

Date: July 12, 2026 (Pentecost 7)

1. Texts: Genesis 25:19-34; Ps. 119:105-112; Romans 8:1-11; Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23.
2. Subject: discipleship.
3. Topic: choosing the life in and of the Spirit.
4. Aim: encourage, guide.
5. Proposition: "God made us with restless hearts."

## RESTLESS HEARTS

It has been said that nature abhors a vacuum. A vacuum is an empty space, without air or gas or particles. Gas and particles will always flow into a vacuum until an equilibrium is reached. So it is said, that nature abhors a vacuum.

Human nature also abhors a vacuum, even though God created us with one, a very substantial spiritual vacuum.

God created humankind in his image. That divine image exists as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three persons but one God. We humans are created as body, soul, and human spirit, three aspects of our human existence in God's image.

The body is our physical presence in God's creation. The soul is the total of our personality, will, intellect, and emotion. The human spirit is our ability and need to be filled by God's Holy Spirit. It is through our spirits that we communicate with God's Spirit. The human spirit is the potential for the divine in each one of us and looks to be filled with that divine reality.

Until God moves into our human spirits, our spirits are a spiritual vacuum, needing to be filled by God's Spirit. That's what the collect for today was praying about.

Almighty God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you. May we find peace in your service, and in the world to come, see you face to face; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "The Collect for Proper 15", *The Book of Alternative Services*, The Anglican Book Centre, Toronto, 1985, 15<sup>th</sup> edition, p. 367.

God made us to be filled by his Holy Spirit and until this spiritual vacuum is filled, our hearts will continue to be restless.

For most of us, that infill occurred in our baptisms. In baptism, God the Holy Spirit takes up residence in our human spirits. Our spiritual vacuum is filled by God who responds to our invitation to live his divine life.

Here's another image, that may work to better describe the infilling and presence of the Holy Spirit.

View the human spirit as a dry sponge. Its purpose is to be filled with the Holy Spirit, with that divine presence that was given to Jesus in his baptism in the River Jordan. The water of baptism becomes the symbol of new and refreshing life in the divine Spirit of God.

For most of us that inpouring of the Spirit happened at our baptism.

For some people that inpouring of the Spirit was the last significant experience of the Spirit. You see, *having* the Holy Spirit is not the same as *living in* the Spirit. In our baptisms the Holy Spirit and his water of new life were poured into our human spirits. But, without attention, the presence of the Holy Spirit tends to evaporate. Oh, not entirely, but without refreshment our human spirits tend to dry out. Having the Holy Spirit is not the same as living in the Holy Spirit.

Obviously, our spiritual goal has to be to live in the Spirit. We have to renew the Spirit frequently. We have to soak our human spirits in the refreshing waters of the Holy Spirit to combat our tendency towards spiritual dehydration.

The first and primary means of refreshment in the Holy Spirit is frequent and consistent worship from within the community of the faithful. By definition, you cannot worship God on your own. Worship is a communal expression of our shared faith in God. The Body of Christ and the Whole People of God gather to share their praise of and love for God. The form of the worship is practically irrelevant. The assembled faithful support one another and find support for the

faith in one another through whatever forms the community chooses. The members of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church primarily refresh the Holy Spirit through frequent and consistent worship.

In second position are your personal devotions, both in prayer and in study. These two require more intention and discipline. In worship, the traditions and presence of the Church kind of force us to renew our lives in the Spirit. Our personal devotions demand that we carry out our decisions, that we make intentional choices. They can thus have a greater impact than worship, which can deteriorate into mere habit. But once you are able to consistently develop your personal devotions, you will experience a wellspring of renewal.

Our renewal in the Holy Spirit will also find its third rich resource in our public service to others. Remember, the essence of the incarnation and the foundation of the Christian faith is sacrificial love. We demonstrate and prove our love for God by serving others. By showing God's love in word and deed, we enhance our own experience of such love. So, our life in the Spirit is refreshed.

Each of us was born with a spiritual vacuum in the middle of our souls. God made us that way, so that we might eventually take on his spiritual life. But that life in the Spirit needs consistent and frequent refreshment. We experience such renewal through worship, devotion and service. But think about the outcomes of such a divine renewal.

Jesus once said, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."<sup>2</sup> We experience ever increasing amounts of that divine abundance as our human spirits are renewed in God's Holy Spirit. Living the life of the Spirit means that our creation in the image of God is evermore intensified. We become more and more of what God intended us to be.

Furthermore, we share in the life and ministry of Christ himself.

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of

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<sup>2</sup> John 10:10.

the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”<sup>3</sup>

As we are refashioned according to the image and plan of God, we more accurately reflect Jesus in both our words and our actions. We better *re-present* God to others.

The one last reality lying on the foundation of our creation is the necessity to choose. Yes, God created us with a spiritual vacuum at the centre of our lives. We call this vacuum the human spirit. By God’s design and plan, this vacuum needs to be filled by God’s Holy Spirit. But we must choose. God must be invited to take up residence in our human spirits. God will not simply invade or overwhelm our free choice. We must choose—choose both to be filled and then to have that infilling refreshed.

Some people choose power or drugs. Others choose influence and position. Still others try to fill their God-shaped vacuum with money and possessions. But here’s the thing: the vacuum in our souls is God-shaped. Nothing and no one can adequately fill that space. Only God’s nature and being can fill our spiritual vacuum. We must choose to invite God’s Spirit into our spirits.

It is said that nature abhors a vacuum. I like to think that this is only true because God put a vacuum at the centre of *our* lives. The universe doesn’t so much reflect the nature of God as it is the proper place for human nature to thrive and improve. Nature abhors a vacuum because God placed a vacuum in our nature. At least, that makes the best sense to me.

AMEN.

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew 28:18-20.