

Marks of a Spirit Filled Church - Part 1

by A.W. Tozer

A.W. Tozer emphasizes the essential characteristics and responsibilities of a Spirit-filled Church, focusing on glorifying Jesus and being empowered by the Holy Spirit to impact the world positively.

Duration: 21:05

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Acts 2:1-4, Acts 2:32-33, Acts 2:36, Acts 2:42, Ephesians 4:4-6

Topics: "Spirit Filled"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of the church being useful to the community. He dismisses the notion that the church is a parasite and believes that it should make a positive impact on society. The preacher also discusses the marks of a spirit-filled church, stating that a spiritual church can be distinguished from the world. He references the story of Pentecost in the Bible, where the Holy Spirit filled the disciples and enabled them to speak in different languages. The preacher encourages the church to be a witness to powers beyond the earthly and human, relying on the power of the Holy Spirit.

Transcript

All right, now, Peter, and all the disciples were gathered together when the day of Pentecost was fully come, and they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly, as they were thus gathered, there came a sound from heaven as the sound of a rushing mighty wind. There wasn't a rushing mighty wind, but there was a rushing mighty wind.

And suddenly, as they were thus gathered, there came a sound from heaven as the sound of a rushing mighty wind. And suddenly, as they were thus gathered, there was a rushing mighty wind. And suddenly, And there was a sound there, as of a rushing mighty wind, that filled all the house where they were sitting.

And little jets of fire sat upon each tongue, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. And they began to speak in languages, seventeen nations were there and heard them speak in their own language. And they were all amazed, that is, the ones that could be amazed, and the doubters doubted.

And the questioners said, What meaneth this? And then they had present also the others, who sat in the seat of the scornful, and they said, These men are full of new wine. But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and said unto them, Then he went on to tell them, Ye men of Israel, hear these words. This is a fulfillment of prophecy that you are experiencing here.

Jesus of Nazareth, verse 22, and from there on was all about Jesus of Nazareth. And then he said in verse 32, This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses, all we are witnesses. Therefore being at, or by, the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.

Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ." The contrary to what most people might just unintentionally assume, and I might, the important thing here wasn't that the Spirit had come. The important thing was that Jesus had been exalted, for he said himself that last great day of the feast of Jerusalem sometime before, that whoever believed in him, out of his inmost being there should flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit which they that believed in him were to receive, but the Spirit hadn't been given because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

The glorification of Jesus brought the Holy Ghost. Now, we ought to be able to get hold of that instantly, and if any embryonic preachers are present here, who later will be preachers in their own right, let me just hand that little thought to you that wherever Jesus is glorified, the Holy Spirit comes. He needn't be begged, he comes when the Holy Spirit, when the Savior, is glorified.

When Christ is honored, the Spirit comes. The verse I want to get particularly to tonight is this one, but Peter stood up and lifted up his voice. He stood up and lifted up his voice.

Now, there will not be an exposition of the passage that I have read, but only to remind you that Peter here stands for the whole Church of God. Peter was the first man to get on his feet after the Holy Spirit had come to his church. And as far and as long as the church has been the true church, and wherever it is the true church, the individual believes the Lord's word.

Peter had. He had believed the Lord's word, and he had received confirmation in his own breast. Now, long ago, it was 1937, I wrote some articles that later became a little booklet, and in it I had one chapter in which I dealt with what since that time has been named easy-believism.

And I said that the difference between faith as it was found in the New Testament and faith as it is found now is that faith in the New Testament produced something, that there was a confirmation of it. Faith now is a beginning and an end. We have faith in faith, but nothing happens.

They had faith in a risen Christ, and something did happen. That's the difference. Incidentally, that little book has had a very wide sale.

It was sent to one of the mission fields, not the Christian and Missionary Alliance, but a fundamentalist mission field, and 500 copies of it were sent by a man who thought that it had a little message in it that it was called, Pass the Power. And they hated that little booklet so badly there that they passed a conference motion to have it barred from the field. And I rejoiced when I heard that, for so persecuted they, the Prophets, were before me.

But some years went by and things began to happen. Whatever the little book had to do with it, I don't know, maybe nothing at all. But that society received such a pouring out of God blessing that they wrote me that they not only were sorry that they had barred that little booklet that I put in, they didn't say that, but that they had chosen another book of mine for conference study during their conference.

So I was a heretic for saying that when you have faith, that God will confirm it. And later on I was a hero. So you see, as Babe Ruth says, you're either a hero or a bum, and there's no middle ground, you know, there's nowhere in between.

Now here was Peter standing up, and he lifted up, and that's the business of the Church. Stand up and lift up. And Peter became a witness, as the Church is a witness, on earth to things in heaven.

The Church is a witness to powers beyond the earthly and the human. It is a source of great grief to me that the Church is trying to run on its human powers. Peter testified to something beyond the human and beyond the earthly, some power that lay beyond the earthly scene, but was interested in us men and women, and not only that, but was working in men and women, willing to enter us and make itself known to us.

And I use the word itself for power, because the itself turns out to be a himself, none other than the Spirit of God himself. And thus, the witnessing to things he had experienced, and to inform and to influence, and to urge and exhort those who hadn't yet experienced to enter in. So now I want to talk a little bit to this Church, if the Church is to be a Church of Christ.

Now, I don't know about you, I don't know whether this is temperament or the Holy Ghost. As I told the Brethren last week when I preached to their conference, I have an awful time being sure whether it's closure, temperament, or whether it's the Spirit. I might as well be honest with you and tell you that, no use lying about it in a nice, saintly way.

I might as well tell you that sometimes I don't know whether or how much is temperament. I had an English father. My English father was so nervous, so nervous, it was terrible.

He was tighter than a G-string that was pulled so tight that one more tiny infinitesimal turn and it would snap. Well, then I had a German mother, and you know what you get out of that. And therefore I have a temperament, and I don't know, but I'm grieved over the fact that the Church is trying to carry on in its own power.

And I'd like to say this to you, that if I couldn't have the divine power of God, I'd quit the whole business. I'd walk out and stop the whole business. Well, you know, all this Boy Scouts stuff, all this knitting society stuff, what's the idea to have it all? I might as well go out and say, God says, be ye either hot or cold.

I would, Lord, hot or cold, but because you're not hot or cold I'll spill you out of my mouth. It makes God sick, the kind of Christianity that doesn't know where it is and that's trying to run a heavenly institution after an earthly manner. Now, if this Church is to be a Church of Christ, a living, organic member of that redeemed body of which Christ is the head, then its teachers and its members must strive earnestly and sacrificially and with constant prayer to do a number of things.

Let me name them for you. This Church, the Church, our Church, the Alliance, this Church here on the corner, and all the Churches of all the denominations that are gospel churches, for they're all, we're all a part of the same body, then I say that if we are to be that kind of Church, then there are certain things that we must do, not nibble at, but earnestly strive to do, sacrificially and with constant, earnest prayer. We must strive to make our beliefs and practices new testament in their content, new testament in their content, nothing dragged in from the outside.

But we must teach and believe new testament truth, and we must go constantly to the grassroots, the men who founded this country and the country below the border, this great North American continent. They took it over a wilderness and they made it into a civilized continent. How did they do it? They did it by going out and with their axes cutting down the trees first and making houses and then planting corn and potatoes and other vegetables and grain.

And you know when they planted that, they didn't go to bed then and sleep until it was time to harvest it. They fought encroachment from the wilderness from the day they planted their corn and the rest of their crops until they harvested them and had them safely in their log barns. Because the wilderness encroaches on the fruitful field, and unless there is constant fighting, I know as a farmer boy from the state of Pennsylvania, I know how we used to have to do, plant your corn and then cross your fingers and pray and get your shotgun out.

Because the crows would have your corn if you didn't do everything that was possible to do. Now it's exactly the same with the Church. I read, where did I hear this the other day, one of the old Saints said, "...never think for a minute that there is a time when you won't be tempted, and he is tempted the most effectively who thinks he isn't being tempted at all." So just when you think you're not being tempted, that is the time when you're being tempted the most effectively.

And so it is with the Church. We lean back on our own laurels and say that may be true of some churches, but it's not true of us. We are increased with goods and have need of nothing.

But I want to remind you that you've got to fight for what you have. This little field of God's planting has to have plenty of shotguns and plenty of watchmen out driving off crows, not only crows, but bears and foxes and groundhogs and all sorts of other creatures, to say nothing of the little insects that destroy crops. You've got to keep after them.

You've got to keep your field healthy. And there's only one way to do it, and that is to keep it true to the word, keep the word in it, keep the word in it. To be constantly going back to the grassroots and getting the word, getting the word into the Church.

And we must not only do this, but we must also earnestly and sacrificially and prayerfully strive to be empowered with that same power that came upon them and that Peter said, God has shed forth this which you now see and hear. And to live, to gear ourselves into things eternal and to live the life of heaven here upon the earth, and to put loyalty to Christ first at any cost, now that's a Church. Anything else than that isn't a Church.

And I personally want to be a member of a Church. I'd rather be in a little room over a barber shop on a side street somewhere with twenty people meeting and singing off-key some old hymn of Zion than to be part of a great going concern that is not New Testament in its doctrine, in its spirit, in its living, in its holiness, in all of its whole texture and tenor. We must be New Testament, and of course such a Church as that need not expect to be relatively popular, but certain fruits will follow it if we make a Church that kind of Church.

Certain fruits will follow it. It's people will be a joyful people. When the Holy Ghost came upon the Moravians in 1727, that October morning when they were having communion, they said they went out from that place scarcely knowing whether they were on earth or had died already and gone to heaven.

And that was a characteristic of the Moravians for a hundred years. The characteristic was joy, they were a joyful people. They weren't a happy people in the sense that they worked up their happiness.

They were a joyful people, the joy came from within. One of these college groups, Stratton Shufelt was in one, I suppose it would be, excuse the word, Wheaton, but I'll use it tonight, he was a Wheaton man, I suppose it was a Wheaton college group. He was out with him when he was a young chap and he told me that he went into a certain church, and I will leave you to discover which it was, it could have been Lance, but it wasn't.

And he said that he was in that church, and they got there early and all, and how they do, you know, brush their teeth and change their clothes and straighten their tie, and that's what they were doing, waiting to get time to go on the platform. And he said he noticed a little prayer meeting down in front, and there were some ladies down there, and they were down there beating the bench, saying, All right, Jesus, now let's get going, let's get going, Jesus, all right, let's get going. Well, you know what she was trying to do, God bless her or them, they were trying to work up their joy.

They weren't joyful, and they were trying to work it up. You know Elvis Presley can teach you a lesson on that if you want to learn from him, because he knows how to work it up, brother. I've been and preached one time in a huge building, it was an auditorium, and I was in one end preaching to a packed house and he was in the other end preaching to his council, that's when he was packed.

But I was preaching in one end and he was singing in the other. Well, the police didn't bother us, so we were full that night. But they did have to keep his customers under control, because he knows how to get in there and work it up.

He didn't even have to pray, he just stood up and wiggled and sang, and everybody got blessed. Well, you can do that now, but listen to me, I say that when we give God his place in the Church, when we recognize Christ as Lord, high and lifted up, when we give the Holy Spirit his place, there will be a joy that isn't worked up. It will be a joy that springs like a fountain.

The Lord said that it should be a fountain, an artesian well that springs up from within. So that will be one characteristic of a Spirit-filled Church, there will be a joyful people, and it will be easy to distinguish them from the children of the world. So I wonder what Paul would say if he came down and looked us over, went up and down the aisles and looked us over, then went down to a theater and looked them over, then went to a hockey game and looked them over, then went down to Eaton's and looked at the people shopping, then went out on the street and looked at them, went wherever crowds were, and then came back and looked us over.

And I don't think he'd see very much difference, really. But where the Church is a Spirit-filled Church, you can always distinguish a child of God from a child of the world. And then a Church that is Spirit-filled will be useful to the race of men.

We ought to be useful to the race of men. You know, they claim we're parasites. We preachers, Bill and I, William and I, we're supposed to be parasites.

The Communists say we are, and a lot of others, they say we're social parasites, that we don't turn a hand or anything, we just live like a parasite. You know a tick? We used to, a dog used to come in flapping his long ears and whining, and I thought, well, he's got a tick on his ear, and they'd hunt a tick. A tick is a little

flat nothing that fastens itself on a dog's ear and drinks dog blood until he's puffed up something, full of dog blood, and you have to pull that out, you know, and if you pull it out, then the head pulls off and they get sore, or it's a mess.

But anyhow, they say we're parasites, that we drink the blood of society and don't produce a thing. I have seven children and sixteen grandchildren, and that's not too bad, and he has four children, and I think we've produced all right. And beside that, the scripture says that he, that the ox, that the ox that Harvard works in the cornfield, feed him, it says, that's my version, it says, feed the ox.

So I don't have any, I'm not, they don't get me down on talking about it like that. I know how God does things. If I, if I were driving a truck, for instance, how could I preach sermons on Sundays? So the Lord says, you, you, I have lots of truck drivers, you, you, you get in your room and get quiet there and read and sing and get up sermons and talk to the people, and I'll talk to you and you talk to the people.

So I'm not worried about them, what they say about us being parasites. But I believe that the church ought to be useful to the whole community, that because we're here, everybody ought to be better. Now fellows sneak in with some, with some nitroglycerin and soap and he'll blow a, he'll blow a, a safe, but that, that fellow, we, we can't help him any.

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