

ABBAY INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CHURCH, READING



10.30 am 19th October 2025

Bridget Gurney leading and Revd Dr Zoltan Biro preaching

Theme: Gifts or fruits, what is the difference?

Prayer Time

Call to Worship

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give him thanks and praise.

It is indeed right. It is our joy and duty at all times and in all places, to give you thanks and praise, holy Father, heavenly King, almighty and eternal God. Therefore, with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we proclaim your great and glorious name, for ever praising you and saying:

Holy, holy, holy Lord. God of power and might. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Hymn BPW 51

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty,
early in the morning our song shall rise to thee;
holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three persons, blessed Trinity.

Holy, holy, holy! all the saints adore thee,
casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim, falling down before thee,
God ever living through eternity.

Holy, holy, holy! though the darkness hide thee,
though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see,
thou alone art holy, there is none beside thee,
Perfect in power, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty!
All thy works shall praise thy name, in earth, and sky, and sea:
holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three persons, blessed Trinity.

REGINALD HEBER (1782-1826) / CCL Licence Number: 1763

Family Time

Song MP 302 - *During the singing of this hymn our financial gifts will be taken*

I want to walk with Jesus Christ,
All the days I live of this life on earth;
To give to Him complete control
Of body and of soul.

*Follow Him, follow Him, yield your life to Him,
He has conquered death, He is King of kings;
Accept the joy which He gives to those
Who yield their lives to Him.*

I want to learn to speak to Him,
To pray to Him, confess my sin;
To open my life and let Him in,
For joy will then be mine:

Follow Him...

I want to learn to speak of Him,
My life must show that He lives in me;
My deeds, my thoughts, my words must speak
All of His love for me:

Follow Him...

I want to learn to read His word,
For this is how I know the way
To live my life as pleases Him,
In holiness and joy:

Follow Him...

O Holy Spirit of the Lord,
Enter now into this heart of mine;
Take full control of my selfish will,
And make me wholly Thine:

© 1964 C. SIMMONDS JOHN H. SAMMIS & DANEIL BANK TOWNER 1887

Young people leave for their groups

Prayers

Bible Readings 1 Corinthians 12 1-11 and Galatians 5 22-23

MP 241

Holy Spirit, we welcome You. Holy Spirit, we welcome You!
Move among us with holy fire, As we lay aside all earthly desires,

Hands reach out and our hearts aspire.
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, we welcome You!

Holy Spirit, we welcome You. Holy Spirit, we welcome You!
Let the breeze of Your presence blow, That Your children here might truly know
How to move in the Spirit's flow.
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, we welcome You!

Holy Spirit, we welcome You. Holy Spirit, we welcome You!
Please accomplish in us today Some new work of loving grace, we pray -
Unreservedly - have Your way.
Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, we welcome You!

CHRIS BOWATER © 1986 SOVEREIGN LIFESTYLE MUSIC.

Sermon - Gifts or Fruits? – What is the Difference?

Today we are starting a new series on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. There is a threefold problem with this topic, which caused confusion and even argument throughout the history of the church. Firstly, the identity of the Holy Spirit makes the subject confusing. Secondly, how humans experienced the Holy Spirit has changed, therefore the Biblical texts can make the topic unclear (subjectively experienced not embodied). Thirdly, according to the Bible the work of the Holy Spirit has many layers which makes the topic complex.

This morning, I would like to clear some of the confusion and hopefully moderate some of the arguments.

1. The identity of the Holy Spirit. - Who is the Holy Spirit?

So let us first look at who the Holy Spirit is. The Bible clearly defines it as the third person of the Trinity, the other two being God the Father - the Creator of the Universe; and God the Son – the Saviour of the Universe. Now, the problem is that while the first two persons of the trinity has some physical manifestation, the Holy Spirit has no such form.

Let me explain, a little bit more we can identify God the Father, because we can have an understanding of the Creator, by looking at His creation. The Beautiful mountains. The autumn colours. The variety of the flowers. Also, we know Jesus, because he took on a human form, lived with us, thought his disciples, died on the cross and at Easter he was resurrected, which was witnessed by over 500 people. But the Holy Spirit is spiritual, the Bible often describes it as breath.

This is why, over the centuries Christians used various illustrations to make sense of both the Three persons of God and the Holy Spirit. Obviously, all such illustrations will fail in one way or another. St. Patrick used the Shamrock to show how God is one, but with three distinctive "leaf's". Others tried to explain it the same person having different roles, like I am a minister, a father and a husband, but at the end of the day I am Zoltan. In this picture God is the Creator, the Saviour and the Sustainer of the world. These illustrations are all imperfect and create misunderstanding about the identity of the Holy Spirit.

Let me use another illustration, which I quite like, despite being imperfect too. H₂O, which can be Solid (Ice), Liquid (Water), and Gas (vapour/steam).

No wonder that the Holy Spirit was seen as either the power of God on earth... Like electricity which you can't see, but it's there. Or the spiritual appearance of God, the glue that holds the world together, a manifestation, even worst a projection and a hologram.

At this point let me make it clear, that the Bible clearly tells us 3 things about the Holy Spirit:

1. The Holy Spirit is not a force or manifestation, the Holy Spirit is a person
2. God is 100% Holy Spirit just as he is 100% Son and 100% Father
3. Holy Spirit is active in our world today

2. The Human experience of the Holy Spirit – How do we know the Holy Spirit?

Throughout history humans experienced the Holy Spirit differently. On the one hand, as we all are different, we have different cultural lenses, we have different personalities, so we bring a lot of subjectivity to our experiences. On the other hand, the Bible tells us that the way the Holy Spirit interacted with Humanity has fundamentally changed due to Jesus's death and resurrection. The Old Testament witness of the Holy Spirit is different than the witness of the New Testament. The Old Testament picture is that of anointment or being anointed by the Spirit While the New Testament in general talks about the Holy Spirit living in the followers of Christ.

Bridget's illustration at the family time highlighted this difference. During the Old Testament people were surrounded and enabled by the Holy Spirit to fulfil a specific duty. While Jesus' death and resurrection made it possible for the Spirit of God to fully live in us.

But what does it mean to be filled by God's Spirit? In Acts 1:4 Jesus tells his disciples that "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you". The Holy Spirit is not a force which simply energises us, but when we get filled with the Spirit, we get stronger. In a way the Spirit releases our abilities, we can reach our full potential. This experience is different for all of us.

3. The work of the Holy Spirit – What does the Holy Spirit do?

The final aspect of the confusion, when it comes to the gifts of the Spirit is that the Holy Spirit has multiple roles in the life of the believer.

Firstly, the Holy Spirit is actively involved in the work of our salvation:

- **Makes us recognise our failures and sins:** "When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8).
- **Regenerates us:** "Truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:5)
- **Brings us into the family of God:** "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons" (Romans 8:20).

Secondly, God's Spirit is helping us grow in our Christian life. This is the lifelong work of the Spirit in us. It allows us to behave more like Jesus. Paul uses the word Fruits of the Spirit when he describes the outcome of this amazing work of the Spirit.

"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh. The works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control... Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

What Paul explains here is that God's Spirit works with us so we can go and become more like Jesus. This is a continuous process; it is like cleaning the kitchen or your house... You don't just do it once in a lifetime, you have to do it regularly. I was patient once, that's enough, I can be angry from here on.

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit equips us to serve others. You may remember that last week we finished the series on Ruth by saying that God uses imperfect people to bring about redemption. This happens because the Spirit gives us gifts. The text from 1 Corinthians 12 describes this brilliantly:

- **The gifts are for serving each other and not to bring personal glory:** "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good"

- ***The Gifts are given to fulfil a specific task:*** “For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body.”
- ***There are a large variety of gifts in the church:*** everyone has gifts to serve others, no one has all the gifts of the Spirit, so we are all depending on each other.

As we begin this journey into understanding the gifts of the Spirit, let’s remember that the Holy Spirit is at work in each of us—convicting us, renewing us, welcoming us into God’s family, and growing Christlike character within us. These gifts are not for our own recognition but are given so that we can serve and support one another, building up the church as one body with many vital parts. No one has all the gifts; instead, we rely on each other, using what God has given us for the good of all. May we be open to the Spirit’s leading, ready to grow, and willing to serve, trusting that God will use even imperfect people to carry out His kingdom work.

MP 1183

Holy Spirit, living Breath of God
 Breathe new life into my willing soul.
 Bring the presence of the risen Lord
 To renew my heart and make me whole.
 Cause Your Word to come alive in me
 Give me faith for what I cannot see
 Give me passion for Your purity.
 Holy Spirit, breathe new life in me.

Holy Spirit, come abide within
 May Your joy be seen in all I do—
 Love enough to cover ev'ry sin
 In each thought and deed and attitude
 Kindness to the greatest and the least
 Gentleness that sows the path of peace.
 Turn my striving into works of grace.
 Breath of God, show Christ in all I do.

Holy Spirit, from creation's birth
 Giving life to all that God has made
 Show Your power once again on earth
 Cause Your church to hunger for Your ways.
 Let the fragrance of our prayers arise.
 Lead us on the road of sacrifice
 That in unity the face of Christ
 Will be clear for all the world to see.

Keith and Kristyn Getty

Communion

Invitation

Come to this table
 Where bread and cup are transformed by the Spirit of God
 Into a meal of love and grace

A supper of visions and dreams
A table where all souls are welcome.

Prayer of Communion

Loving God
Whose Divine Lungs exhaled the Spirit into our World

Your breath continues to transform our world

From the still to the stirring.

Before the earth was formed
The Spirit of God swirled through voids and shadows.

As humans were created...
The air of God filled the lungs of Adam and the soul of Eve.

This Divine Air

Continues to fill us up

When our bones are dry and spirits are sluggish.

Today,
We invite the Spirit to come upon these elements.

God of winds pour out your Spirit
to make the elements come alive for us.

**Make this meal awaken our sleepy hearts
and stagnant souls.**

**May we begin to celebrate visions and animate the dreams
that have only been alive in our minds.**

As we share this meal, let us remember our siblings in faith who came to this table,
in decades and centuries past and our children
who will surround this table in the future.

**Lord, we come knowing that
we depend on You for
life and truth and love.**

**We come knowing that
You welcome us with
open and accepting arms.**

**We come ready to meet with You,
and be changed by the encounter. Amen.**

Distributing the elements

The Lord Jesus, on the eve of His crucifixion,
gathered His friends for a meal.

During supper, He took a loaf of bread,
and gave thanks for it.

Then He broke it and passed it among them
with these words:

This is my body which is broken for you.

Take, eat and remember Me.

After the meal, Jesus took a cup of wine
and gave thanks for it.
Then He passed it among them with these words:
This is my blood which is shed for you.
Take, drink and remember Me.
So now, we eat, and we drink
and we remember Jesus and His great love for us.
And we will continue to do this until He returns. Amen.

Closing Prayer

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession – Angel Yu

Heavenly Father,

We come before You with humble hearts, lifting up all who suffer around the world.

We thank You that the war in Gaza has ended. Lord, please bring lasting peace, grace, and healing to those who have lost loved ones or homes.

Please also bring an end to the war between Ukraine and Russia. Surround both nations with true peacemakers, and bring great comfort, hope, and restoration to their people. Please guide all leaders to make wise, peaceful, and compassionate decisions for the good of their nations.

Lord, please rebuild these countries with Your love, justice, mercy, and hope.

We pray for our country, the United Kingdom, and all nations under economic pressure. Please provide for families facing financial hardship, and give wisdom to governments to act with fairness and compassion, protecting the poor and promoting peace in society.

Lord, please guide the leaders of our country and all nations with integrity and mercy in all their decisions.

We lift up those affected by violence and terror, especially the victims of the Manchester synagogue attack.

Lord, please heal the wounded, comfort the grieving, and help communities stand united against hatred and fear.

We remember those suffering from natural disasters and extreme weather, such as the recent storms in Spain, Mexico and floods in Africa caused many people died.

Lord, please grant the victims safety, strength, and swift recovery, bring comfort to those who have lost homes or loved ones, and restore hope to the affected communities.

We lift up our Abbey family. Lord, please heal the sick, provide jobs for those seeking work, bless those waiting for visa or settlement approvals.

Lord, strengthen and guide us each day, filling us with Your peace and reminding us that You are our constant help and hope.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Song BPW 289

Holy Spirit, come confirm us
in the truth that Christ makes known;
we have faith and understanding
through your helping gifts alone.

Holy Spirit, come console us,
come as advocate to plead,
loving Spirit from the Father,
grant in Christ the help we need.

Holy Spirit, come renew us,
come yourself to make us live:
holy, through your loving presence,
holy, through the gifts you give.

Holy Spirit, come possess us,
you the love of three in one.
Holy Spirit of the Father,
Holy Spirit of the Son.

BRIAN FOLEY (b. 1919)

Blessing

Father, help us to live this day to the full, being true to you in every way. Jesus. Help us to give ourselves away to others, being kind to all we meet. Spirit, help us to love the lost, proclaiming Christ in all we do and say. Amen

The Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen

Events next week:

Wednesday 22 nd	10.30	Renew Wellbeing		
	12.15	Bible Study		
	2.00	iCaf 5		
Thursday 23 rd	10.30	Bible study		
	10.30	Toddlers		
	7.30	Men's Bible Study		
Friday 24 th	5.00	Table Tennis Club	7.00	Iranians meal and Bible Study

Sunday 26 th	10.30	Worship <i>Our Skills and the Holy Spirit</i> (The source of the gifts of the Spirit) 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Timothy 1:6-7
-------------------------	-------	---