



Discussion Notes

Rivers • Repentance (The Spirit is Holy)

June 14, 2026 • Kirsten Anonby

Main Theme:

Jesus promises that as we come to Him, rivers of living water will flow within us, referring to the work of the Holy Spirit in us. Today, we reflect on the reality that the Spirit is Holy. As we pray “Welcome Holy Spirit” and invite him more fully into our lives, He leads us to a place of reverent and worshipful repentance.

Sermon Outline:

Holiness defined: to be set apart, completely distinct from and above creation, completely pure with no sin or brokenness.

The Incongruity of being inhabited (filled) by the Holy Spirit:

- We are walking incongruities, because holiness and sin do not mix.
- The Jewish Law is all about purification, so that an unholy people can draw near to an unholy God.
- Jesus changed this when he became human, died, and was resurrected.
- Because of what Jesus has done, the impossible was made possible. The Holy Spirit dwells within us.
- We feel the incongruity of our sin and the recreating work of the Holy Spirit.

What holiness isn't and what it is:

- Holiness has an image problem. We have caricatures and real life experiences with people using God's law to boost their egos and shame others rather than to heal and renew.
- Jesus is nothing like these pictures. When we look at Jesus and the picture of holiness in the Bible, we discover that holiness is compelling. Holiness is beautiful.
- Holiness is relational, not legalistic, it's the abundant life we're longing for.
- Holiness is profoundly a work of the Spirit. Whenever anyone is trying to be good out of their own capacity, it subtly becomes all about ego — their own virtue. What the Spirit is doing is something different altogether.

What happens when the Holy Spirit gets in us, when we say “Welcome, Holy Spirit?”

- Ezekiel 36:26–28
- Image of a heart transplant.
 - From a heart of stone (cold, dead, unresponsive to God’s love and direction).
 - To a heart of flesh (warm, alive, responsive to God’s love and direction).
- This heart transplant is the work of the Spirit in the believer’s life.
- When we pray welcome, Holy Spirit, we are welcoming this ongoing work, and we can expect:
 - The Spirit to show us ourselves.
 - The Spirit to make us more aware of sensitive to sin in our lives.
 - The Spirit to share his heart with us — to move us beyond ourselves.
- We can expect to be called to repent, to turn away from one thing towards another.

Repentance and the Outpouring of the Spirit

- There is a connection between repentance and the movement of the Holy Spirit.
- Some might say that a repentant heart is a necessary preparation for the work of the Spirit. The danger of leaning too far in this direction is we might begin to see the outpouring of the Spirit as a reward for good behaviour. The Spirit is always a gift.
- Others might say that as the Spirit moves in us He leads us to repentance. The danger of leaning too hard in this direction is that we run the risk of sitting in apathy and passivity towards the Lord. To love is to lean in.
- It’s both – what we know is that there is a connection.

Final Thoughts

- The Spirit is drawing us close to Him, and as He does He is lovingly leading us to take our sin seriously and bring it to the cross. As hard as this is, it is a good thing – it’s moving from death to life.
- No one needs to be afraid that they don’t have it in them to turn to God. If we look at Ezekiel 36 again, we discover that it is God who is doing the work. Our role is to yield and submit to that work.
- Final prayer: Psalm 139:23–24



Study Questions

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Engage:

- What emotions or images come up for you as you think about holiness, about repentance? Are these positive or negative words for you?
- Read the Ezekiel 36:26–28. At your initial reading, what stands out to you?
- What questions do you have about this text?

Observe:

- Take a few minutes to share what you know about the book of Ezekiel. Who is the author, the audience, and the purpose of the book? How does that inform your reading of this text?
- The dominant image used here is of a heart transplant. How is the Lord using that image to describe the renewing work of the Spirit? What is the difference between a heart of stone and a heart of flesh?
- What is the Lord promising here, and how do you see that fulfilled with the coming of the Spirit in the New Testament?
- Spend some time talking about what it means to be a sinful person inhabited by a holy God. What is that tension like for you? How do you sense the renewing work of the Spirit in your life?

Apply:

- What has been your experience with the practice of repentance? How has it been a part of your life? How would you like it to become more a part of your life?
 - How are you sensing the renewing work of the Spirit in your heart recently?
 - Pray through Psalm 139:23–24. Leave space for confession if you're able to as a group.