

**Pray**

Today I am trying to do two things

1  
We have come to the 3<sup>rd</sup> talk about emotionally healthy spirituality  
Which is about **retreat to advance**

2  
It is Pentecost Sunday when we remember the coming of the Holy Spirit  
And so I am going to use illustrations about  
the difference the HS makes in our lives

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**First example = Gideon in the Old Testament**

It will help if you turn to **Judges 6.11** which you will find on **page 248**  
Where I am going to start with the passage we had read  
and look at the rest of the chapter

In **verse 11** we read Gideon was threshing wheat in a wine press  
So – **the context** is - he was throwing wheat and chaff in the air  
Hoping the wind would blow the chaff away  
while hiding in a wine press because **he was afraid of the Midianites**

**Read Judges 6.12-16**

Gideon sees an angel and God speaks to him promising to be with him  
And Gideon basically disagrees with God!  
It's not a great start for a leader of the people of God

But look at **Judges 6.33-35**

**<sup>33</sup> Now all the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples joined forces and crossed over the Jordan and camped in the Valley of Jezreel. <sup>34</sup> Then the Spirit of the LORD came on Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him. <sup>35</sup> He sent messengers throughout Manasseh, calling them to arms, and also into Asher, Zebulun and Naphtali, so that they too went up to meet them.**

The situation got worse

And when the Holy Spirit came on Gideon he blew the war trumpet  
And this man who had been hiding out of fear  
Had the courage to lead the Israelites into battle  
And with just 300 men he defeated the armies of two nations

So Gideon who had been in hiding because he was **afraid**  
**When he was filled with the Spirit of the Lord**  
**Became Bold and courageous**

## My second example = Saint Peter in the New Testament

And this comes in **Mark 4.35 on page 1006**

I am sure you know Peter was a fisherman on the sea of Galilee

But lest read from **verse 37**

**<sup>37</sup> A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. <sup>38</sup> Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, 'Teacher, don't you care if we drown?'**

**<sup>39</sup> He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Quiet! Be still!' Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.**

Peter was one of the 12 and yet here he was afraid

And was one of those who wake Jesus

Who simply said to the storm **Quiet Be still** and it was

And like us - Peter had other challenges

So in **Mark 8** Peter rebuked Jesus

And Jesus said to him "Get behind me satan"

And while Jesus was on trial – Peter denied him three times in **Mark 14**

So it seems to me Peter is very human

Or to put it another way he is very like us

But in **Acts 2** which we had read from us today

When Peter is filled with the Holy Spirit

He stands up to preach in front of a huge crowd

And it is such a good sermon that 3000 are added to the church that day

and please turn with me to **Acts 12.1 which you will find on page 1106**

Read **Acts 12.1-7**

So Peter is in prison - James has already been executed

And Peter is to be brought to trial tomorrow morning

And what is more Peter is chained to two guards

So...How would you be feeling if you were Peter

I think verse 6 proves that Peter was becoming more like Jesus

Because it says ....**Peter was sleeping**

just like Jesus in the boat in the storm

and when a light shone in the cell – **Peter was still sleeping**

and you can imagine the angel saying "what is it with these apostles"

and **struck Peter in the side and woke him up "Quick Get up"**

Peter had learnt to sleep through the storm

The work of the Holy Spirit in Peter had made him more like Jesus

### 3 So What about me? What is my experience of the Holy Spirit?

When I was a teenager  
I went to church to keep the peace at home  
But it didn't mean much to me

Then I went to University at Durham  
And in a small group I met some Christians my own age  
And there was something about them that I wanted  
So I went back to my room  
and prayed that God would help me to trust him

and lots changed over the next year  
I became much less angry – I stopped swearing  
and I acquired the smile which I wear almost all of the time  
God the Holy Spirit was changing me from the inside out

### 4 And what about us?

As a result of COVID **everyone has been more isolated than usual**  
And while half of the world may have liked that  
**Half of the world have hated it**

And as a result lots of people are **more afraid** than they have every been  
And other people are **angry** with Boris or the NHS or just life  
And still other people are **sad** that people have been ill or died  
And some people are suffering **the extreme grief of bereavement**

And I believe that **God wants to be with each of us**  
**Like he was with Gideon and like he was with St Peter**

**He want to be as close to us as the breath in our lungs**  
In fact both the Hebrew and the Greek for Breath  
Is also the Hebrew and the Greek for Spirit  
In Hebrew it is Ruach and in Greek it is Pneuma

So at the end of the sermon - on **page 7 of our service order**  
**Prayer for Personal Renewal**

And I am going to suggest that we all stand  
And ask God to **fill us afresh with his Holy Spirit**  
To take away our fear and anger and sadness  
And fill us instead with his **love and joy and peace**

And there is one last thing I want to say before I finish  
**5 Emotionally Healthy Spirituality theme of Retreat to advance**

**An Annual Retreat** is like going on holiday with God  
And you can go on noisy extravert retreats eg new wine / spring harvest  
OR you can go on quiet retreats eg a monastery / retreat centre

It is also possible to go on a **weekly retreat**  
**the bible calls this the Sabbath** - Sabbath means literally **to rest**  
Thursday is my Sabbath  
And over the years it has taught me **God is God and I am not**  
Because every Friday the world is still turning  
And somehow everyone has managed perfectly well without me

And finally it is also possible to have a **mini retreat every day**  
When we stop rushing around in our busyness  
And draw near to God  
and notice what he has been doing in us and through us

Last week Robin introduced Lectio Divina – a Benedictine way of praying  
This week I want to follow his example  
And introduce the Examen – which comes from St Ignatius  
A Spanish priest who lived about 1500

In your pew sheet you have a little bookmark which describes the Examen  
It is basically a **1 Review of the day**  
When we **2 Rejoice** over the good news  
And I usually write down at least three things which have gone well  
Eg Father thank you...  
And **3 Repent** over the things we got wrong  
Eg Father I am sorry I was cross when ...  
And finally after I have said sorry  
I **4 Rehearse** what I might do next time  
And in this format it comes from **Pete Grieg's** book **How to Pray**

**PRAY**