**By My Spirit**

**6-14-20**

Being a Dad, like being a Mom, is one of those things that carries an amazing amount of joy & sorrow, pride & humiliation, fun & labor, expectation & disappointment, serendipity & discipline.

* But its all wrapped up in a love that can overcome every sorrow, every humiliation, every disappointment.
	+ Kids, don’t forget that next week is Father’s Day, and the old man deserves some cred.
* But then there are some things where being a dad is not like being a mom – like those instances where you can feel like a superhero!
	+ When you do something easily that your child has neither the strength nor coordination to accomplish yet, and they are amazed at your physical prowess or your surpassing intelligence.
		- OK, maybe moms are also seen that way by their kids, but its only dads who actually get a bit of an ego boost from it.
	+ I even run into this with my girls at my advanced age.
		- Lately we’ve been playing catch with a baseball – a relatively new thing for them.
			* And they are really getting the hang of it.
		- But at times I’ll make a catch of a toss that is really low or off to the side and they react by saying something like “Wow! How did you do that??”
			* Now bear in mind that I never played organized baseball – I was never good enough to play.
			* The most I did play was church softball, and I wasn’t all that good at that either.
		- But compared to a beginner, I’m amazing!
			* Mostly because I’ve had 50 years of practice!
			* And to compare my ability to theirs right now is not fair.
				+ I know in a year or two, if they keep doing it, they’ll be better at it than I am.
				+ Just as even now Maria can occasionally beat me in a game of Horse with the Basketball.
		- But for a short time, Dads reign supreme in their athletic abilities and knowledge of the world.
			* And secretly, it feels good, even though we know its fleeting.

I mention this because I think that when it comes to Jesus, we tend to be like little kids marveling at His super-human (actually divine) character and ability.

* Afterall, He IS the ultimate superhero, isn’t He; endowed with all the power of God by His very nature.
	+ Isn’t this how He could live perfectly, perform miracles, know what others were thinking, cast out demons, and so on.
	+ Jesus was God – the second person of the Trinity: Father, SON, and Holy Spirit!
		- In fact, as I write my notes I even capitalize the pronoun Him and His when I write of Jesus – just as I capitalize the word God.
* But while it is true that Christ is the second person of the Trinity and is, as Paul said, *by His very nature God*, the idea that He functioned in the power of His divine nature as Jesus of Nazareth presents some very real problems.
	+ Imagine with me for a moment that you’re at a little league baseball game for kids around nine or ten years old.
		- You’re there to support your son or daughter or niece, nephew or grandchild.
		- And it’s not just any old baseball game, but it’s actually the citywide little league championship game.
		- It’s been a great game and your team is ahead by a run as you come to the bottom of the ninth inning and the other team is up to bat.
			* The first player pops out to third.
			* The second player strikes out.
			* But the third batter manages a bloop single and is standing on first base.
			* But that’s OK, because the next kid up is a tiny little girl named Ruth who hasn’t even been able to get the ball out of the infield all day long (everybody’s pretty confident).
		- But then, over the loudspeaker you hear, *Now, pinch hitting for little Laura Ruth, her dad, George Ruth (otherwise known as, Babe).*
			* What? Babe Ruth is going out to bat for his daughter? THE Babe Ruth?
			* And he goes out there and swats the ball with one hand over the fence, over the sidewalk, and even over the parking lot.
			* And all the kids on the other team cheer and grab the trophy.
		- What would be your first response? (well after the shock of Babe Ruth returning from the dead to play baseball) That’s not fair!
			* Yes, the rules allow for a pinch hitter, but not a ringer.
				+ The pinch hitter has to be someone on the team!
				+ It has to be another 9 or 10 year old child!
			* You can’t have a dad come in, much less Babe Ruth, to hit for little Laura Ruth.
				+ You might as well have a superhero.
		- And you would be right. It would be unjust.
	+ And that describes the problem we would have if Jesus had come in the full power of his divinity lived a perfect life and then suffered and died for our sin.
		- Satan, whose we were, would rightfully scream, “foul!”
			* You can’t have a pinch hitter who is not on the team, much less a superhero!
			* If Jesus, by definition, COULDN’T sin (which as God He couldn’t), then how could his perfection be an equivalent sacrifice for OUR sin?
			* He couldn’t just LOOK human, Jesus had to BE FULLY human in order to “take one for the team”.

And this is just what the Apostle Paul demonstrates in the passage we read just a few moments ago.

* Paul is actually talking about the implications of what we call the incarnation on the life of the believer (incarnation being the act of God becoming Human).
	+ But in doing so, Paul reveals the most in depth and concise description in Scripture of just how God took on human flesh.

*5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.*

* I want to take a few moments to look at just what this means, because, like Paul, I believe the details of the incarnation of the Son of God have profound implications for how we live our lives in Christ.
	+ First, Paul twice uses the word *morphe*, which is translated in the ESV “form”.

*6…though he was in the* ***form*** *of God…7 [he] emptied himself, by taking the* ***form*** *of a servant…*

* + - In English, the word “form” usually carries the connotation of just one’s appearance or external shape.
			* In fact, in recent years we have even been using the underlying Greek word of the text in this way, speaking of one thing “morphing” into something else.
		- But the actual Greek word speaks of both appearance AND substance together.
			* So Jesus didn’t just LOOK like God in “form”, but was God in both appearance and substance.
			* But this also means, then, that the second time the word “morphe” is used in the passage, it means the same thing.
			* So where in vs. 6 Jesus before the incarnation is said to be God in both appearance and substance …
				+ Vs. 7 indicates that in the incarnation Jesus *morphed* into a servant (or slave) in both appearance and substance.
				+ His *morphe* – his appearance and substance– changed.
	+ How did it change? We find that later in vs. 6: First,

*6…[Jesus] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.*

* + - This Greek word, translated “a thing to be grasped” has taken some time to figure out how to translate over the centuries.
			* The word is: *harpagmos*
			* And it is not found anywhere else in the Scriptures.
			* In fact, it is very rare in other Konia Greek documents of the time period as well, making it very hard to get a read on what it means.
				+ The few times it was found non-biblical usage, it referred to robbery or rape.

Which explains the KJV’s translation *thought it not robbery to be equal to God.*

Or as in other translations speak of “something to be grasped” as in taking something.

* + - * But since those translations, more recent discoveries of ancient Greek writings have determined that the word also carried the idea of “taking advantage” or “exploiting”.
				+ Thus, the NRSV translates:

*…he did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited.*

* + - * + Or as in the footnote of the ESV:

*…he did not count equality with God a thing to be held on to for advantage.*

* + - * + Thus, the attitude of Christ was that there was no advantage to his mission for him to hang onto his divine nature or prerogatives.
				+ It would do no good to exploit his divinity in the mission on which he was embarked.
	+ So, vs. 7 tells us:

*7 [he] emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.*

* + - Seeing that to exploit his divinity for the purpose of his mission would actually undermine his mission, He chose instead to empty himself of his divine substance and prerogatives.
			* And he did so BY TAKING ON the substance and appearance of a slave.
			* He was “born” just as all humanity was born, except that he was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Now if you’ve been paying attention these last couple of weeks, you know that we are in a series about the Holy Spirit – I am calling it, “The Breath of God”.

* And even if you haven’t been following along, you may be wondering why all the slides have a Holy Spirit theme even though we are studying the incarnation of the Jesus.
* I am starting here, because it is in the incarnation of Jesus that we find the first work of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament.
	+ And because it is by the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the incarnate Christ that Jesus is empowered to carry out his ministry.
		- After all, “Christ” is not a name, but a title that means “anointed one”. But just what was the Christ anointed with?
			* It is Jesus himself who tells us in Luke 4:18-21 when he quotes the prophet Isaiah:

*18 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,*

 *because he has anointed me*

 *to proclaim good news to the poor*

 *He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives*

 *and recovering of sight to the blind,*

 *to set at liberty those who are oppressed,*

*19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”*

*20 And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21 And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”*

* + - * Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit – this is what made him The Christ!
		- And in the coming weeks, we will see that it was in the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus:
			* Was conceived
			* Overcame temptation
			* Proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom
			* Outwitted religious rulers
			* Performed miracles of healing
			* Drove out demons
			* Endured the cross
			* And was raised from the dead
	+ We are mistaken if we think that he did all these things by the power of his own divinity within him.
		- If he had, then he could not have been a suitable sacrifice for our sin.
			* He would have been a ringer – a superhero – a dad in a little league game trying to unfairly change the conditions of the game.
			* Jesus knew that his divine nature would not serve his mission, so he emptied himself of it and instead took on the fullness of humanity.
				+ He had to be a member of the team in order to take one for the team.
	+ So, instead, he functioned in the power of the Holy Spirit until he was raised by that Spirit from death itself.

This is not just some high Christian theology, but it has enormous practical implications for every follower of Jesus.

* Jesus walked this earth in the same power that is poured out upon us when we give our lives to Jesus.
	+ It is why Jesus was able, in John 14:12, to say to his disciples with confidence:

*12 “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.*

* + - But what’s the connection here?
			* What is the connection between followers of Jesus doing greater works than he did with Jesus going to the Father?
		- Jesus explains in John 16:6-7

*6 But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. 7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.*

* + Jesus tells his disciples that the same Spirit who has been empowering his ministry on earth is going to empower their ministry as well – as well as that of *all who believe in him*.
	+ He assures them that when he returns to his Father, he will anoint them with the same anointing he received at his baptism.
		- Only theirs will be a baptism with the Holy Spirit.
	+ You know, there are surprisingly few events in the life of Jesus that are included by all four Gospel writers – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.
		- So, when a story or event is included in all the Gospels we know that it was clearly recognized by everyone as essential information for every believer.
		- Well, all four Gospel writers record the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist as well as the Baptizer’s reflections on the event.
			* And this is what John’s Gospel tells us John the Baptist said about Jesus.
			* John 1:32-33.

*32 And John bore witness: “I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. 33 I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.*

* + - And in Acts 1:4-5, just prior to his going to his Father, Jesus promises that he will soon do that very thing:

*4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”*

* Friends, today I just wanted to do a little corrective surgery.
	+ For too many years much of Evangelicalism has sought to achieve the mission of our Lord through methods and models and programs of our own design and making.
		- Rather than seek the Lord and the power of his Spirit, we would watch for what God was doing elsewhere and seek to replicate it by following their methodology.
		- Thus a whole conference and seminar industry grew up around “how to do it” like Willow or Saddleback or Eaglebrook (to name just a few).
			* And though I am hopeful that we are learning to turn to the Spirit for transformation, leading and guidance in our lives and calling…
			* I still find that my email box is full of invitations to learn all the “how-to’s” of successful ministry and outreach.
	+ But the same can be said of our attempts to grow in our walk with Jesus and our understanding of faith.
		- Libraries of “how to” books that will lead to successful witness or weight loss or parenting or marriages or what have you.
			* I have a resource in my library called something like 17 Steps to Successful Leadership.
			* We tend to be those who desire to mimic the successful.
				+ But apparently, we just don’t believe Jesus to be all that successful.
				+ OR – and this is more to the point of today’s message – we believe that Jesus’ “success” was based on his divinity; something that we do not share and cannot emulate.
* But this is not true. The “methodology” of Jesus’ life and ministry are totally available for us to walk in.
	+ For Jesus’ methodology and that of the early church was as simple as seeking God and as difficult as following his leading.
		- But this means believing the Spirit is active and powerful and brings divine wisdom and power to bear in our callings in this world.
		- It means believing that the Spirit is working to apply the Gospel of the glorified Christ to the assembly of believers known collectively as “the church” and to the world in which it lives.
		- And it means believing that the same Spirit that not only empowered the life of Jesus, but actually raised him from the dead, is at work in you and in me and is available to all of us as we follow look to him.
			* For wisdom and love in unprecedented days.
			* For creative solutions to intractable injustices and generational brokenness.
			* For courage to speak truth to power, to speak grace to the sinner, and to speak healing to the broken.
		- For the anointing of the Christ has now been poured out on us for the same purpose and program of Christ Jesus.
			* To bring good news to the poor…
			* Liberty to the captives…
			* Sight to the blind…
			* Freedom to the oppressed…
			* To proclaim the season of the Lord’s favor.
	+ But I can’t do that, you say. I’m just one person. I don’t understand the issues. It’s all so complicated.
		- And you would be right – except that you have been anointed; anointed with the same Spirit that empowered and lead Jesus throughout his earthly ministry.
		- And because of this, Jesus said, *you will do greater things than I have done.*
			* Do you believe this?
			* Prayer

**Benediction:**

*May God…give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation…that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know…the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe; the very power he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.*