

Living Supernaturally – Getting Started

On Saturday nights and Sunday mornings through the month of June, Patrick and I are going to be speaking on “**Living Supernaturally**”. I don’t know if you have ever thought about living a supernatural life, but that’s what we’re going to be talking about as we spend five weeks or so on the subject of the Holy Spirit. I remember in my first church, when we asked this question “*Why do I Need A Supernatural Life?*” that we’re going to start out with today. When we ask that question, I remember at a Vestry meeting where we were talking about the possibility of having a prayer time at the communion rail like we do here at St. Stephen’s after the Eucharist on Sunday morning and where we might come forward and be prayed for healing or for any other need in my life and expect God to answer those prayers. One of the Vestry members got very upset about that, a fellow named, John, *a friend named, John*. And at one point he got so exacerbated in the discussion he said, “If we do that, and if that begins to happen in our church, people will think that something supernatural is happening here! And I kinda sat back (I never forgot the comment) and I thought, “Okay, let’s step back a few steps and go at this again.” You know, if something supernatural doesn’t happen in your life and mine, then we’re just left to ourselves. That’s it. You’ve got to deal with life by yourself. If God doesn’t do something supernatural that comes in over and above your strength and your character and your heart and your weaknesses, then you’re going to be left to yourself. We’re not here because we want to be left to ourselves. We’re here because we need help. We need supernatural help from the supernatural God of Heaven and Earth.

But let me see if I can give you a few reasons why we need a supernatural life to come along side that.

As we turn to your outline this morning, here’s the first: **Because I get Tired**

I’ll bet you do too. Isaiah tells us that God...

“...gives power to those who are tired and worn out; He offers strength to the weak.” Isa 40:31
(NLT)

What would we do without his supernatural power and strength? I mean, we all know that we run out of our own pretty quick. I think parents know this best of all! I was reading this week about Charlie Shedd, an author. He tells this story on himself, "Before we had kids I use to travel across the country teaching a lecture I called 'The Ten Commandments for Raising Perfect Kids'." After he and Martha had their first child, he changed it to "Ten Hints for Parents". After their second child, he relabeled the lecture, "A Few Tentative Suggestions For Fellow Strugglers." He said after the arrival of the third child he gave up speaking on the topic altogether. All of us moms and dads know that if you are going to raise your kids well, you need supernatural help. You can't do it by yourself. You need more help.

Here’s another reason: **Because I Get Tempted**

Temptation is a part of real life. The man or woman who says, “I’m not tempted very much,” is either lying, or *dead!* Temptation is real. You name the temptation – chocolate cake, internet pornography, the latest offering at the mall, the next step up where you step on somebody along the pathway in career ambition, lying for a job interview, cheating on your partner at work or on your spouse at home. What is surprising – and we know this now – is that along the road of life, temptation is vicious and overpowering, seductive and effective. And you’ve got to learn to deal with it. When you’re tempted, you need supernatural help. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10,

“At the time you are tempted, He will give you strength to endure it, and so provide you with a way out.”
1 Cor 10:13 (TEV)

What would you do if you didn’t have His strength to endure or the way out that He provides?

Here’s a third reason that you need supernatural help: you need it **Because you’ve Got a Problem to Solve.**

Early this month I said to Moms that in order to raise your kids well, you need a sober and unbiased recognition of your child's sin nature. You've just gotta have it, you've got to be honest about what's going on. But what's true of our kids is true of us as well... we need a sober and unbiased recognition of our own sin nature also. The scriptures are blunt about this...

the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Rom 8:7

You're not capable, by yourself, of yielding your life to God's will and plan for you. You need help even to turn it over. Look what Paul writes in Romans 7:

I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. Rom 7:18

You have a lot of "wanna do's" but not so many "follow through's". It's hard. We're famous for New Year's resolutions that we break again every year. C.S. Lewis described the disorders deep inside us by saying that we are 'bent' – we have this uncanny tendency to always make the wrong choice, time after time after time. When you do that, you know you need supernatural help. You can't fix the problem of your own heart.

Here's another reason we need that kind of help: **Because I've Got a Purpose to Fulfill**

One of the most important discoveries of our lives is that God has put us on this earth for a purpose. We are here on mission. We're part of his team taking our part in the middle of a cosmic invasion of planet earth. God has YOU on that team. That's what's going on. God wants to take this planet back for himself, one life at a time. You are on the rescue team. You are in His army. You've got a purpose for your life. That is why you are here. Now here's a piece of the instructions Jesus gave us about being on his team, the night before He was crucified...

(Jesus said) "I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in Me, and I in them, will produce much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."

John 15:5 (NLT)

Nothing that will last. Nothing that will make a difference for eternity. Nothing that will abide. Nothing that, in the end, will have been worth doing. Not without Him. You are on the team, but you can't make a contribution to the mission without his supernatural power and His supernatural presence. That's why we need a supernatural life.

When Jesus was raised from the dead, he told his followers to stay in Jerusalem until he sent the Holy Spirit to them. They were to wait for 50 days. Because they needed a supernatural power and presence to live the life he had called them to and to undertake the mission that He has charged them to fulfill. You can't do it on your own. So they waited. 50 days. And **then the day of Pentecost came.**

Today and in the weeks to come, I want to **teach you about that day and about the Holy Spirit over the next weeks.** Today I want to start with just **a couple of clear points.** Here's the first...

1. On the day of Pentecost, Jesus Delivered the Holy Spirit.

That is what happened. But let me **spin it back** a few years and then ramp up to it. Do you remember what happened at the beginning of Jesus' ministry? Do you remember when he was **baptized** three years earlier by John the Baptist in the Jordan River? Do you remember what happened at that moment? It was the start of His ministry and at that moment, the Holy Spirit -scripture tells us- came down on Him like a dove, in bodily form, the scriptures say, like a dove, and it set upon Him and remained on him. That's what the scriptures say happened. Now, from that moment on, everything changed for Jesus. Before that time, he did no miracles, but **from that moment on**, his ministry launched in a spectacular way. He healed people in town after town after town, he cast out demons, he demonstrated power over the wind and the sea, he called people to be his followers and people came- by dozens, by hundreds, by thousands! He forgave people's sins – no one had ever done that before! He taught with authority (like no one had ever taught before), he

raised three people from the dead. In the end, He surrendered His life on the cross. All of that happened starting at the moment when the Holy Spirit came down upon him. None of that happened before that moment. The Holy Spirit made that kind of difference in the life of Jesus.

In the Gospel of John, **John the Baptist comments** on what he saw as he baptized Jesus in the Jordan River...we're told in chapter 1:

I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water (that's the Father) told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'

John 1:33

That was what John understood from that experience. Then and there he understood that his cousin, Jesus, was the Messiah. Then and there, he knew that his cousin, Jesus, would baptize people with the Holy Spirit – he baptized them with water in the Jordan River but Jesus would baptize them with the Holy Spirit. He knew it, right then, right there. Jesus delivers the Holy Spirit. You cannot get it anywhere else. But you can get it from Him. He promises. It's His gift.

Three years later, on the night before his crucifixion, after all the miracles, after all the unbelievable events of the previous years, Jesus would say this to his followers...

Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. John 16:7

Would you **circle the phrase "your advantage"**? I've wondered about that. When I was a younger Christian, I had the hardest time understanding this. I mean, do you know how awesome it would be if we could load up a couple hundred of us on a jetliner and go over **to Jerusalem** and be at a weeklong conference that Jesus himself was teaching. Do you know how awesome that would be? Wouldn't you go? I sure would! Can you imagine how life changing it would be if you could be on **a mission trip** to some unreached people (outside your comfort zone) and on your small team of a dozen or two dozen people, Jesus was the leader? He was there in the flesh and you could go with him on the trip! Wouldn't that be extraordinary? Just think for a minute about the impact it would make in your life if you were in one of those crisis seasons we seem to get into so much and you could have **a few private minutes** with him to talk through a deeply personal problem... And I will bet that if you can do that with Him in the flesh that he would say back to you some penetrating words that would make a major shift in your life. And probably before you were done, he would put his hands on your shoulders and he would **pray for you**... you would know that you'd been prayed for – that God was there with you. Wouldn't you love to do that? I used to think like that, and then I ran into this verse that says *it is to your advantage that I go away... if I go, I will send him to you.* It was hard for me to understand. It was hard for the disciples to understand.

And then, after his unbelievable crucifixion... and then his **more** unbelievable resurrection... he talks to his disciples again and says don't go anywhere and don't tell anybody. **Wait... 50 days.** Wait for the gift, because you need it. To do what I'm sending you out to do, you need it. So they did. They waited 50 days. And then we're told in Acts 2:

*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. Everybody started speaking in languages that they didn't know how to speak! Praising God for all the great things that He had done. The summary verse: *All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit...every single one, filled.**

Acts 2:2-4

Jesus delivers the Holy Spirit. What John saw three years earlier had proven true. From the day of Pentecost on, every man or woman or child – young or old, it makes no difference - who surrenders their lives to Jesus **receives**... not just the forgiveness of their sins, but the gift of the Holy Spirit to live inside them. *All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit*... Jesus kept his promise. He still does today.

But I want to press on with my question. **Why is this to our advantage?** Here's **the answer...**

2. Because the Holy Spirit Delivers Jesus

That's what he said the Holy Spirit would do. Here's how he said it the night before his crucifixion...

“when the Friend comes, the Spirit of the Truth... he won't draw attention to himself, but will make sense out of what is about to happen and, indeed, out of all that I have done and said. He will honor me; he will take from me and deliver it to you. Everything the Father has is also mine...”

John 16:13-15 (Msg)

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to **honor Jesus**, to point people to him, to lead people to him, to help us to understand what He taught and apply it to our lives. Sometimes people get so excited about the Holy Spirit that all we talk about is the Holy Spirit and the supernatural things that He does. And he does! But all the time **the Holy Spirit is pointing to Jesus, saying, “Don't look at me, look at Him! He's what it's all about!”** J.I. Packer has described this focus by saying that the Holy Spirit has a **“searchlight ministry”**, always casting his great light, like a beacon, not on himself but on Jesus.

Note what Jesus says... *“Everything the Father has is mine...He will take from me and deliver it to you...”*

I like to explain this with a picture of **three great vats**, stacked up a ladder towards heaven. At the top (bear with me, please) the greatest vat is God the Father. Inside that huge vat is everything that belongs to God. His eternal purposes; his truth; his wisdom; his majesty; his unbroken holiness; his goodness; his mercy; his love for sinners. It's all in the vat! His righteousness; his power over every created thing... **it is all there.** Jesus says everything the Father has is his. He's the second vat down the ladder. Everything. The Father pours it all into Jesus, like a river flowing from the throne of God himself into the Sun. There's nothing he holds back, everything goes to the Son. That is why Jesus said, “If you have seen me, you have seen the Father.” They are that close.

Now here's what happens. **Everything in Jesus** (the second vat)... all of it, no holding back... he **pours into you** (you're the third vat) when you give your life to Jesus. He does it by the Holy Spirit. It's a river of life that flows from the Father to the Son to the children (that's us). His eternity; his majesty; his unbroken holiness... **he pours it into you...** his goodness; his mercy; his love for sinners... **he pours it into you...** his truth; his wisdom; his righteousness; his power over everything; his commitment to reach every person on the face of this globe with His gospel and His love... **he pours it into you by his Holy Spirit.** That's what the Holy Spirit does: *“He will take from me and deliver it to you...”* And then it starts to grow.

It just grows, and grows, and grows. You know, when the disciples were talking about the *Holy Spirit*, they finally stopped talking about the Holy Spirit, they began to call him, like in Acts 16:7, *“the Spirit of Jesus...”* Because the Holy Spirit delivers Jesus to His followers. **It is the purpose of the Holy Spirit to give you the character of Jesus, the heart of Jesus, the faithfulness of Jesus, the wisdom of Jesus, and the power of Jesus – and to turn you loose on the mission of Jesus to the world.** If you want the Holy Spirit, that's where you are going. The Holy Spirit is given for no other reason than that.

Do you understand why he said it was **to our advantage** that he would go away? Because he had to ascend to heaven before he could send us his Spirit. Look at the **graphic** on your outline...

“your advantage”	
Before	Now
One place	Anywhere
One moment	Forever
Outside us	Inside us

Before, Jesus would be with us in **one** place. He could be at my side or your side, or here in Sewickley or in Galilee, but he couldn't be in both places. But now He can be anywhere! Because anywhere there is a follower of Jesus, the Holy Spirit delivers Jesus. Before He could only be with us at one moment, for a stretch of time, then he'd go off and do something for somebody else. But now, as he promised, he can be with us forever. Before he could only be outside us, maybe alongside us. But now, he can be inside us and he can fix the problem of the human heart. It's to our advantage that he went away.

My testimony...

In my mid-twenties, when I came to Christ, I spent some years stumbling along. I mean, I really was just stumbling along and someone noticed (probably a lot of people noticed) and someone finally talked to me about it... they asked me this question: "Are you filled with the Holy Spirit?" I knew the promise of Jesus...

"you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8

I knew the promise was for fullness. And when they asked me that question, my heart got real nervous. "Well... I hope I am." That was an honest statement. But I didn't, honestly, know. I didn't have any sense of this supernatural presence inside me. I didn't have a sense of this river that was flowing from God, flowing through me. I didn't have a sense of something much, much bigger and beyond me. Every now and then, I had maybe a hint, but nothing regular; nothing like the Bible talked about. And, to be even more honest, I wasn't sure that I wanted to. That was what I began to realize.

For some months I wrestled with it. Finally, it came down to one clear issue. I bet you know the issue because I'll bet you wrestle with it too. Most of us do. The issue was: **Control**. I believed in Jesus but wasn't so sure I wanted to give over control of my life everyday. I was so glad to be forgiven for my sins but giving up control of my life every day, that was a different deal. That made me nervous. I found I was saying "Yes" and "No" to Jesus at the same time. Ever been there? **The question that began to occur to me was not just how much of the Holy Spirit did I have, but how much of me did He have?** The answer was "Not everything. Not yet." I was too afraid of losing control. The Lord began to talk to me about this. Finally, I had to yield in a way that I'd never yielded before and gave it over. I began to pray like this: "Jesus, I will follow you where you lead me. I will let you set my career ambition. You can make me anyone you want to make me. I will do what you say. I will depend on you for the power I need in every minute and every opportunity. I will thank you for every gift you want to give me, even if you want to give me some supernatural gift that I don't quite understand and makes me nervous. If it comes from you, I want it because I know you give only good gifts. Whatever you want to give me, I want it." And I yielded. You know, I was ready at that moment for tons of fire and violent winds blowing or something like that. I thought something spectacular would happen to me. Nothing spectacular ever did (like that) happen to me. It was much more like in Ohio where I grew up; we had these canals all over Ohio where the barges used to go down. And they had these big gates, and as an upper pool would lower a barge to go on the next pool, the gates would slowly open and the water would begin to surge through. And that was what happened with me. The gates to my heart slowly opened and living water began to surge through like I'd never experienced before. And from that time in my life to this day, I have known a presence of the Holy Spirit that I didn't know before. Sometimes it's wonderfully powerful. Sometimes there's ebb and flow. And I found out over the years that I leak – a lot – so I need to go back for more. But the promise is for every single one of us, that he will fill us with the Holy Spirit and give us a supernatural life.

Here's Jesus' invitation...

If you believe in me, come and drink! For the Scriptures declare that rivers of living water will flow out from within." (When he said "living water," he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him...)

John 7:38-39 (NLT)

Come and drink. Come and ask. Come and yield. If you are having a struggle with Him, you are going to have to yield. Come and give it over. And his promise is that that river, flowing from the throne of the Father to the Son will flow to you... and not just stopping with you, but run through you like a river to the world outside you. We're here for a purpose. Every one. No one left out. **That living, surging river is for you.** Right here. Right now.

I want to lead you in prayer, please. If you'd let me, I want to ask you to take a moment, bow your heads. We know that the positions of our bodies can wonderfully reflect the positions of our hearts. I want to ask if you would take your hands and open them on your lap to Him, to Jesus. Because your heart is open to Jesus, right here, right now. I want to ask if you would repeat the words that I will say, that they would be words that you would say. *Lord Jesus, fill me with your Holy Spirit. Right here, right now. I need a supernatural life from you so that I can live like you. So that I can step into your purpose for my life. But I can't do it alone. Lord Jesus Christ, fill me with your Holy Spirit, right here, right now. In your name, I pray, amen.*

Keep praying that prayer. Keep praying that prayer. Over these four weeks God is going to answer that prayer.