presence of the Spirit. The difference between the apathy of the Jews and the rejoicing of the righteous remnant was the Spirit in their midst. Luke attributes Elizabeth's joy to her being filled with the Spirit. The same is true of Simeon.

If you are feeling particularly joyless this season, the remedy is not changing your outward circumstances but it is having an inward presence: the presence of the Spirit. Peter said that even those undergoing persecution could have a joy inexpressible and full of glory. Are you filled with the Spirit? What evidence is there that this is true? As J. I Packer said in his book on the Holy Spirit, those who are filled will show the Spirit. That's what this sermon is about - showing the Spirit. Joy is one of the evidences of a Spirit-filled life.

IV. The Spirit of welcome (1:41-45)

But welcome is another. Christmas should be a time of welcome, yet for some people it is a time that they jealously guard for their families.

Wherever one finds the Spirit in abundance, one will also find a spirit of welcome in His people. We just read the passage in your outline. Luke 1:41-45 describes the Spirit-filled baby John welcoming Christ and the Spirit filled Elizabeth welcoming the woman in whom Christ dwelt. And that is the attitude that the Spirit always produces in His people. The book of 1 John says that we cannot even claim that we are indwelt by God if we do not welcome the brethren and love the brethren. One of the last words of the book of Revelation are the Spirit's welcoming attitude that is produced in the church. Revelation 22:17 says,

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

Do you have a spirit of welcome and hospitality? Hospitality can be shown right in this room - talking to new people and making them feel welcome. If you want to really get into the Christmas spirit this year, you not only need

Christ who is the reason for the season, but you need the Holy Spirit who produces Christmas cheer within His people.

V. The Spirit of praise (1:46-55,67-79)

What about praise? Someone once said that the worst kind of air pollution is not smog, but a sour disposition. And I think you have all experienced times when you can feel the air heavy with someone's sour attitudes. The Holy Spirit does not produce sour milk. He produces a spirit of praise in His people. Luke 1:64 says, "Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God." Our tongues need to be loosed in praise more frequently.

Now some people excuse their lack of praise based on their reserved personality. And that is a factor, I will admit. But if praise were dependent entirely on personality, why would Revelation 19:5 say, "Praise God, all you His servants." It isn't just the ones with pleasant personalities who are commanded to praise Him. And the reason all people can do so is that a genuine spirit of praise comes from the Holy Spirit and not just from us. It doesn't come from our personality; it comes from the Holy Spirit.

VI. The Spirit of adoration (1:46-55)

Another way is through adoration. We have many in America who pretend to worship and adore Christ at Christmas just as Herod made profession of wanting to worship and adore Christ then. When I was younger I would get a bit irritated with people who would tell me to "Smile, God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." Apparently I wasn't much of a smiler, so people always pestered me that I needed to smile more. I had a very reserved, shy, and somewhat depressed personality. And even after I became convicted that I did need to put more energy into my worship, it was work. It was sort of like the old fashioned water pumps that we had as kids. You had to pump like mad to eventually get a little bit of water out, and then it would start to gush. And that was kind of what adoration felt like for me - it eventually came, but it was forced. But I remember when the Holy Spirit came upon me in fullness for the first time. I didn't feel like I was getting a little trickle of water from a pump. I felt like I had the entire ocean of God's love flowing over me - wave upon wave of His love - so much that I didn't think that I could stand it. And it made adoration of God instantly easy. Because the Holy Spirit was pouring into me I felt like the Holy Spirit was pouring out of me in adoration to the Father.

And that is the image that Scripture uses to describe the Holy Spirit. Jesus

said that when we drink of Him by faith, out of our innermost being will flow rivers of living water. You can't stop a river. Even if you build a dam, eventually the river will flow over it or go around it. A river must flow. And that is what happens to the person who is full of the Spirit. Out of his innermost being flows rivers of living water.

There are several examples of adoration in the nativity story: the wise men, the shepherds and others. But let me just read without comment Mary's adoration and praise in verses 46-55:

LUK 1:46 And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord, LUK 1:47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. LUK 1:48 For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. LUK 1:49 For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name. LUK 1:50 And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation. LUK 1:51 He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. LUK 1:52 He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly. LUK 1:53 He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty. LUK 1:54 He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy, LUK 1:55 As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and to his seed forever."

The Holy Spirit is a spirit of praise. He is always pointing to the Son and to the Father. And one way that we show the Spirit is through praise. And if you feel dry, go to God like David did and say, "Lord, give me your Spirit. I am so thirsty for Your Spirit." And if you have never experienced the ocean or even the rivers of life that flow from God's throne, start where you are at. It may be just a pump. Prime the pump and bring up the water. Priming the pump may be listening to worship music on your iPod or other device and singing along. It may be reading a devotional. But don't be satisfied until you have a Spirit-generated joy and adoration.

VII. The Spirit of prophecy (1:67)

The Holy Spirit is also described as a Spirit of prophecy. These were inspired prophets. Luke 1:67 says, "Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied." One of the things we can be thankful for this Christmas is that the Holy Spirit gave God's Word to the Church. This is an incredible gift, and without the Spirit we wouldn't even have a nativity story to pass on to our children. It was by the Spirit that Elizabeth, Mary, Zacharias, Simeon and Anna all spoke.

Now here's the point. God's Spirit loves the Word. He loves to communicate God's heart to our hearts. He loves to opens our eyes to the Word and motivates us to study that Word. Christmas is robbed of its true spirit if the Word of God is neglected. Deuteronomy 32:46-47 says,

...be careful to observe - all the words of this law. For it is not a futile thing for you, because it is your life, and by this word you shall prolong your days...

Of course, in the broad sense of the word, all God's people are called prophets, priests and kings. As prophets we are motivated to speak God's Word to others. But you should not separate Word and Spirit. He is the author of the Scriptures and will never move you to set aside the Bible in favor of your experience.

VIII. The Spirit of empowerment (1:80; 2:40)

But the next point is important as well. God never separates Word and Power. He wants us to experience the reality of what His Scriptures promise. And there are several examples of the Spirit's empowering work in the lives of His people. I have just picked two. Luke 1:80 says of the child John, "So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel." That thought is repeated in chapter 2:40 and applied to Jesus. "And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him." If Christ needed to become spiritually strong as a perfect man; if He needed the grace of God to be upon Him as the perfect man, how can we hope to live without the strengthening work of the Holy Spirit in our lives? We can't.

For many people Christmas is just an empty tradition. They talk about Christ and celebrate His birth, but there is no reality or power in their lives. 1 Corinthians 4:20 says "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk [only] but of power." The Spirit is what makes the difference between a Christmas that is a matter of talk only or a Christmas that is also a matter of power and substance. May we be empowered by the Holy Spirit.

IX. The Spirit of Anticipation & Hope (2:25-26,38)

Hope is another major component of Christmas talk. But unlike the hopes of the world which are often dashed, the Spirit gives hope which does not disappoint. We will just look at one example: Luke 2:25-26 speaks of the Holy Spirit's role in giving hope of a Messiah to Simeon.

LUK 2:25 And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. LUK 2:26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

That may have seemed like an impossible dream, but the fact that the Holy Spirit produced this hope within him made it unshakable. Rom. 5:5 says, "And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." He wasn't just a Spirit

of hope back then. He continues to give His people hope today. You may have had failure after failure, but the Holy Spirit makes us determined not to give up and not to throw in the towel. He is the Spirit of hope.

X. The Spirit of Guidance (2:27)

Quickly taking up the last two points: The Spirit gave guidance. Obviously the direct revelation that was given to these people was a form of guidance, but God guided these people in other ways as well. For example, what moved Mary to go visit Elizabeth for three months? Perhaps just a desire to visit with her, but ultimately God moved her. What moved Joseph and Mary to go to Bethlehem? Well, you could say that the tax office served them notice that they had to do it. But ultimately God guided them through that providence to fulfill prophecy. What moved Joseph and Mary to present Jesus at the temple? You could say that they were just obeying the Scripture. And that is true, but it was the Spirit that motivated them to obey that Scripture. And the Spirit was very much involved in Mary's desires, providence and Scripture.

Look at Luke 2:27. This is another example of guidance by the Spirit. It says of Simeon,

So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God...

But it says, "he came by the Spirit into the temple." We aren't given any details about how the Spirit moved him to come into the temple at exactly that point, but we can praise God that the Spirit is in control of our lives, guiding us. And this Christmas we can claim the gift of guidance that God has given by His Spirit. It's a wonderful gift.

XI. The Spirit Of Blessing (1:41-42,45; 2:34)

The last thing I wanted to highlight this morning was that the Spirit produced a blessing on the lips of His people. In chapter 1, filled with the Spirit Elizabeth says,

- 42: ..."Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! LUK 1:43 "But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? LUK 1:44 "For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. LUK 1:45 "Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord."

The first impulse of being filled with the Spirit is that three times she blesses Mary. Simeon filled with the Spirit picks up Jesus and blesses Him. The role

of blessings in our lives should not be neglected. Those filled with the Spirit desire God's blessings for others, and not just for themselves. They pray God's blessings upon others, and if in positions of authority, continually confer God's blessings upon others. And I think you can see how this ties in with the Christmas spirit as well.

All of these things are other-oriented, and the Spirit produces the miracle of thinking of others more than we think of ourselves. The Spirit produces the miracle of rejoicing when others are advanced above what we are or receive more than we receive. The Spirit purges us of selfishness. We don't compare our presents with other peoples presents in envy. We wish even greater blessings upon others. Now, do we struggle with selfishness? Yes, because the flesh is always present. But the Holy Spirit helps us to crucify those desires and to put on His supernatural character more and more.

And so this brings us full circle in this sermon to point I. How do we gain the Christmas spirit? Naturally we are selfish and do not care for these things. But when we have the Holy Spirit residing within us and preparing us for Christ we can enter into the Christmas spirit as God intended.

If you have never trusted Jesus Christ alone for your salvation, I would urge you to do so. And with Christ, receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. If this season's joy is to be more than passing, you need to walk in the Spirit and ask Him to cleanse your heart of selfishness. May each of us find such a full measure of the Spirit in our lives that we can become channels of living water to others. May we show the Spirit. Amen.