

Sermon Outline  
Burton Memorial United Methodist Church  
“As Citizens of the Kingdom of God, the Holy Spirit empowers us”  
(Part II of “Kingdom of God Citizens”)  
September 21, 2025

Scripture

Isaiah 11:1-2  
Revelation 5:6

Core Idea and purpose

**Core ideas from earlier sermons in the series:**

- As followers of Christ, we are citizens of the Kingdom of God. As such, we use unconditional & sacrificial love to change the world for the better – not strength, violence, or coercion.

**Core Idea:** As citizens of the Kingdom of God, the Holy Spirit empowers us to unconditionally & sacrificially love people while pursuing justice for poor, oppressed, and marginalized people.

**Challenge/purpose:** To comfort people in the knowledge that the Holy Spirit empowers us to do God’s loving will.

The Sermon

When I was a cadet at the Virginia Military Institute (VMI), the highest-ranking non-commissioned officer in my Army ROTC unit was Sergeant Major Goodson - a member of the U.S. Army’s Special Forces – a Green Beret. He was in his forties, and we were in our early twenties, but he could outrun us, out march us, do more push-ups, sit-ups, and pull-ups than us, and whip us in a fight. When he led physical training, we jokingly called him Sergeant Major Satan because it seemed as if he enjoyed torturing us. With his real-life combat experience, he also had many things to teach us. We all knew that SGM Goodson was the best example of a soldier for us to follow. We all wanted to be as tough and skillful as he was.

Like SGM Goodson, our Savior & Lord Jesus Christ is the best example of a citizen of the Kingdom of God for us to follow. Not only is Jesus the best example, he is the **perfect** example for us to follow as citizens of the Kingdom of God. As good as SGM Goodson was at being a fine example of a soldier, he was never a perfect example. Jesus, however, is the **perfect** example of how to live as a citizen of the Kingdom of God. This really shouldn’t surprise us because Jesus is fully human and fully God.

As a human, Jesus perfectly surrendered his life to God the Father. In John 5:17 & 19, Jesus says, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working....Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only

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what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.” In the same way Jesus respected and obeyed God the Father, we are to respect and obey God. Every decision we make should honor God. Who we choose to vote for, or follow should honor God. Our loyalty to God and God’s emphasis on love and justice for poor, oppressed, and marginalized people should take precedence over everything else.

Also, as a human, Jesus went in the power of the Holy Spirit. This means that Jesus allowed the Holy Spirit to empower and guide him. Luke 4:1 tells us that right after his Baptism, “Jesus, **full of the Holy Spirit**, left the Jordan and was **led by the Spirit** into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil...” So, in the same way Jesus went in the power of the Holy Spirit, we are to go in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Revelation 5:6 and Isaiah 11:1-2 are symbolic representations of Jesus going in the power of the Holy Spirit. The first half of Revelation 5:6 says, “Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.” Last week, we learned that the slain lamb is a symbolic representation of Jesus because, just as the Israelites had to sacrifice a lamb to be free of Egyptian slavery, Jesus had to sacrifice himself to defeat sin & death on our behalf.

We see an earlier reference or foreshadowing of Jesus in Isaiah 11:1. It says, “A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.” After the resurrection of Jesus, early Christian leaders looked at this verse in Isaiah and realized it was about Jesus because Jesus comes from the line of David and Jesse is David’s father.

The second half of Revelation 5:6 describes Jesus as the slain lamb. It says, “The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.” In apocalyptic literature, the number 7 stands for perfection or completeness. So, the 7 horns represent Jesus as the perfect Lord. The 7 eyes stand for the 7 Spirits of God, which is another way of referring to the Holy Spirit who is perfect & complete. The seven eyes representing the 7 Spirits of God also references back to the 7 Spirits of God found in Isaiah 11:2, “The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him [Jesus] — the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord” So, both Revelation 5:6 and Isaiah 11:1-2 symbolically portray Jesus as going in the power of the Holy Spirit.

As citizens of the Kingdom of God we are to go in the power of the Holy Spirit just as Jesus went in the power of the Holy Spirit.

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In John 14:15-17, Jesus promises, “If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.” Did you get that? Jesus promises that when we follow him, the Holy Spirit will reside in our hearts. Also, right before he ascended to be at the right hand of the Father, Jesus said, “...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witness in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

Going in the power of the Holy Spirit should give us great comfort. Remember, the Holy Spirit is God along with the Father and the Son. So, if the Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts, God dwells in our hearts. Wherever we are and no matter how good or bad things are, the Holy Spirit is in our hearts – God is with us. The Holy Spirit is always ready to help and comfort us. I know the Holy Spirit has comforted me when my 6-month-old daughter, Sarah, died and when a drunk driver killed my first wife, Jackie.

But the Holy Spirit is also always ready to convict us of sin. This is not fun but a very good thing for our journey towards holiness or Christian perfection. For example, how many people here have ever gossiped and then felt bad about it an hour or two later? I know I have. That’s the Holy Spirit talking to us. We just need to listen and respond.

So, what exactly does the Holy Spirit empower us to do? Well, last week we learned that, as citizens of the Kingdom of God, the Lord calls us to unconditionally and sacrificially love people. It is also true, that God is a God of justice for poor, oppressed, and marginalized people. I will talk more about that next Sunday. So, the Holy Spirit empowers us to unconditionally and sacrificially love people while pursuing justice for poor, oppressed, and marginalized people.

There’s a group of faith leaders in South Florida called the Interfaith Coalition. For over two months, this group of faith leaders from different religious traditions have been conducting prayer vigils every Sunday at 5PM at Alligator Alcatraz. They plan on doing this until the state closes Alligator Alcatraz. In this way, the Holy Spirit has empowered them to seek justice for poor, oppressed, and marginalized people.

In every situation, whether it’s our personal situation, local situation, national situation, or international situation, we can ask: In this situation, how is the Holy Spirit empowering us to unconditionally and sacrificially love people while pursuing justice for poor, oppressed, and marginalized people? Is the Holy Spirit empowering me to listen to a hurting friend, give money, provide a helping hand,

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offer solicited advice, visit someone in jail, attend a peaceful protest, write to my congressman, or organize a march? How is the Holy Spirit empowering us to unconditionally and sacrificially love people while pursuing justice for poor, oppressed, and marginalized people?

Please join me in the following prayer: Dear Holy Spirit, the Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and fear of the Lord, we acknowledge that we are citizens of your Kingdom. As such, show us how YOU are empowering us to unconditionally and sacrificially love people while pursuing justice for poor, oppressed, and marginalized people.  
In Jesus' name, Amen.

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Sermon Outline

I. Introduction

A. When I was a cadet at the Virginia Military Institute (VMI), the highest-ranking non-commissioned officer in my ROTC unit was Sergeant Major Goodson - a member of the U.S. Army's Special Forces – a Green Beret.

- He was in his forties, and we were in our early twenties, but he could outrun us, out march us, do more push-ups, sit-ups, and pull-ups than us, and whip us in a fight.
- When he led physical training, we jokingly called him Sergeant Major Satan because it seemed as if he enjoyed torturing us.
- With his real-life combat experience, he also had many things to teach us.
- We all knew that SGM Goodson was the best example of a soldier for us to follow.

➤ We all wanted to be as tough and skillful as he was.

B. Like SGM Goodson, our Savior & Lord Jesus Christ is the best example of a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven for us to follow.

- Not only is Jesus the best example, he is also the **perfect** example for us to follow as citizens of the Kingdom of God.
- As good as SGM Goodson was at being a fine example of a soldier, he was never a perfect example.
  - Jesus, however, is the **perfect** example of how to live as a citizen of the Kingdom of God.
  - This really shouldn't surprise us because Jesus is fully human and fully God.

II. Jesus: The perfect example for us to follow as citizens of the Kingdom of god

A. As a human, Jesus perfectly surrendered his life to God the Father.

- In John 5:17 & 19, Jesus says, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working....Very truly I tell you, the Son

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can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”

- In the same way Jesus respected and obeyed God the Father, we are to respect and obey God.
  - Every decision we make should honor God.
  - Who we choose to vote for or follow should honor God.
  - Our loyalty to God and God’s emphasis on love and justice for poor, oppressed, and marginalized people should take precedence over everything else.

B. Also, as a human, Jesus went in the power of the Holy Spirit.

- This means that Jesus allowed the Holy Spirit to empower and guide him.
- Luke 4:1 tells us that right after his Baptism, “Jesus, **full of the Holy Spirit**, left the Jordan and was **led by the Spirit** into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil...”
- So, in the same way Jesus went in the power of the Holy Spirit, we are to go in the power of the Holy Spirit.

III. Revelation 5:6 and 11:1-2 are symbolic representations of Jesus going in the power of the Holy Spirit.

A. The first half of Revelation 5:6 says, “Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders.”

- Last week, we learned that the slain lamb is a symbolic representation of Jesus because, just as the Israelites had to sacrifice a lamb to be free of Egyptian slavery, Jesus had to sacrifice himself to defeat sin & death on our behalf.

B. We see an earlier reference or foreshadowing of Jesus in Isaiah 11:1.

- It says, “A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.”

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- After the resurrection of Jesus, early Christian leaders looked at this verse in Isaiah and realized it was about Jesus because Jesus comes from the line of David and Jesse is David's father.
- C. The second half of Revelation 5:6 describes Jesus as the slain lamb.
- It says, “The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.”
  - In apocalyptic literature, the number 7 stands for perfection or completeness.
    - So, the 7 horns represent Jesus as the perfect Lord.
    - The 7 eyes stand for the 7 Spirits of God, which is another way of referring to the Holy Spirit who is perfect & complete.
- D. The seven eyes representing the 7 Spirits of God also references back to the 7 Spirits of God found in Isaiah 11:2, “The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him [Jesus] — the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord”
- E. So, both Revelation 5:6 and Isaiah 11:1-2 symbolically portray Jesus as going in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- IV. As citizens of the Kingdom of God we are to go in the power of the Holy Spirit just as Jesus went in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- A. In John 14:15-17, Jesus promises, “If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”
- Did you get that? Jesus promises that when we follow him, the Holy Spirit will reside in our hearts.
  - Also, right before he ascended to be at the right hand of the Father, Jesus said, “...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes

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on you; and you will be my witness in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

B. Going in the power of the Holy Spirit should give us great comfort.

- Remember, the Holy Spirit is God along with the Father and the Son.
- So, if the Holy Spirit dwells in our hearts, God dwells in our hearts.
- Wherever we are and no matter how good or bad things are, the Holy Spirit is in our hearts – God is with us.
- The Holy Spirit is always ready to help and comfort us.
  - I know the Holy Spirit has comforted me when my 6-month-old daughter, Sarah, died and when a drunk driver killed my first wife, Jackie.

C. But the Holy Spirit is also always ready to convict us of sin.

- This is not fun but a very good thing for our journey towards perfection.
- How many people here have ever gossiped and then felt bad about it an hour or two later?
  - I know I have.
  - That’s the Holy Spirit talking to us. We just need to listen and respond.

V. So, what exactly does the Holy Spirit empower us to do?

A. Well, last week we learned that, as citizens of the Kingdom of God, the Lord calls us to unconditionally and sacrificially love people.

B. It is also true, that God is a God of justice for poor, oppressed, and marginalized people.

- I will talk more about that next Sunday.

C. So, the Holy Spirit empowers us to unconditionally and sacrificially love people while pursuing justice for poor, oppressed, and marginalized people.

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- D. There's a group of faith leaders in South Florida called the Interfaith Coalition.
- For over two months, this group of faith leaders from different religious traditions have been conducting prayer vigils every Sunday at 5PM at Alligator Alcatraz.
  - They plan on doing this until the state closes Alligator Alcatraz.
  - In this way, the Holy Spirit has empowered them to seek justice for poor, oppressed, and marginalized people.
- E. In every situation, whether it's our personal situation, local situation, national situation, or international situation, we can ask: In this situation, how is the Holy Spirit empowering us to unconditionally and sacrificially love people while pursuing justice for poor, oppressed, and marginalized people?
- Is the Holy Spirit empowering me to...
    - listen to a hurting friend,
    - give money,
    - provide a helping hand,
    - offer solicited advice,
    - visit someone in jail,
    - attend a peaceful protest,
    - write my congressman,
    - or organize a march?
  - How is the Holy Spirit empowering us to unconditionally and sacrificially love people while pursuing justice for poor, oppressed, and marginalized people?
- F. Please join me in the following prayer: Dear Holy Spirit, the Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and fear of the Lord, we acknowledge that we are citizens of your Kingdom. As such, show us how YOU are empowering us to unconditionally and sacrificially love

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