

## NATIONAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

June 23, 2019

Same Spirit

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Hey, God is doing a new thing across all of our locations at National Community Church and we believe that as well for you that might be listening to us via podcast. We believe so far so God and the best is yet to come. And part of the reason we believe that is because in Romans 8:11 it says, the Spirit of God who raised Jesus from the dead lives in us. Can we let that just sink in for a minute? The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead lives in you. 2,000 years ago, somewhere outside the city walls of Jerusalem just before dawn, the Spirit of God rushed into the Tomb of Joseph of Arimathea and raised to life the body of Jesus Christ. And then the Spirit of God fell on the disciples on the day of Pentecost as a mighty rushing wind and they preached with such boldness that 3,000 people were saved in one day. The same Spirit that breathe life into the first man, that incarnated Christ in Mary, that birthed the church, that raised Jesus from the dead lives in you. If we could just get that one piece of practical theology settled in our hearts and our minds and in our guts, it would change everything. Now, conversely, I think most of us tend to live our lives as practical atheists. Now, Arthur Craig Rochelle defines practical atheists and this way he says "it's when you walk around claiming that you believe in God and then turn around and live your life in such a way that totally denies his existence." I mean, for instance, this week it's a little bit crazy and there's a lot going on around here on staff at NCC, I'm trying to prep for this message, I'm just swamped with all this study and I'm starting to stress out. How is this message going to come together? How am I going to be ready to preach? How is this all gonna come together and make sense? And I'm stressing and I sensed the Holy Spirit tapping me on the shoulder saying, you know, I can help with that. Do we understand that the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead lives in us?

Now in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit came on specific people at specific times for specific reasons. In the Old Testament, it was God for us, with Jesus we have God with us and now it is God in us. No longer is it just God coming in specific people, in specific times, for specific reasons, but the Spirit of God lives in us. It's like we're a new creation because the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead lives in us. We're made alive because the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead lives in us. We are a free people. We can love our enemies. We can bless those who persecute us. We can be more than conquerors because the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead lives in us, and I believe somebody here today needs a resurrection. See, when we get that settled in our hearts, it changes everything, it changes our outlook, it changes our perspective, it changes the way that we see God, it changes the way we see ourselves, it changes the way we see the world around us and makes sense of the chaos and the confusion that we live in.

Now, we're gathered today from a lot of different backgrounds and different stages of faith journey. Some of you are here today at church for the very first time maybe you're kind of new to exploring faith, maybe you got tricked into coming here by a friend. However you came we're glad that you're here and we want to just take a moment to make sure we're all on the same page so we all kind of understand together what we're reading and what we're learning today. So, Paul

wrote these words in this book we call Romans and Paul was an early follower of Jesus, but he was a little bit of a late adopter. In fact, in the beginning he was seeking to extinguish the Jesus movement. He wanted to just snuff it out, but Jesus appeared to him in a vision and because Jesus was appearing to him in a post resurrection glorified body, it was a bit of a powerful encounter and it knocked Paul off his horse, it blinded him and the power of that encounter caused him, convinced him to personally become a follower of Jesus as well. And at that time he began to move around the Roman Empire preaching the Gospel and planting churches. He also wrote much of what we have today in that we call the New Testament. Much of the New Testament are letters that Paul wrote to individuals, to churches and to groups of churches. And often what he would do is write to churches that he had started or had a role in starting and he was telling them just kind of how to live, how to do church. In fact, a lot of the letters seem to be answering questions that they were asking of him. He was giving them very practical advice about how to lead a church, how to be a church, how to deal with issues and problems in the church. But the letter to Romans is a little bit different. Paul didn't start the church in Rome, he had never even been to the church in Rome, and yet his letter to the church in Rome is the longest one that he wrote. It's also the one that seems to be the most systematic and the most well thought out. It seems as though what Paul had to say to the church in Rome, he felt was of the utmost importance, even though he had never actually been.

Now, I think if we understand some of the things that were going on in Rome, we understand why Paul thought this was so important. So the first church, the first followers of Jesus, the Jesus movement in the beginning was a Jewish movement. The first followers of Jesus were Jewish. In Acts 18 we learn that the Jewish people were expelled from Rome under the reign of Claudius. Now, there was a lot of prejudice against Jewish people in the Roman Empire, so this wasn't an isolated event. But we do know in Acts 18 that there was an expulsion under Emperor Claudius and so all the Jewish people were pushed out of the city of Rome. In fact, Aquilla and Priscilla that we encounter in Corinth were part of that expulsion.

Now, over time, there were also Gentile people or non Jewish people who became followers of Jesus. So in Rome, you begin to have these clusters, these churches, these communities of Jesus' followers forming, but their Gentile people. Five years later, the people who had been expelled, the Jewish people who had been expelled are returning to Rome. Some of them had already been Jesus followers, some of them have become Jesus followers and they are now connecting with this church in Rome. But it becomes a flash point because the Jewish people who are a part of this Jewish sect of following Jesus are coming back to Rome, stepping into the community of Jesus followers and encountering Gentiles who do not follow the law, who do not celebrate Sabbath, who are not circumcised, and they have the smell of pulled pork on their breath. This causes a conflict, it is a tension point. And so Paul is writing to a church in crisis, a church in need of reconciliation, a church in need of unity, a church in need of getting along, togetherness. And so while we tend on this side of history to read Romans as very theological I think Paul's primary reason may have been more sociological. It was how to get these two very different groups of people to live together, to worship together, to pray together, to eat together, to find their way together.

And I think that when we read Romans through that sociological lens and that lens of reconciliation, it becomes even more relevant to us today. Because what Paul is saying is that

there is a Spirit at work within each one of you and that Spirit has empowered you to live differently, has given you the ability to think differently and has adopted you all into the same family. And through the power of that Spirit, you can live as a reconciled people who are reconciling people.

Okay, I want to look at a few different things in Romans eight. So in Romans eight verse one, backing up a little bit, Paul says this,

*"<sup>1</sup>So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. <sup>2</sup>And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death."*

The power of the life giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. Right now I'm reading through the Jesus storybook Bible with my daughter Sawyer and you know, we're a couple nights in and we come to the story of the fall in the garden. You know, everything starts really well in the story and then real fast we mess it all up. And so it's a story, you know, Adam and Eve and the fruit and the enemy crawling in in the form of a snake. And you know, Adam and Eve are tempted, they fall and they get banished from the garden. And the whole time I'm reading it, I'm a little worried as a parent, I mean Sawyer's only four years old. So, how is she making sense of this story? I mean, there's a talking snake, so does she just put this in the fairy tale category? You know, is she going to be scared of God? Is she going to be scared of being put in timeout from the garden as well? Like how is she making sense of this story? And we get to the end and we stopped the last sentence and she says, Mommy, why God not kill the snake?

You know, in western Christianity, we tend to understand the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus is about paying for sin. That he died on the cross, he was resurrected to pay for our sin. But the crucifixion and death of Jesus was also about killing the snake. It was about triumphing over sin. It was about victory over darkness. It was about overcoming death and obliterating the enemy. Now sin is kind of a dirty word, like we don't even like to talk about it in the church like it feels harsh, it feels negative, it judgmental. Maybe it feels a little antiquated, but the reality of sin in its original Greek is an archery term, which means missing the mark. You can hit the target and still be not in the bull's eye. The bull's eye is God's mark. It's missing the mark of God's perfection, missing the mark of God's intended order, missing the mark of God's created potential.

Now I'm guessing that all of us here this weekend, probably to a person sense that something is not quite right with the world. Something's a little off with this world that we live in. Something isn't perfect about this world, that there's something that is missing the mark. Now, in the Old Testament, God gave the law to set the mark, to establish the mark, and then when Jesus came, he fulfilled the law. Not meaning that the rules don't apply anymore, but to say that the game has changed, that now the Spirit of God enables us and empowers us to live up to the standard that God had set. You see, sin enslaves us, sin destroys us, sin separates us, sin kills, sin weakens but the Spirit of God that raised Jesus from the dead lives in us to release us from the grip that sin has on our lives. And to reverse the shame that comes on us because of the sins that other people commit against us.

See, Pauline theology always has us moving from one state to another in the theological term justification. That's Paul moving us in a forensic sense from guilt to innocence. In reconciliation it's a relational move from isolation and exile to community and reconciliation. Paul says that we move from darkness to light and from death to life and sometimes it's instantaneous. For instance, in the book *Miracles* theologian Craig Keener Talks about the church in China, and he says that in China, the Christian church, including the state sanctioned Protestant church, teach and believe in healing. And according to some surveys, 90% of people who are following Christ claim that healing was the reason for their conversion. It's Jesus killing the snake. Now, sometimes the Spirit does it instantaneously, and other times it's a process and it's a process not because the Spirit can't do it instantly, but because the Spirit wants to do a deep work in us to ensure that we're able to sustain that freedom permanently.

There's a lot of Exodus language in Romans eight and what we remember from the Exodus story is that God freed the people from slavery in Egypt, but it took 40 years in the wilderness for God to forge within them the character they needed to sustain the freedom he had already given to them. See, when we're talking about healing from things, when we're talking about mental and emotional and relational healing, when we're talking about freedom from bondage's like addictions and fear and anxiety, when we're talking about stepping into a new life from hurts and habits and hangups and trials and traumas and tragedies the Spirit wants to do a deep work in us. He wants to form in us the maturity that we need to make better decisions. He wants to forge in us a character that we need to sustain the freedom he's given us. It takes time to establish new habits, to maintain that freedom. Sometimes it's instantaneous, sometimes it's a process, but all the time the Spirit of God is at work in us and the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead is at work in us to liberate us, to free us, to release us from the grip of sin, and to reverse the shame that the sins of others has brought on us. I just today want to declare freedom across all of our locations the Spirit of God is alive and well and is in you and has freed you today.

Let's keep going a little bit into Romans eight verse five, it says,

*"<sup>5</sup> Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace."*

This idea of who's controlling your mind in contemporary language, the best equivalent is the idea of a mindset. It's a settled way of understanding or thinking about things. It's your worldview or your perspective. Now, your worldview is a set of beliefs, a set of values that creates a framework or a structure by which you understand the world. It seeks to answer the fundamental questions of who are we? Why are we here? Where did we come from? Where we going? Is there a greater purpose? Is there an afterlife? And then your worldview also drives what you believe about moral issues and ethical issues and political issues. Your worldview gives you explanations for things in the world like suffering or miracles or the presence of good and evil. And your worldview also gives you perspective on the things that are a little bit closer to your own personal life. How you answer questions of why things are happening and what their purpose is. For example, in Philippians one we find Paul in prison and as Paul's sitting in prison there are a number of valid reasons he could give for that particular situation. For instance, he

could believe, well, God has led me down, that could be his explanation for being in prison. He could think, you know what, maybe I did something wrong. I went off grid, I made a mistake, and that's what has landed me in prison. And he could be replaying everything he had done to try to figure out how we could have avoided that present circumstance. He could've blamed it on the enemy, this is an attack of the enemy to try to keep me from preaching the Gospel and the church needs to pray that I be freed immediately. He could blame the injustices of the Roman Empire. There are a lot of different reasons or explanations or understandings that Paul could have given to his present situation and why he was in it. But here's what we read in Philippians one verse 12 he says,

"<sup>12</sup> And I want you to know, my dear brothers and sisters, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Gospel."

His explanation for what is happening to him is that it's a catalyst for the Gospel to be spread even further. He goes on to say, 'look, the palace guards that see me in chains, their ears have perked up to listen to what I have to say and all the people on the outside of these prison walls who are followers of Jesus, they have found a new courage and a new boldness to preach the Gospel. So I just believe that this is God working all things together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purposes.' That's the way he explained the circumstance he was in. See, there are two ways that we can live. We can allow God's thinking to impact our thinking. Or we can try to overlay our thinking on God's thinking and hold him in judgment for the things that we believe he's done. See, we can either let what we believe to be true about our circumstances dictate to us what must be true about God or we can let what we know to be true about God tell us what must be true of our circumstances. And the mind that is led by the Spirit allows the thinking of God to affect our thinking and it leads to life and to peace. Everything that's happened to me has served advance the Gospel that allows Paul to live in life and in peace because he's allowing God's thinking to affect his thinking. And when God is in the equation all bets are off, we step into infinite possibility. And the life giving Spirit changes the way we view the world, it changes the way we view our circumstances, it changes the way we view the people around us and it leads to life and peace. The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead lives in you and can change your entire worldview.

Paul goes on to say in verse 15,

*"<sup>15</sup> So you have not received a Spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father."<sup>16</sup> For his Spirit joins with our Spirit to affirm that we are God's children."*

The Spirit of God adopts you into God's family. That's a powerful idea. You are adopted into God's family. There is a seat at his table and it's got your name on it. The word Father was Jesus' favorite title for God. He used it 165 times in the Gospels. He refers to God, his Father when he teaches his disciples the Lord's Prayer. He refers to God as Father when he is in agony, in the garden of Gethsemane, he on his way to the cross. The Spirit of God gives us intimacy with the Father.

Now look, I know this is a complicated thing for some of us. Some of us have awesome dads, they reflect the love and the joy of the heavenly Father and so seeing God as our Father is a good thing, it resonates with us. But if you had a difficult relationship with your dad, or you were in a situation where your father was absent, then this can be hard. Or if you have been in a situation where you have been mistreated by men, it might be hard for you to think of God as Father. But let me tell you a story that I think might help us understand the kind of intimacy with the Father that the Spirit wants to give to us.

When President Kennedy was in the White House for the first time in a long time, kids were running rampant through the halls of the White House. And it's reported that John Jr would run into the Oval Office in his pj's, his bath robe and his slippers and jump up into his dad's lap. And at that moment, whatever conversation, whatever decision, whatever legislation he was supposed to be signing or looking at whatever cabinet conversation was happening, came to a halt for him to engage with his son. Now, for anybody else in that room, no matter how high of a cabinet position they had, no matter how close to the president they were, no matter how trusted advisor they were, to jump up in the president's lap in their bath robe and slippers would be really weird, little bit outside of protocol, but to John Jr, it wasn't the president it was his daddy. That's the intimacy with the Father that is the loving, open, peaceful, joyful arms accepting arms of the Father that the Spirit wants to lead you into and not only to have intimacy with the Father, but to understand your identity. There are so many stories that have gripped our culture that are rooted in this idea of people stepping into their calling when they understand who their dad is. You're Mufasa's boy, your dad was a great wizard, your dad was the most powerful Jedi in the galaxy, and in a moment of seeing their father, they step into their own destiny. That's what the Spirit does when you're adopted into the family of God, you receive intimacy with the Father and it changes your identity. The Spirit of God that raised Jesus from the dead has affirmed that you are a child of God.

Now, along with that comes a family and that's where sometimes it's hard. I mean, if you're remember, he's writing to a church that's in conflict. There are people that have different perspectives and different ways of looking at things, and so Paul has reminded them, 'hey, you have the power to live differently, you have the power to have a new perspective and a new worldview, and you can see things from the same angle, and also you have the power to relate to one another well.' The Spirit that raised Christ from the dead lives in you, so now you can love one another and serve one another and accept one another and encourage one another, forgive one another, accept one another; we could do all those one another's because the Spirit is alive in us.

The other thing it does is it makes us ambassadors to the world around us. When these people in this church in Rome realized the work and the power of the Spirit within them, how did that change the way they viewed the oppression of the empire, the way they interacted with those who persecuted them? How did it change the way that they related to those that were in authority over them and those that they had authority over? One of our favorite benedictions at NCC is that when you leave this place, you don't leave the presence of God, but the presence of God goes with you wherever you go. The presence of God goes with you wherever you go, because the presence of God is within you and the Spirit of God is within you, to be an ambassador to the world around you, it should change the people that we interact with. See reconciled people are a

reconciling people and the Spirit of God that raised Jesus from the dead, not only has given us intimacy with the Father, not only has given us the tools and the power to be unified as a family, but has also commissioned us to be ambassadors, to make his kingdom come and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead lives in you. Jesus predicted his own death and resurrection and pulled it off. And he promised that he would send the Holy Spirit and he pulled it off.

Earlier this week I was thinking through Peter and the fact that after the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost he stood up on the steps of the temple and he preached with great boldness. And I wondered a little bit why he hadn't done that on Resurrection Day. Like on Resurrection Day, it seems like that would have been the moment that Peter would have gotten up in front of the table and said, hey, everybody, Jesus really is who he said he was. He predicted his own death and his own resurrection and he pulled it off. I have good news. But that wasn't the day he preached. It was several weeks later on the day of Pentecost, after the Holy Spirit came that Peter stood up and said this, 'let everyone know for certain that God has made Jesus to be both Lord and Messiah.' Now, one reason we can give for this is the Holy Spirit gave Peter Boldness that maybe he didn't have before. But remember, Peter had always been a little bit impulsive. I don't think timidity was Peter's issue. Here's what I wonder; the coming of the Holy Spirit was like the final proof that Jesus was who he said he was because he promised the Holy Spirit. And so when the Holy Spirit came, it was like, I have fulfilled my promises, all of them. When the Holy Spirit came, it was like the proof it has been finished, I have done everything I said I would do. And now Peter is thinking he's done everything he said he would do. Every proof has been finished, every promise has been fulfilled and now we can say with certainty that God has made Jesus to be both Lord and Messiah.

Jesus came to rescue creation and to set it right and you may be here this weekend and you don't know what to do with Jesus. You don't know what to think about Jesus. You don't know how you should interact with Jesus and what I want to tell you this weekend is that there is a seat at the table of the family of God with your name on it and all you have to do is sit in it. I want to invite you to consider doing that this weekend. If you've never made a decision to follow Jesus, would you take that first step today? For those of you that say that you're a follower of Jesus, what I want to challenge you in today is, are you following Jesus with an awareness that the same Spirit that raised him from the dead lives in you? Or are you living life as a practical atheist? I want to encourage you in a moment if you're following Jesus, but you need a new awareness of the work of the Spirit in your life that you would come down to the altar at all seven of our locations, however, that might be set up and you would seek a new infilling of the Holy Spirit and some of you need to experience the freedom that the Holy Spirit gives today.

Father, we thank you that you are for us, that in Jesus you were with us and with the Holy Spirit we experience God in us. I pray that today, this idea that the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead lives in us would take a grip on our minds in our hearts and it would change everything. God, I pray today for freedom from the grip and the power of sin. I pray today for new mindsets and new worldviews and new perspectives that allow us to see things through the lens of life and peace. And I pray today that every person that is in this place across our seven locations, listening to this via podcasts, would get deep in their gut, that they are part of the family of God, and that that changes everything. Holy Spirit, we welcome you into our lives, into these places.

We acknowledge that you are here and we pray that we would live in a greater awareness of your activity in our lives. In Jesus' name. Amen.