

NATIONAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

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Beloved \_ Beloved-The Holy Spirit Is the Strategy

Joel Schmidgall and Ernest Clover

**Pastor Joel Schmidgall:** The Azusa Street Revival, the historic revival that happened in Los Angeles, California and it was led by William J. Seymour. He was an African American preacher, and he was the son, the 34 year old son of a former freed slave. And then there were leaders, such as Jennie Evans Seymour and other incredible women who stepped in at a time when women in church leadership was quite taboo, but they step in, their incredible influences in this revival, and then over the past century, of the movement of the church. And we see Seymour and seven other people who begin to seek God and they wait on God, and then immediately they hit the ground, they begin to speak in other tongues, and they begin to praise God loudly. And there's this outpouring of the Holy Spirit in this room. And it flows not just in that room, but it goes out into the neighborhood, it goes into the city, and there's this stirring around the country, and people begin to show up. And it's pouring out of this place. And for three years, there's this incredible revival, the blind, see, people are healed, diseases are cured, immigrants show up, and they hear their native tongue from uneducated congregants. And then there's people of different ethnicities that begin to intermingle. And different races who come together at the height of the Jim Crow era, when everyone is segregating that's the rule of the day, but the Spirit shows up, and it brings people together as one, and they begin to worship together and then the encouragement of women in leadership, 14 years prior to suffrage even coming into play for women in the US. And so there's this amazing, multicultural movement that happens at Azusa Street.

Here's the thing though, they didn't set out to be a multicultural movement. They set out to seek the gift of God, the Holy Spirit. And when they were baptized in the Spirit, guess what happened. People started coming together, a multicultural movement began to rise up and ethnicities came together, and races and people of all different backgrounds came together and young and old, and rich and poor, and male and female all came together under one Spirit in one body.

Acts chapter one, we see the disciples go into the upper room and they're fasting, and they're praying and they're seeking God. And we come to our text, which is Acts chapter two today. Verse one, says this, "When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them." them.

This passage is constantly looking backwards and looking forwards at the same time. And we see this description and it's the description of wind, and of movement and of earthquakes and of shaking, and it calls us back to Sinai. Sinai was where God gave the law to Israel. But Pentecost is where God gives the Spirit to the church. So everything that God chose to do through the law for Israel, God chooses to do for the church through the Spirit.

Verse four, <sup>4</sup> *All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.* <sup>5</sup> *Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.* <sup>6</sup> *When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language (are you kidding me? This is crazy). They heard their own language being spoken."*

Now, let's go back again so we can go forward. There's a parallel passage or a reference passage that goes back into Genesis it's called the Tower of Babel. And it's found in Genesis chapter 11. And it's this story about the people of God who decide to build the world's first skyscraper. And so they build this thing up but their intent in building it was to come at the same plane as God. They desired to build it in the heavens and there's an issue here. The issue is it's a people trying to become God issue. But there's a more precise issue that's happening as well. Genesis chapter one, verse 28, God gives one of the first commands in all of Scripture which says, He calls us to be fruitful and to fill the earth. Now we think of filling as, you know, pouring water or liquid and filling up a bottle. But this is more of a cloth covering to fill the earth is to migrate, it's to expand, it's to spread out. But here the people at Babel they're called to fill the earth. But what do they do? They huddle. In fact, they huddle up is that where we get huddle up? They huddle and they go up, right, instead of expanding out. And God sees this rebellion. And what does he do? He mixes up their languages. Why? Because it forces them to go out onto the mission that he had called them to. It forces them to expand, to multiply, to be fruitful, all over the earth.

And so the miracle of Acts chapter two is bigger than Acts chapter two, when we see the context, because at Babel, the people were seeking to become God, and to avert his mission. But at Pentecost, the people were seeking to be like God, and to get in sync with his mission. At Babel, people were perplexed, because they couldn't understand each other's language. At Pentecost, people were perplexed, because they could understand each other's language, and culture, and they get insight into people who are drastically different. It's not just a miracle of speaking. It's not just a miracle of tongues. It's a miracle of understanding.

And so here we are seeking to become the beloved community, and races and ethnicities and backgrounds are colliding together. Holy Spirit come and give us understanding today of another who is so different. Listen, when Nina and I get together with other couples, when we get together with other people, when we hear about other relationships, and we see broken relationships and hurt in relationships, here's the refrain we often hear, we don't hear the other person is too flawed they're no good. We don't hear you know, they don't let me talk. We hear this and let me know if you relate. You don't understand. Right? No, no, no you're not understanding where I'm coming from. Come on. Don't tell me you haven't said that before, right? Imagine the healing that would come into relationships, if we just decided to be students of another person, if we decided to be students of another culture, students of another race, if we got outside of ourselves. And listen, we hear the other person, we hear the other side but it's a different language, isn't it? And I don't know what you're saying right now because it's making no sense logical sense or any other kind of sense to me. Holy Spirit, come, right to give us the miracle. That's what this is; it's a miracle of understanding.

To seek understanding is not merely hearing someone else's arguments or knowledge but it's the power to comprehend, empathize and discern their experience. You say, "How can I even understand this person who is completely irrational?" Holy Spirit come. "How can I even get in the same room with this person who has such different ideals or beliefs or, or political understandings?" We need you Holy Spirit, don't we? Give us knowledge and understanding of the other? There's a lot of sermons out there that talk about the multiculturalism of Acts chapter two, but don't talk about the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts chapter two. And there's a lot of sermons out there that talk about the baptism of the Holy Spirit but don't talk about the multiculturalism of Acts chapter two. Listen, he did not decide to divide these up. No, they are intermingled and intertwined intentionally and beautifully, because we need both. We need you Holy Spirit, and we are called into the community that is, beloved. Spirit of God come.

Here's how our theologian and resident put it Peter Hardwick. He said, "The Spirit is not God's cute way of affirming diversity. He has God's power in the world to make a people that will be what every other people cannot be, which is unified in diversity." The beloved community is a constantly failed endeavor in our culture. Why are we taking the cultural talking points and action points? No. We've got to get to the Spirit today, y'all. We've got to seek the Holy Spirit in our hearts, over our minds; over our bodies we need the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is 100% absolutely over and above the foundation to this calling that we are pursuing.

Last week, our multicultural team, they brought the high heat, didn't they? So good. Thank you Pastors Marion, Joel, Lora, Dave, incredible word. And Lora challenged us a couple of times and at one point, she said this, she said, "Family, we are pushing through. And we are defying the world's message that we should all stay in our own lane. That is not what Jesus called us to. We will keep going back to the Sermon on the Mount. We want to be as it says in Isaiah 58, repairers of the breach, restorers of streets to dwell in."

Luke 11:13. Jesus says this, <sup>13</sup> *If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask!*"

God didn't say to go win the war on your own. He didn't say to go win the political battle and get all the political power that you can get in your possession and then bring people together. He said, *"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit. say if the Lord."* It's Acts chapter two, verse 12, that the people come together, and it says that they were amazed and perplexed. They asked one another. What does this mean?

**Ernest Clover:** What does this mean? One of the things that I wanted to share with you is going back to the Azusa Street, we see there that people ask that very question. What does it mean to see this outpouring of the Holy Spirit, just like they did in Acts 2:12? What does this mean? What does it mean that we see flames, and wind and people speaking in different tongues? Now, before I get into what does

it mean? I wanted to set the context for everyone to say, what were people saying who were observers of this activity during that time?

So one of the things I want to share with you all is that quite often, the work of the Lord looks like foolishness in the eyes of man. But I want to tell you something, it is never that way. Whatever the Lord does, that is not foolishness. He will make us look foolish, okay. So this is what was said at the time about Street from the LA Times. Meetings are held in a tumble-down shack on Azusa Street, and the devotees of the weird doctrine practice the most fanatical rites, preach the wildest theories and work themselves into a state of mad excitement in their peculiar zeal. Colored people and a sprinkling of whites make up the congregation, and night is made hideous in the neighborhood by the howlings of the worshippers, who spend hours swaying forth and back in a nerve racking attitude of prayer and supplication. They claim to have the "gift of tongues" and be able to understand the babel.

Now, we're going to come back to Azusa Street but I want us to make sure we understand something Beloved, that God's work never comes the way that those who are watching for him even expect, okay. So I want to make sure that when we go back to Acts 2:12, and say, "What does it mean?" Peter really breaks this down for us beautifully. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, he turns to the word of the Lord, that was spoken through the prophet Joel, and says this, *"In the last days,"* God says, *"I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy,"* God's power is limitless between men and women. *"Your young men will see visions and your old men will dream dreams."* God's power is limitless between the generations. And everyone, *"even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days and they will prophesy."* God's power is limitless, between socio-economic classes. *"And everyone who calls on the name to Lord will be saved."* God's power is limitless to save. Prophecy, vision and dreams, all empowered by the Holy Spirit give us a direct path back to God for the sake of salvation. That is what we see in Acts 2:12, beloved.

And we realized something Peter, being empowered by the Holy Spirit has the keen insight, the keen insight to know his audience is questioning and saying, this looks like some foolishness up in here. And he says, "No, no, no, no, this is not drunkenness, this is not drunkenness but this is the word of the living God being fulfilled in your hearing. Let us just sit in that for a moment. Let us just think about that. Do we believe today that scripture can be fulfilled in our hearing? I want you to sit in that and ponder that. Because I would like to encourage you and say, yes, we should believe that not because I say it but because Jesus clearly outlines it and tells us in Matthew 5:18, *"I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God's law will disappear until his purpose is achieved."*

The Holy Spirit has always demonstrated the power of God. What type of power and to what end? Right? God's power transforms the physical world by first transforming us from the inside out. That is the power of the Holy Spirit in us working through us. And again, this power, just so you understand, Jesus prophesied this, and told us about this in Acts 1:8. He says, *"but you will receive"* What? *"power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you: and you will be my witnesses"* Where? *"in Jerusalem, and all of*

*Judea, and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.*” Right. So I want us to soak in that, that Jesus said that and we see it fulfilled in Acts two. And I realize that those disciples just like us today, I'm sure they said, “Jesus, now we're getting it. When you were here with us for three years, we kind of missed some stuff but now we're seeing that what you spoke is true. And I want to encourage you, Beloved, that that is still true today, what he spoke is true. So if we're talking about having a beloved community, I want you to know that it's only through the power of the Holy Spirit that this is ever even possible, to what Pastor Joel was already preaching.

Now, in Acts, they go through the wind, the flames, the tongues, and people see the fulfillment, because Peter points it out of Joel 2 in their sight and hearing. Now, one of the things that I find truly amazing is that God is showing us this power, and in a Greek, there's a unique word *dunamis*, for power. And I love this meaning, and I just want to read it to you all here. And it says that its inherent power, its very nature and its very nature, is power. *Dunamis* meaning its very nature, its inherent, this is God. God's very nature is inherent power. Therefore the Holy Spirit, when we talk about inviting Holy Spirit in we are inviting God's power to again, -do what?- transform, renew and refresh us and make us new creations in the likeness of Jesus Christ.

So this revolution that we saw 2000 years ago was then played out again, in 1906. And, Beloved, I want to make sure you understand something that this is one continuous line that you too fall in and it's from Genesis to Revelation, you fall in this with Azusa Street. And what I want to encourage you with is that when the Lord talks about that last verse, in Acts 2:21 that I read to you for the sake of salvation call on the name of the Lord. And I want to just clearly look at everyone that's here and say, “Have you called on the name of the Lord for the sake of salvation.” That's all you have to do - call on his name, to be saved.

When we think about gifts, beloved, I'm curious for you when you're thinking about a gift and bestowing it upon someone who should have the honor and glory is the person who receives a gift but a person who gives a gift is the gift giver. We often because we realize that gifts are not owed don't demand a gift it's not something to be presumed or assumed on someone. So we see that our Lord and Savior, our God has offered us the gift of salvation to his son Jesus. And I want to encourage you again, as clear as I can be pleased, accept that gift. It is when we let go of control, invite Jesus in, in our field with the Holy Spirit, that his power is able to work in and through us.

And so we went to endeavor to build the DC Dream Center, we thought we were in control. And we were not in control. And we went down this road. And I tell you what, that was a crazy moment, I think the pinnacle of our not being in control was this ANC meeting that we went into, and we're trying to get our building permit, right. And this is the major hurdle you got to go through. And we go to this meeting. And it was it was the craziest meeting that I have official meeting that I've ever been to, and we go and we share our story. And they're in some kind of power struggle internally leadership wise. And so they said, “Well, we don't even know you, we don't know if the neighbors want you here. And so now

you can go ahead and go.” So we leave and we come back the next month, with 100 of our closest neighbors. And you got to get the picture cuz you know, if you've been to ANC meeting is 15 to 20 people. So we show up with 100 people, and this place has happened. And we come in and we give our presentation. And it was a great idea to us, by the way, I don't think they like the 100 people showing up. But we give our presentation. And then they start talking and a couple sentences in say something to the effect to you and I and to our neighbors and, “You people...” People, is it, you know, no, no, no. And it got a little crazy. And it got a little out of control. And it got rowdy in that place.

**Ernest Clover:** Definitely got rowdy. God rest her soul. I'm thinking about Honey, who stood up and who just I don't know you, you talked about you people I lived in this neighborhood my whole life. I never seen you and these people are the ones that's been here. And I remembered I said, Hey man, give it to 'em, meet up, shouting in there yelling and this is now between the ANC leadership and people who are in the audience yelling back and forth. It was like a tennis match. We just went o – o – o . And I remember thinking to myself just sitting there like, Lord help us.

**Pastor Joel Schmidgall:** You got that right. That's where we started our one word prayer, JESUS, JESUS. And we went home that night and I don't know about you but I was praying in the Spirit. I'll tell you what, and we got home and then we talked. Remember that conversation we had? And I remember one thing about it, we both felt like we had been in a fight. That was inaccurate. We felt like we had been beat up. That's so more specific, right. And like physically and emotionally, it was intense. And then we felt in prayer prompted that, number one, we need to submit ourselves to the Holy Spirit, and let go to the Holy Spirit's process in this thing. And number two, we needed to resolve to keep showing up to keep loving and pushing.

**Ernest Clover:** So we resolved to pray. We resolved to act in boldness. And we resolved just to keep loving. And it's so funny because four months later, after we have resolved one of the members of the ANC came to our Christmas party. And this is for the whole neighborhood and people come into the SE White House at the time and we're having a blast. And you can tell when someone's there reluctantly like it's like the political thing to do like, "okay, I'm here show my face". It was like, Oh, okay, thanks for coming. And they're there and you're going around and you're talking to folks, two hours in, they come up to me, and they have their toothpick and meat ball on it. And they're looking and I'm like, okay, I wonder what... Cuz we always spice them up a little southeast style. We use Sweet Baby Ray's sauce just so you know tastes really good. But anyway, it was funny cuz I'm thinking like what is about to happen right now. Our last interaction was not a good one. And they looked at me directly, squared up, you know, not sideways just squared up and said, "Hey, I'm sorry the way I treated you the last time you were at the meeting. I've come to realize that you guys really are here for the community. That was a blessing to be... Amen. That's a miracle of the Holy Spirit that we would...

**Pastor Joel Schmidgall:** That was a breakthrough, Bro.

**Ernest Clover:** Amen, that was a breakthrough.

**Pastor Joel Schmidgall:** We had a breakthrough and that moment was worth more than a building permit because we weren't just trying to build a building. We were trying to reconcile people, to one another, to us, to God. And so on one moment, we see the mission and the purpose of the Holy Spirit showing up, not because of us, but because the Holy Spirit had his way. And that moment wasn't just about that moment, that moment was about submitting to the Holy Spirit. That moment was about faithfulness and relationship. That moment was about doing the work of listening, of stepping back, of reconciling to our sister and to our brothers in the community, of loving well, but that moment was about the Spirit showing up and reconciling. And when reconciliation took place a month later, we went back in there. What was the vote? I can't remember.

**Ernest Clover:** It was eight votes, I think we almost had unanimous, I think there was one person...

**Pastor Joel Schmidgall:** I think it was zero, Bro. I don't know what you're talking about? It was eight to zero. Yeah, they were unanimous.

**Ernest Clover:** Yeah, that's what I thought.

**Pastor Joel Schmidgall:** Right, I don't think Connie voted against us.

**Ernest Clover:** No, no one voted against us.

**Pastor Joel Schmidgall:** So we had unanimous and that opened up favor and open up the ability to reach out and bless our city and now to reach into an overlooked under resourced part of our city. And over this past year, we got to give God praise and the Spirit honored over many years, but let's just look give a snapshot of this past year; over 56,000 meals I mean, 57,000 meals that we served, over 106,000 resources were given out, I think it was around 540,000 pounds of food of groceries of healthy vegetables of food getting into people's hands. We can go ahead and give God praise right there.

And I just got a call out many of you who have given who have invested you invest regularly, and I just have to call you out from National Community Church from the Dream Center. Thank you for your investment; it is being multiplied for the kingdom of God. Keep investing, keep sowing seeds, because God is bringing the water and the fruit is rising up. So thank y

Number two, I gotta call you out, man. I want to thank you, Executive Director, Ernest Clover. And I got to say this, and we didn't talk about this because I gotta call you out. You are a man of faith. You have the gift of faith Ernest, and I am so challenged by you, my brother. And when other leaders and nonprofits were stepping back, were huddling up, come on, somebody were huddling up. You said, "Here we go. We're about to cover. We're about to expand. We're about to get out. We're about to be

fruitful and multiply not for us, but for the kingdom of God and for those in our city. And through this past year you lead strong. So I just want to honor you, thank you for being a good brother and challenging me.

The Holy Spirit at work, not by might, nor by power, but by his Spirit. We have talked about the work throughout this series. We've talked about using our words wisely. We've talked about listening well. We've talked about understanding our own belovedness, finding our gifts, and playing our part, knowing the love of Christ in our own hearts, in our own hearts. But I want to remind us today that none of that works if the Spirit doesn't fill it, if the Spirit doesn't show up. The Holy Spirit is the goal. He's the gift. He is the strategy. And then the outcome is the beloved community. So family seek the gift of God.

I can't think of a better symbol for reconciliation, for the Spirit of God bringing multiple cultures together at the DC Dream Center than the table. And so we want to invite you to the table today. And so if you have elements begin to gather those. If you don't, why don't you go get the communion elements and prepare because in just a moment, we're just going to come to the table and we're going to celebrate. I want to invite our worship team to come.

And for 20 plus years, we've served a three course meal at the DC Dream Center, the reconciliation lunch. And it's been so awesome. It's a table just like this right here. That Corey who was out on the streets in a gang finally found community and he found salvation in Christ and became a part of our community just like you see in the painting. And he found Jesus not long before he met Jesus in person in spirit. And it was around a table like this, that Baxter G, that Sammy Morrison that Scott Demmick came together and began to be an example of the beloved community that would go out in Ward seven and eight and be such an incredible example to so many of our city. It's around a table like this that brings us together in Christ. And so today, we come to the table, and we give Christ our hearts and it's the table that brings us together. The New Testament believers were not about coming together and just trying to find a church experience that satisfied their every need, nope. They were about coming together in communion, and in community. So that's where we are today. So go ahead and take the elements.

The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, he took bread and after he had given thanks, he broke that bread. And he said to the beloved community, he said, *"This is my body, which is broken for you. Whenever you eat it, do it in remembrance of me."*

I want to do something a little different in this moment right here right now. I want to ask you if you can, to go ahead and break the bread. Christ's body was broken for you. He was broken for you. Whoever's listening out there. It was broken for you. He sees you. He values you. He knows you today. And he sees you. His body was broken. And so now, I bless this bread. I bless you, my brother Ernest. I bless your family. I bless your marriage, your children. I bless your dreams today, my brother. I bless your hurts. I bless you in your pain. I bless you in the name of the Lord and I bless you today. Through this time of receiving the body, I bless you in your hurts. I bless you in your brokenness. I bless you in



your areas of chains that Christ would give you freedom that his broken body would open up possibilities that you never have seen before. I bless your mindset that has been held captive today, find freedom and so I bless you today and I bless this bread. Let's receive the bread together.

**Ernest Clover:** Then he took a cup and he gave thanks. Then he turned to the beloved community and said, *"This is a covenant in my blood; do this in remembrance of me for it's for the forgiveness of sins for many."*

Joel, I declare over you a renewing and a washing in the blood of Jesus. Lord, I pray this over Joe's marriage, over his family over his home Lord, over his dreams and visions, just not for this church but Father for the generations that will come. And Lord I also pray over everyone that is here right now, who is under the sound of my voice, Lord, that they would know the power is in the blood of Jesus to wash away all guilt, all shame, all envy, all jealousy. Lord, you will make them a new creation. This is the new covenant that we partake in Lord so I pray that people will boldly proclaim that today I will be renewed in his blood. Please take the cup.

For those of you who are on our online community, and today, you say I will call on the name of Jesus as my Lord and Savior, amen. The angels in heaven are praising right now for you. So I want you right now to go to your chat function and raise your hand. And for those of you who are here in this room with us right now and you're saying yes, I have proclaimed that Jesus is my Lord and Savior this day, please, come down here and talk to the pastoral team because we would love to pray and connect with you.

Let us pray. Lord, we are so grateful that you have given us this opportunity to be here this day, to be able to preach the good news, to be able to realize that we come from a long story that we can trace all the way back to Acts all the way back to Genesis, Lord, as we were able to do today. And Father, we realize that you set this story in motion before you set the foundations of the world. So Father, I am praying for those who have claimed to come upon you and see Jesus as their Lord and Savior, Lord, I pray for their strength in the Lord right now. I pray that they would know something about the power of the Holy Spirit that they did not see it under a man sitting under banyan tree someplace, but no, in the act of community, Lord. So I pray that they will realize that there is power in your church in the body of Christ. So Lord, we ask you to give us wisdom and discernment as we move forward as a beloved community. Grant us your favor Lord, it is in the name of Jesus, we pray.

**Pastor Joel Schmidgall:** And we continue to pray over the beloved community. All of us, every single one of us are made in the image of God. And so we call out your love across our congregation today. And I can't help but call out the AAPI community that is a part of this beloved community. Continue to pour your love into so many who are hurting right now who are frustrated, who are angry, who are sad, who are fearful God, we just call love and we stand with our community today. And now I pray for the power of the Holy Spirit to fill each who would desire you, who would go after you in fasting and in

prayer. And I call out today that we would receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit to stand up to step out, to receive and be empowered with your word and with your Spirit that is for this day. I pray this in a powerful name of Jesus. And we say in agreement, my brother Amen.