

# The Holy Spirit and Mission

by Thaddeus Barnum

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of agape love, unity, and mission in the church. It highlights the need for intimacy with God, empowering believers to love others as Jesus loved us. The speaker urges the congregation to receive the Holy Spirit's power, embrace agape love, and engage in mission to impact the world around them.*

**Duration:** 36:36

**Scripture:** John 13:34, Romans 5:5, Acts 6:3, 1 Corinthians 13:1, Ephesians 3:16, 1 Thessalonians 3:12, 2 Chronicles 20:12

**Topics:** "Agape Love", "Church Unity and Mission"

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## Description

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## Transcript

Heavenly Father, just so many of us come from broken relationships. Even now, you can feel that story in our life of those that are distant from us. Do not let us distance from you as you heal the relationships in our lives.

Lord, heal the relationship between us. Teach us intimacy with you and then empower us to be able to love those you've given us with the love with which you've loved us. This culture has stolen honor from us.

We don't know what it means anymore. And sometimes our language dishonors you in our approach to you. The reverence, the awe, the trembling, the weakness.

Too often we come in arrogance, confidence, because we can't see you, don't know you. As we should, with honor, to teach us to honor you, submit to you, as we offer ourselves, all that we are, all that we have, a living sacrifice before you. As we pray these things in the most blessed name of all, Jesus, our Lord.

When I was a schooled in preaching, I was always taught that our job is to bring the word of God by the spirit of God to the people of God. It wasn't later till I found out my job was to entertain you. And Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones used to begin every sermon, the words with which I'd like to address you are to be found in.

Always keeping that focus. I'm afraid to give you my text, actually, so I'm going to hold it back, because if I speak it, it's going to be too familiar and we might miss it. I wish there had been more time.

It has been so lovely to be with you. I feel like I'm engrafted in the most wonderful family. I've been to diocesan clergy gatherings.

Oh, yes, I have. And the these sit here and the those sit there, and the ones who are against these and those sit there. It's fascinating, among us, the divisions.

But not here, or at least I can't find it. There's a beauty about you that I just thank the Lord for. The Lord is here.

I wish I had more time. I would love to have shown and just explored with you how Pentecost impacts Ephesians 6. Jesus said, you'll be clothed with power from on high. And then he takes us to Ephesians 6, where we see that clothing is called the armor of God.

And I have found in my work with pastors over these years, that in as much as there's an ignorance of Pentecost, there's an ignorance of spiritual warfare. I don't want that, but there's no time. I wish there was time to talk about the sealing of the Holy Spirit, this gift of assurance that comes through this wonderful gift of Pentecost, as you find at the end of Ephesians 1, 13 and 14, especially in a day where assurance is needed in a day of anxiety.

But we don't have time. I wish we could talk about Pentecost and its impact on suffering, which is not only where we are in so many portions of our life, but as Christians, we're going to have to face and teach the next generation in the culture we're living in. But there's no time.

I wish there was time to speak on the Holy Spirit and leadership and how to lead our vestries in the power and unity and love of the Holy Spirit, and not go back to corporate means, but actually come to the kind of principles we find in Acts 15 of how to lead by this wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit. I wish there was more time to talk about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, so that we might be a people that can hear that sound, hear what the Spirit says to the church. This is why Paul said, pursue love, earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy that we might have ears to hear what the Spirit of the Lord is saying to the church.

But if we're afraid of the Holy Spirit and afraid of Pentecost, we shall never get there. There's so much to talk about. But I have limited this time as I prayed with Bishop Ken over this, just simply to take us to worship and to see Pentecost in temple language, where the glory comes down upon the living stones.

He takes us through the cross into the very place of the Holy of Holies to fill us with the Holy Spirit. I wanted to take us yesterday into the irrefutable evidence that we cannot talk about discipleship and godly character without talking about the person of God, the Holy Spirit and Pentecost. And today, finally, you'd think I would have done this first, because most of us do it first.

It's time to talk about mission. And I say that by saying it's self-evident that Pentecost is about mission from Acts 1.8. You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be my witnesses. To the ends of the earth, He's empowering us for service.

The very renewal of vows that we just did for the people of God to be empowered. And it's the position of the people in office to equip the saints for the work of ministry. That's the work, the people of God being

empowered by the Spirit to go out and change this world, turn it upside down for the gospel of Jesus.

So I'd like to just do a few things. As we come to the last and closing moment of our Eucharist, I want to be able just to give just some categories about mission. I listened this past fall to a series that Redeemer City to City gave on their podcasts.

It was called How to Reach the West Again, seven podcasts that Tim Keller and his team did. Tim would give about a 10-minute brief and then they would talk to global church planters in the first world context and what they're facing in the culture and what is the missional strategy today. And I'm going to summarize just a few points of it that I took away.

The first is called, I call diagnostics. In that what Tim Keller was saying simply is this, that the evangelism of today is different than the evangelism 10, 20 years ago. Then we had categories.

We've got no categories now. He listed five. In this day, there's no talk of transcendence.

There's no talk of sacred space. There's no talk of moral essence. There's no talk of sin and guilt.

There's no talk of afterlife. And then argued the fact that we are being disciplined, this world now with the birth of the internet and social media, we are being disciplined by social media. Our kids are growing up imbibing on it 24-7.

It is the means of formation of their souls in which it is described that world perspective and worldview is given. Moral ethic is defined. It is appealing to the passions of the consumer, inflaming the passions of lust and of self-centeredness.

And lastly, it's deadening our senses to God. In response to that, the way I was picking it up is that we are a grieving culture and anxious culture. We are a cynical culture.

We are a lonely culture. Grieving because everything's changing. Ever since 9-11, we've been in a state of trauma of not knowing what's next.

The pandemic only heightened that. The anxiety in our culture, the demand for anxiety medication to somehow give us some sense of stability in a culture that is not stable. Anxiety is an epidemic today.

And what it's producing with no sense of security is producing a cynical culture. Cynical culture means I trust nobody. Well, let me say this.

I do trust you. I trust you as long as you do for me. And when you stop doing for me, I am done with you.

Cynical. We don't trust authority. We don't trust government.

We don't trust people in any walk of life. We become a people on our own, doing what's right in our own eyes. And so we are a lonely culture.

We're a people who are isolated, locked down into our little boxes, finding places to have outlets so we can somehow feel like we're connected in a world that we're distanced from. This often is the way it is seen. And it's impacting our church so much so that there are two reactions to this.

And they are typical reactions. Either we hibernate. We insulate from culture.

We watch our media 24-7 and say, ain't it awful? They're all going to hell. And then we go into here and go, thank you, Jesus. Insulation.

The other possibility is compromise, which is dominant and it's ripped the church apart. The progressives, the inclusives. How do you stand for this gospel in this day on solid ground? It's much easier to bring the golden calf in, set it beside the altar and let people come.

Compromise. And we're seeing it everywhere. Denominations are splitting apart because of this.

The Methodist is coming August. They're splitting apart because of it. You're finding it everywhere.

And what the sound coming out of the podcast was this. And what Keller argued is, it is time to return to faithful presence. To get into the culture with faithful presence.

So to connect relationally. Therefore building relationship where the gospel can be preached. And so it can bring conviction of sin and lead to conversion.

We've got to build runways that connect. Do you believe that? Let me give some biblical grounding for this. And this moves me to my text, which I shall not give you.

What is the missional strategy of the Godhead? Let me say it from the beginning. It has everything to do with relationship. Again.

To glorify the son. It is. And the son comes to get us.

Thank you, Lord. Yes. In the Godhead, there is perfect community.

It's why he is called agape. In the fullness of the father, the son, the Holy Spirit. And he creates us in his image.

And we become agapes. When sin broke us apart from the Genesis garden three. Genesis three.

Immediately you still see that agape upon him. Do you not? Genesis 3:15. I'm going to come.

Everything about him is connect, relational. It's who he is. It's how he's always been.

So much so that the covenant itself is set in marital language. I was a husband to them, the Lord declares. I, your maker, am your husband, declares the Lord.

I betrothed you to me forever. I betrothed you to me in righteousness and in justice. In steadfast love and in mercy.

I betrothed you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the Lord. I don't know if you've gotten to the end of the book yet.

But it ends with a wedding. Did you know that? It ends with the marriage of the lamb. And the people that belong to him, who love him, who follow the lamb wherever he goes.

Everything is about agape. It's always been about agape. And that draws me closer to my text.

Go to John 13. Here in John chapter 13. If I could just simply pick up that verse from verse four.

Jesus having loved his own who were in the world, loving them to the end. He rose from supper. He laid aside his garments.

He took to himself a towel. He poured water. He got down.

Now because I'm speaking to you, leaders. You who know the scriptures. I'm not going to spend time in the exposition of this.

Except bring it to its fulfillment. Is not that motion that I just described an exact exposition of Philippians 2, 5 and following. He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped.

But made himself of no reputation. Taking the form of a servant, a bond servant. And being made in the likeness of men.

And being found in appearance as a man. He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death. Is not that the same imagery? He rose from his Godhead.

And descended to be among us. He took off his garments. And he took to himself a towel.

And he poured down water. He has come to love us. That's what he's come to do.

I don't need to exposit these things. You know these things. And this is why I would say to you.

That what John 13 is doing for us. In model, in picture form. Is taking us to the cross.

What he's doing with their feet. He's going to do with their souls. He's not going to just wash with water.

It's simply the picture. He's come to wash us with his blood. And what has he come to do in specific? To wash us and to forgive us.

Yes, well done. Yes, but that's not just it. In this forgiveness of sins.

What has he come to do? He's come to bring us to new life in him. He has come in his death to wrap it all up. His blood to shed for our forgiveness.

Our justification. And on that third day he rose again. And he breathed upon us the Holy Spirit.

So that the doctrine of lust. At the very essence of a core of who we are. Would be replaced by the power of agape.

Back into the imago. He's creating us to be agapes. Does that make sense? If we do not speak in this language.

Then when we get to my text. It's going to be legalism. We're going to hear the words.

You also ought to love one another. A new commandment I give you. I'm coming to my text.

A new commandment I give to you. You are to love one another. Just as I have loved you.

Just as I have loved you. You also are to love one another. As I have loved you.

As I've poured out my life to you. On your behalf. For you.

To give you new life. I am putting this new principle of my heart. My father's heart.

And the Holy Spirit's heart. Inside of you. And it's called agape.

And then comes my text. Two words. By this.

By this. All people will know. That's your mind.

This agape. If you've known it. And if you've tasted it.

If you've been allowed in your heart. So to breathe in that agape. You're going to know.

It is dangerous. Everything about it. It is dangerous.

It is a contagion. I parallel it. Because I really am me.

It's the Omicron. You hear about it in South Africa. It's living next to you.

How did that happen? That has been the revival of the church from the beginning. And it happens through the power of agape in the church. It is unacceptable that if we belong to Christ.

We divide from each other. Unacceptable. It is, isn't it? It's unacceptable that we harbor inside of us.

These bitternesses and resentments. It's unacceptable. It's unacceptable that we look down on people.

Seeing ourselves better than them. Unacceptable. It is unacceptable that we take pride in who we are.

Always, always seeking someone to praise us. And not doing what he's taught us to do. To get down on our knees.

And honor each and every person. Did you notice that he washed Judas's feet? Just like he washed the other 12. How do I know that? I know that because after he was done.

He said, one of you is going to betray me. If he had acted differently to Judas. Don't you think they would have picked it up? He bathed Peter for five minutes.

He bathed Thaddeus for 10. Thaddeus's need more time. He came over to Judas.

Went flick. Oh, James. No, no.

The honor and integrity of each one. He loved his own who were to the end. And that's why the key behind this.

Is the most difficult thing we can ever talk about. And yet we've got to learn it for ourselves. So we can teach it to others.

And it is how to receive. How to receive. As I said, this culture especially.

It's the sinful nature, yes. But it's also the nature of this culture. When you're in a trauma sense.

You are a survivor. It's why we don't trust anyone. We have to have people who are safe.

We only let people in built on our boundaries. And our safeguards. We just don't let people in.

We are afraid to let people in. And then there are layers. We let these people in this much.

These people in this much. And even those close to us. We weigh, are they safe with all of us? And now we come to receive.

And to let go control. To yield to the Holy Spirit. To yield ourselves and not feel the fear of letting go.

The fear of being able to say those words of Jehoshaphat. In 2 Chronicles 20 verse 12. Lord, I'm powerless.

I don't know what to do. My eyes are upon you. Too many of us are full of unworthiness and shame.

Some of us simply have those control mechanisms up so much. We actually say, yes, I'm here to receive. But on my terms.

So many of us just don't want to change. He wants to give us the experience of this. Do you realize that by saying the words by this.

He is sending us out in mission. To a world that needs to know this agape. And we can't just say it.

If we're not living it in our midst. If we're not living it in our midst. We can't take it from where we are.

If it's not in us and in our families. If it's not moving from our families to our leaders. If we're not moving to our leaders to our church.

If we're not teaching them. And also letting them experience the power of this new birth. Our job is not to give them morality.

And to say we should live differently. Ours is to lead them to the one who can change us from within. And by changing us from within.

We learn to love one another. Paul said this in 1st Thessalonians. As he responded to a question.

When it comes time to speak about how to love the brethren. The Lord will show you, he says. I love that teaching.

He doesn't expound upon it. He leads his hearers to the one who will teach us about agape. And fill us with that contagion.

That it might be just that. It might move away from. We're dangerous people when agape seizes us.

And that's why I'm going to say to you very briefly. That there's too much scripture. That puts this agape in the context of Pentecost.

That shows you it's the essence of our mission. Example. I shared this at the pre-synod.

The higher gifts of the Holy Spirit. The one that every person receives. Is found in 1st Corinthians 13.

I don't care what gifting you have. If you do not have agape at the center. Your gifting is nothing.

It shapes us. Agape shapes us. Have this attitude in yourselves.

Which was also in Christ Jesus. It shapes attitude. It shapes character.

It shapes everything about us. Agape does. And that's why Paul thunders in 1st Corinthians 13.

Well done you on your great exhortations. And your great giftings. Well done.

If you don't have love. Leave the room. Until you've got him.

And he's got you. Second text Billy. You gave it to us yesterday.

That I would pray that you would. Grant you the. It's gone from me.

But it's a lovely text. Sorry. Thank you so much.

But that's not the text I was going to. That he would grant you. According to the riches of his glory.

To be strengthened with power. Through his spirit in the inner man. That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

And that you being rooted and grounded in love. May be able to comprehend with all the saints. The breadth.

The length. The heights. And death.

To know the love of Christ. Which surpasses knowledge. To be filled up to all the fullness of God.

That is called Pentecost power. And it has everything to do with Agape. And when that happens.

Nothing is impossible. Now to him who is able to do exceeding abundantly. Beyond all that we ask or think.

Because we have got the power of Agape. The heart of the father. The heart of the son.

The heart of the Holy Spirit. In the people of God. A contagion that turns the world upside down.

Relationships are everything in the kingdom of God. Intimacy with him. Intimacy with each other.

Romans 5.5. Coming out of suffering. That God will pour out into our hearts. His love by the Holy Spirit given to us.

Hope does not disappoint us. Because God has poured out his love. He's poured out his Agape.

Into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Whom he's given us. I think I've made my point.

I'm going to take you now to the exhortation. And to the application. And this is my favorite part.

It's my favorite part. Because does it ever surprise you. That when the early church began to have conversations.

About ministry and order. The apostles knew their office. They had to deacon the word of God and prayer.

But the tables needed to be set. And so they needed deacons to serve. Not the word of God and prayer.

The apostles do. They need to serve the tables. They need to go out and faithful witness.

Serve the tables. How many of you know. That it doesn't take much to serve tables.

You know what I'm talking about. Sunday morning. We need some volunteers.

There's a sign up. But isn't it interesting in act six. That the answers.

Let me just say this. If you want to be in this role. You are in the role and the office of the Savior.

Because he's the one that initiated. And showed us what the deaconate is all about. He came not to be served.

But to serve. And he. When he got down as a bond servant.

To wash our feet. The very picture of what he would do. Humbling himself on the death of Calvary.

When he did this. He showed us that the lowest place. Is the highest place.

Because the highest one. Made the lowest one. The highest one.

That you and I might know him. And love him. And take his place.

And go to the lowest place. Which is the highest place. And serve as he has served us.

And love as he has loved us. The deaconate is the highest office in the church. Our deacons need to be deacons.

And teach us to be deacons. So the mission can go forward. Jehoshaphat brought the choir.

And sent them out to battle. What we need in our day. Is the deacons to lead us.

And to show us the way. Why do I say that? Look at the qualifications of the deacon. In Acts chapter six.

They need to be of good reputation. They need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Filled with wisdom.

Filled with faith. Filled with grace. Filled with power.

That is Stephen. Who went out as a faithful witness to serve tables. And oops.

The gospel accidentally got preached. Signs and wonders began to happen. And he got up to preach his first sermon.

And as you quite well know. It didn't go so well for Stephen. They resisted the Holy Spirit.

And yet you can see agape all over Stephen. As the stones begin to pummel his body. That is called agape.

It is us who break down racial divides. It is us. We don't see race.

We see every single person to be honored. From the unborn to the last breath of every single person. That's what we do.

We make sure that the poor are cared for. We make sure the helpless are cared for. We listen for the sound of the cry.

And we're the first to wash feet. We are not the ones that participate in the divisions of our country. We're not the ones to get into the pulpit.

And speak of the politics of our country. People are off message. Our message is to get eyes back on Jesus.

With the power of his gospel. To change us from within. And give us this agape power.

To live it with our spouses. To live it with our children. To live it with those who've hurt us.

To live it with those who are in our churches. And empower them to receive. That we might change the world around us.

I so remember a day. When our dear friend John Richohanna from Africa. Had come to visit us in Connecticut.

To preach the gospel. And there was a family of means in our church. Who said would you all come to dinner? We all came to dinner.

To share fellowship. And if you've ever met Richohanna. You'll know he never speaks about money.

But they begin to ask how can we help? What are you doing in your diocese? And we spoke of an orphanage. That we've been part of. That Bishop Ken and I have been part of.

In building right after genocide in Rwanda. Up in the northwest. And they made a lovely contribution to that orphanage.

Lovely. Just lovely. But on our next trip to Rwanda.

I got a call and said we'd like to go with you. And I thought well this has been a wonderful. Because if they come with us.

This is my sinful side. I have many sinful sides. If they go.

And if they see this school. Maybe they'll help. Because they've got means to help.

I only said that quietly. I didn't say it. And I would never say it to you.

But it was inside my heart. There came a day. Yes we showed them the school.

And we did a lot of wonderful things. But there was a day. That they were taken off on a tour.

Up in the way part of the northwest. And they stumbled into a village. That was utterly poor.

And the children. Their school building was completely torn down. It was it was a place.

That would that would suffer from. Water mud rolling down. And and houses being crushed.

They were just in poverty. And the spirit of the Lord. Came upon this couple.

The agape love of Jesus. Came upon this couple. When they saw this.

You couldn't have planned it. It wasn't something that anybody. Organized or manipulated.

Thank you Lord. Aren't you done with manipulations? The spirit of God came upon them. And they came back.

And began a mission to rebuild that village. That those their son. Did his Eagle Scout award.

In order to make sure. That those people had clean water. Coming off the roof.

They gave themselves. And it wasn't just a lovely contribution. They gave themselves.

That's what turns the world upside down. That's what makes us see the unseeable. And hear the unhearable.

That's it. It's the power of agape. Oh my dear friends.

We need to receive all that Jesus has for us. If we're holding back from him. Why? If we're not receiving all he has for us.

Why? He wants to change us from within. He wants to teach us the kind of intimacy. The kind of intimacy of worship.

To be priests unto the most high. He wants to disciple our character. And he wants to send us into our world.

The world he gives us. To change it. And give ourselves.

As he has given himself for us. And do it together in the body of Christ. It's called agape.

It is a gift of the Holy Spirit. It comes in mission on Pentecost. This is why we do not see unity in our churches.

And divisions. This is why. You all know what I'm talking about.

Because I come in your midst. And I see it lived among you. I see it lived in your relationships together.

It's beautiful. As we go from this place. Let it be a contagion.

I want you to come at the Eucharist time. To receive all that the Lord has. There's going to be prayer ministry stations.

And Bishop Ken or Billy or somebody. Will explain how we're going to do this. But please allow the ministry of the Holy Spirit to minister.

Maybe just where you're seated. Or maybe coming to a prayer team. Just coming for the anointing of the Lord.

To be sent out. To be asking for this Pentecost power in your life. Let's pray when you go home.

That we're not talking about. Please, we're not talking about mountaintop experiences. I know some people think that.

When they think about Pentecost. That what you're talking about is this wonderful experience. Like that couple had in Africa.

My friends, this is not about coming just to an experience. Yes, it's experiential. But we're talking about coming into a relationship with a person.

Who in that person experience. Experientially gives us that wonderful gift. To the mind.

To the heart. To the soul. And then he empowers us for mission.

And shows us where in the communities we belong. What we're to do. How we're to do.

What we're supposed to do. And he is the one that leads us. Don't want you leaving here.

Still holding back. Still distancing yourself from him. Come into the power of God the Holy Spirit.

His person. Lift up your voice and praise. Ask him for the gifts of the Spirit.

All of them. All of them. Ask for all of them.

But the one that you'll know that you know. I want that contagion in you. To the glory of the Son.

In the power of the Spirit. To the honor of our Father.

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