

# Marks of a Spirit Filled Church - Part 2

by A.W. Tozer

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*A spirit-filled church is a place where people can come to worship God, live clean lives, and experience joyful fellowship with others, and those who have a leading ambition to be rid of their sins, are sensitive to the invisible presence of God, and have tasted of the good word of God and felt the power of the Holy Spirit will be at home there.*

**Duration:** 19:54

**Scripture:** Psalm 29:4, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 22:39, John 10:27, Romans 12:2, Ephesians 4:32, 1 John 1:9

**Topics:** "Spirit Filled"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being a positive influence in the neighborhood. He believes that by living a godly life and having spirit-filled churches, the crime rate can be reduced. The preacher also expresses his ambition to worship the Lord in holiness and to hear the voice of the shepherd. He concludes by stating that worship is more powerful and joyful than any form of entertainment, and that the church should prioritize worship.

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## Transcript

But you can help the neighborhood. You can help the neighborhood where you live, and you can help this neighborhood. And the neighborhood will be better because we're here, and we don't need to apologize.

They owe us money. They owe us a great debt. They can rob us, but we keep the crime rate down nevertheless.

And for you to have more God-filled, Spirit-filled churches, you can have less cops on the street. And be sure of that, that there's more, there's, wherever there's more godliness, there's less crime. And a Spirit-filled church is useful in the neighborhood, useful to the sons of men, even the ones that are not converted.

And it'll be influential among the churches. You know what I have an ambition? I don't know how long I'll be around, but I know what I have an ambition. I'd like to see this church become so godly, so Spirit-filled, that it would have a spiritual influence on all the churches in the whole city of Toronto.

That everybody in this city, every church in this city, would have to take off its hat and stand at attention and say, and I am not unspiritual in this because Paul told some of his people, he said, your godliness and faith is talked about through all of Cain and Asia Minor. And it's entirely right that I could hope this of you,

that I could hope that we might become so Spirit-filled, walk with God, learn to worship, and live so clean and so separated, that everybody would know it, and the other churches in the city would be blessed on account of it. Did you know that when Luther had his Reformation, the Catholic church was forced to clean up, just because the moral pressure from Luther and Lutheranism forced the Roman church to clean up? And when Wesley came and preached, the Anglican church was forced to clean up some of the things that were wrong with them.

That's not to speak unkindly of my Anglican friends, for I have many of them, but it's only to say that in those times they needed some help. And they didn't come into Methodism, but Methodism was a spiritual force that compelled them to do something about their own condition. And so there's no reason why we could not be a people here so filled with the Spirit, so joyfully singing his praises, and living so clean in our business and home and school, that the people would know it, and other churches would be forced to straighten up and begin to pray for something, too, because we'd set the standard for them.

I know, my friend, whenever you have a Spirit-filled people, you have a people that can live well and die well. "All these Christians die well,' they said of the Methodists. They'd die well.

"Behold how these Christians die,' said a man as he looked at the martyrs in their Roman days. "If you live well, you'll die well. Old Balaam wanted to die the death of the righteous, but he wouldn't live the life of the righteous.

If you're going to die the death of the righteous, you must live the life of the righteous. And a Christian ought to be able to die well. He should be able to do that for nothing else." Well, now, there are some who won't feel at home in a church like that.

And if your hope is to have everybody and his brother on his mother's side to just come and sit around and glow, just put that out of your head, brother, it won't happen that way. Not all men have faith, and there are just some people who don't want that kind of church. And I'll name them now.

Let me go over and tell you who they are. They're people who put on religion as a Sunday garment, as a well-dressed Sunday garment. I suppose there aren't many here, but I'm afraid there might be, so I'm going to point out that if we have a revival and the blessing of God comes to us here as we both know, and I want, and the board and many, many others of you are praying and writing me and talking to me over the phone.

So we're together on this, and if this comes and we do get the help we need from God, those who make religion merely a Sunday garment, they won't like it very well, because we'll insist that they live right Monday morning, and they don't want to do that. And they that keep their religion disengaged from practical living, they won't be pleased, they won't like it either, you know. They disengage their religion.

Some people have a wonderful way of disengaging. Their religion is here, and their living is here. And on Sundays they go in and polish off their religion, and in the evening at about 11 o'clock they put it on the shelf, and then Monday they go out and live the way they want to live.

Now, nobody like that ever likes to hear me preach, nobody. If you're like that, they won't like to hear me preach, because I won't surrender to that kind of thing, and I won't surrender to that kind of people, and I wouldn't care that if it was a whole Senate of the United States and the Parliament of Canada and all the big doctors and scientists and all the great may-bubs on the whole continent said they'd come and join my

church, I'd still preach the same thing, because we are to be a church of the living God, not a gathering of big shots necessarily. Though the big shots can come, they'll get on their knees, and when the big shot on its knees isn't any taller than anybody else, you know.

You ever think of that? All right, now, there are those also who let religion, or who refuse to let religion, endanger them in any way. They refuse to let it interfere with their pleasures or their plans. They'll serve Jesus and go to heaven, get saved and can't lose their eternal life, and so they'll make it through, you know.

But then they're going to have fun on the way there, and they lay their lives out just as a gardener lays out the garden, or a woman, my wife, sometimes cuts out a pattern and lays it on a table, and it looks like a mess to me, but it turns out to be a dress for a granddaughter. And we lay out our lives, you know, and we say, now, it's nice to serve thee, and we love thee, Lord, and let's sing a chorus, but we won't change that pattern any. We're going to keep that pattern.

My friends, the cross of Jesus Christ always changes man's pattern, always gets in there and makes a man change his life. The cross of Christ is revolutionary. And if we're not ready to let it be revolutionary in us, we're not going to like a church that takes the things of God seriously, and let it cost us anything or control us in any way.

People want the benefit of the cross, but they don't want the control of the cross. They want all the cross can offer, but they don't want to be under the lordship of Jesus. Then, of course, there are those who expect religion to be fun.

I hope we're through, I'm not sure we are yet, but we're just going through a long period when Christianity was the funniest thing on the continent. We could have more fun serving Jesus than you could do in anything else in the whole world, and it was clean, too. You didn't have a hangover, they said.

You go down to the corner pub, you have a good time, but you'll have a hangover. And they said, you serve Jesus and you can have all the fun you want to, and you won't have a hangover. And that kind of Christianity for sake of fun, Christianity as an entertaining medium, the whole thing is offensive and foul before God Almighty.

My brother, the cross of Christ isn't fun, and it never was fun. There is such a thing as the joy of the Lord, which is the strength of his people. There is such a thing as having joy unspeakable and full of glory, but there is also such a thing as joying while we grieve.

The idea that Christianity is another form of entertainment is perfectly ridiculous. I wrote one time something, and I said that Christianity was being made a form of entertainment. A fellow felt himself called to write and answer me, and he had an editor of magazines, so he wrote me up in his magazine.

I said that we ought not to see things, but we ought to see the things that were invisible. And he said, Tozer believes in going to church and keeping your eyes shut. Well, of course he didn't understand what I was talking about, or perhaps he did understand, but lying about it.

But then I said that Christianity isn't a form of entertainment, and he said, Tozer is all wet, he ought to know better. He said, Every time you sing a hymn, you are being entertained. I said, That's entertainment.

Maybe he was, but, brother, I'm not. When I sing Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, I'm worshipping God Almighty. If you want to call that which they do before the throne, when they cry day and night without ceasing, Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty, and hide their face behind their wings, if that's entertainment, then I'm an entertainer.

But if it isn't, then I'm a worshiper. The church must worship, beloved. There is more healing joy in five minutes of worship than there is in five nights of a revel.

The world ought to find that out. Nobody ever worshiped God and went out and committed suicide as a hangover, but many a man has killed himself because he had just burned himself out trying to have fun. Many a pretty young lady goes out, throws herself into having fun, and before she's twenty-five years old, she's an old hag and has to have a retread job done on her countenance before anybody can look at her without gagging.

And she has simply burnt herself out. She's effete and burnt out, and everywhere you go you find it. All these pretty actresses that you see and see their pictures and some of you have gone to see them, you ought to see them when they get up in the morning, brother.

They have to have a patch job done on their face before they dare even come down to breakfast. It's all burnt out. I love to see the grace of God in a face, don't you? I remember, I mentioned this once before for another reason, I was among the brethren, the brethren in Christ, those plain people who all have these things.

Women have little black hats sitting up on top of their head and their hair is done up in a bun here and their ears stick out. I preached for them, and I was blessed. I was just absolutely refreshed and wonderfully blessed.

They didn't have a thing on but face, not a thing on their head but hair and a little black thing for the angels. According to 1 Corinthians they cover their head for the sake of the angels. And they're just sweet.

You look at them and you're reminded of your dear old aunt back in Pennsylvania and your grandmother out in New Brunswick, and you think of all the nice people you ever knew and the sweet good people you ever knew when you look at them. You don't have to apologize for them, just nice people, the brethren in Christ. Now I couldn't go among them, but I do admire them tremendously.

That is, I couldn't join them, but I do admire them tremendously. I had a tie-on, you know, and I told them, I said, I told the president of the college where I was, I said, you know, I'm a Gentile and I don't know whether they'll take me in or not at all. He said, preach to their hearts and they'll forget that you don't belong to them.

And I did just that and they did just that. Now, of course, there are those who embrace religion for its cultural value. You ever meet those people? They don't know anything about the spirit-filled life or the spirit-filled church, but the cultural value of the church is good for them.

They want their children brought up in the culture of the church. Anybody that does that, of course, they're not going to be at home among God's dear people. They want book reviews and all that sort of thing.

And they won't be at home, but there will be some that are at home and I'm going to name them and quit for tonight. I know we want to sing and I am not going to press my length in my sermon on Jubilee, but

there will be some people, if we have a spirit-filled church that practices the beliefs of the New Testament and goes constantly to the grassroots and roots out everything that isn't of God and keeps the grain growing lush and beautiful, gears into things heavenly and walks with God and obeys the truth and loves each other. We'll rule out a few, but these will be in their glory.

Now, who are they? Those who have a leading ambition to be rid of their sins. If you haven't got an overburdening ambition to be rid of your sins, you won't like to hear me preach very often or long. You won't do it, because I believe we ought to want to be rid of our sins.

If I had a cancer growing on my neck, I'd want to be rid of that thing. And nobody could come to me and say, now here, I've got a cowbell here, let me shake it. Don't you like it? And I'd say, no, I don't like it.

I'm interested in this cancer on my neck. Have you got a cure for it? And he'd say, oh, I'd forget the cancer. Let me jingle the bell.

He'd jingle the bell. I'd say, I've heard real cowbells on real cows when I was on the farm and I don't want to hear them in church, so get them out of here. And let's talk about getting rid of your sins.

My brother, there are some people that are overwhelmed with the desire to be free from their sins. Refining fire go through my heart and sanctify the whole. Those people will be happy among us and to know and walk with God.

Their ambition is to walk with God and to follow the Lamb with us for every God. We'll know each other. The Lord's people kind of know each other.

They do. They know each other. You may get occasional bad apple.

Jesus had Judas's carrot in his little flock. But mostly we know each other. And when you shake hands and somebody says something to you about God, you sort of know you're talking to a brother in Christ, regardless whether he's an Irishman, a Scotman, an Englishman, American, or what he may be.

We all talk the same language and we're brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ our Lord. And those who have learned to recognize the voice of the shepherd, they will be at home in a spirit-filled church. Some people have never heard the voice of the shepherd, but oh, that voice of the shepherd is tender as a lullaby and as strong as the wind and as mighty as the sound of many waters.

The voice of Jesus, that healing, musical, solemn, beautiful voice of Jesus in his church. And the people who have learned to hear that voice and recognize it are always at home where everything centers around him. Jesus is all in all.

In the early days of the Alliance, we were a conglomeration of everything under the sun, and we still are. We really still are. We have Calvinists and Arminians and Methodists and Baptists and all sorts of people, and we're all together on one thing.

Jesus Christ is wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. He's all in all. And you know the people of the shepherd? They sort of gravitate toward that sort of place.

Then there are those who are sensitive to the invisible presence. They're not so sure who else is present, but they know the Lord is present, and they're sensitive to that. Is your heart sensitive to that, the Lord's presence, or are you a sampler and a nibbler? Well, God help you and bless you if you are, but the child of

the King isn't a sampler and a nibbler.

He's a sheep who loves his shepherd and stays awfully close to his shepherd. I told the preachers last week in our conference that the only safe place for a sheep is by the side of his shepherd, because the devil doesn't fear sheep, he just fears the shepherd, that's all. All the sheep in Ontario wouldn't be a match for one wolf.

And if you give one wolf time, he could eat all the sheep in Canada, give him time, and granted he'd live long enough, he could do it, because they can't fight back, you see. They just run and put their heads together and make funny, pleading, bleating sounds, and the wolf doesn't mind that. And that's all God's people can do.

So our safety lies in being near to the shepherd. Stay close to Jesus and all the wolves in the world can't get a tooth in you, thank God. Well, there are some who've tasted of the good word of God and felt the mysterious power of the world to come, have you? Have you? If you haven't, maybe it's because you aren't doing anything about it, maybe it's because you don't want this or don't want it enough.

But if there are those in the church, in present here tonight, who would rather hear the voice of Jesus than to hear the voice of the greatest speaker or the best singer in the world, would rather be conscious of the divine presence than to be conscious of the presence of the greatest man in the world who's sick of his own sin and longs to be holy, then I'm preaching to you. And I pray that your numbers may increase, and I pray that you'll tell others this is what we stand for at Avenue Road, this is what we believe in, Jesus Christ, clean living, joyful, radiant, happy worship, good, sweet fellowship and kindness and patience and endurance and honesty and the missionary outlook and good decency and separation from all things that are wrong, above all things, to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness and to learn to know the wondrous sound of the shepherd's voice. That's what we stand for, that's what we believe in, that's what we're preaching.

Well, that's all now, I think. That's no way to close a sermon. See, I never learned to close sermons.

When I get through, I just quit. Preachers who've studied the thing, they tell you there's a way to close it, but I've never bothered to find out how. I just quit when I'm done.

I'm finished now, so there's no use to go on. But let's have a little moment of prayer, just a little moment of prayer. On behalf of Christian Publications, God bless you, and thank you for listening.

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