

## Life in the Spirit

*John 7:37-39*

### Introduction

Jesus says that “rivers of living water will flow out of the hearts” of those who believe in Him (**John 7:38**). We don’t need to look up other Scriptures that talk about living water to understand what Jesus is saying. John tells us right away that Jesus is talking about the *Holy Spirit who had not yet been given* (**v. 39**). I know what you’re thinking, two weeks ago I said the Holy Spirit came upon prophets, kings, and judges for holy work that God had for them to do. So, it looks like the Holy Spirit has already been given. But last week I said the Ascension was a door between eras, the new one being the “church age,” which began at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out freely on all believers to dwell within us. Today, we look at three things: 1) How the Holy Spirit enters our life, 2) What the Spirit does for us, and 3) How He does His work in us.

### How the Holy Spirit Enters Our Lives

#### *Through Baptism*

(Read **Acts 19:1-6**) The Baptism of John the Baptist was a Baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. But John said about Jesus that He would baptize people *with the Holy Spirit and with fire* (**Matthew 3:11**). So, when the Ephesians were baptized into Jesus, they received the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes into our lives when we are Baptized. That’s what happened today with Charley Sue. When she was baptized, the Holy Spirit entered her life and worked faith in her to believe in Jesus. But that’s not the only means by which God works.

#### *Through the Word of God*

What about Kaitlyn, or others who are baptized later in life? She asked to be baptized, because she already has faith. The **Formula of Concord** tells us that *the preaching and hearing of the Word are the Holy Spirit’s instruments* (**Formula of Concord SD, 52**). Paul says in **Romans**, *faith comes from hearing* (**Romans 10:17**). God works through His Word. In Baptism, it’s the Word added to the water that gives it its divine power.

### What the Holy Spirit Does for Us

But once the Holy Spirit comes into our lives, what’s He do for us? We already mentioned how He works faith in us. Paul says, *no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit* (**1 Corinthians 12:3**). The Holy Spirit gives us faith so we can claim Jesus as our Lord.

#### *He Gives Life*

In the **Nicene Creed**, we call the Holy Spirit the *Lord and giver of life*. He gives us life. The theological term for this is *regeneration*. We are dead in our sins, but when the Holy Spirit works faith in us, He brings us to life. We have no life apart from the Spirit. It’s no wonder that in both Greek and Hebrew, the word for *breath* is the same as the word for *spirit*.

#### *He Washes Away Sin*

The **Small Catechism** cites **Titus 3:5-8** when it tells us that the Holy Spirit washes away sins at Baptism.

### *He Sanctifies*

In the **Augsburg Confession**, we read: *[Christ] sanctifies those who believe in Him, by sending the Holy Spirit into their lives to rule, comfort, and make them alive. He defends them against the devil and the power of sin (Augsburg Confession Art. III, 5).* “Sanctify” means “to make holy”, literally, “to set apart.” The Holy Spirit sets us apart for a life in Christ. He works in us to make us more like Christ as we live.

### *He Produces Good Works*

Part of sanctification is that the Holy Spirit produces good works in us. According to the **Apology**, He *brings life and helps us keep the Law (Apology of the Augsburg Confession Art. 5, 11)*. It’s important that we mention here that these good works are not saving works. We are saved by faith apart from works. The good works that we do are done in response to what God has already done in us. They are done out of faith and love, not out of a sense of duty or “ought-ness.” On our own, we couldn’t do anything good. The writer to the Hebrews tells us that *without faith it is impossible to please [God] (Hebrews 11:6)*. The Holy Spirit gives us faith and helps us live a life that pleases God.

### **How He Works**

The way the Holy Spirit works in our lives is the same as the way He enters them – through Word and Sacrament. When we hear the Word of God, the Holy Spirit uses it to lead, comfort, empower, and convict us. He also works through the Sacrament of the Altar. As we receive the body and blood of Christ at His table, the Holy Spirit, who has given us faith, strengthens that faith and empowers us to live for Jesus. Today, we celebrate the giving of the Holy Spirit, the giver and sanctifier of our life. And we thank God for this Life in the Spirit.

*And the peace of God,  
Which surpasses all understanding,  
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*