

**COME
HOLY
SPIRIT**



Sermon Growth Guide

**June 26, 2022
Renew Our Hearts**

Sermon Growth Guide

June 19, 2022

Come Holy Spirit – Bring Us Justice

Ezekiel 34:1-16

Key Verse: Ezekiel 34:12 “As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so I will look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness.”

Big Idea: Bad shepherds/leaders use people for their own personal gain, but Jesus, the Good Shepherd, will lay down His life for us and bring true justice.



Foundations

You might be asking, “Why is the sermon series on the Holy Spirit based on the prophetic book of Ezekiel and not some New Testament passages that describe Pentecost and the work of the Holy Spirit?” That’s a good question, with a good answer.

The first major thing you encounter in Ezekiel is the description of the rebellion of the people of God. They have abandoned God so that they could build their nation according to their own desires and not according to the commands and desires of God their Savior. Soon their immoralities and worship of idols far surpassed that of the pagan nations. Their hearts became hearts of stone, leading them to exploit and oppress the people of God.

God’s judgment was harsh, but His grace was greater. The rebellious leaders who exploited the flock of God were going to be replaced by God Himself, the Good Shepherd. And God would do what the rebels could not do. He would, by the power of His Holy Spirit, replace their hearts of stone with hearts of flesh. God’s Spirit would bring God’s flock into new life. They would now be able to trust the True Shepherd. The work of the Spirit is demonstrated by setting right the effects of rebellion. God’s Spirit, through His Shepherd, will bring justice to those who have been broken by the bad shepherds. We bring death. The Spirit brings life.

Understanding God’s Word

Together, read Ezekiel 34:1-16

In describing the bad shepherds, Ezekiel also describes the various kinds of suffering the sheep endure. What has happened to the sheep under the bad shepherds? (v. 1-10)

Describe what life will be like for God’s flock under the care of the Good Shepherd. (v. 11-16)

Applying God’s Word

Also read John 21:15-17. What task has the Lord given to us? Given what you learned from verses 11-16, what would that look like in your situation? Be specific.

Witnessing God’s Word

Throughout his prophecy, Ezekiel is very clear that two things will cause people to know the Lord: (1) God’s judgment and (2) God’s gracious restoration. In his sermon, Pastor Tim talked about how we should shepherd God’s flock. He mentioned a transforming benediction from 1 Thessalonians 5:14-16. If we lived into that charge, what would the world see of Jesus? What would justice look like?

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This morning we are continuing our series, **Come Holy Spirit**, asking God to **Renew Our Hearts**. And our guide for this is found in the book where we have watched the Spirit at work these past few weeks, the Book of Ezekiel. Ezekiel is set in a dark time in Israel's history. The people of God are conquered by Babylon, living far from their homeland wondering, how did we end up here? Will we ever go home? The context for us to say come Holy Spirit is a remnant of God's people in exile. Into exile, into the unknown. Into the place where identity is lost and certainty right along with it. We are talking about the people of Israel in the book of Ezekiel, but the imagery and metaphors work for the states of our souls. Exile—seasons where our identity is gone and life as we knew it has changed forever.

I was talking to a friend, and they expressed this strange feeling of not feeling home here in Colorado Springs but the home they had moved from has gone on, is not the same, is no longer home. Homesick for a place that does not exist. In exile, the Israelites are homesick. And the whole story of the Bible is designed to address those very questions: How did we end up here? And will we ever feel like we are at home?

Let us look at how our text addresses this today. "Therefore say to the Israelites, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: It is not for your sake, people of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Sovereign Lord, when I am proved holy through you before their eyes.

'For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God.'"

First, let me tell you what I mean when I say exile. This past Monday was world refugee day, when we recognize there are 82.4 million forcefully displaced people in our world. Which is an astounding number. When I say we live in exile, I have to mention most of us will never wrap our minds around this word, this reality, unless you have lived through it.

But there is this sort of aching texture of the world. Have you noticed?

This hunger for home is one of the oldest adventure tropes of being human. Think of Odysseus. I used to teach humanities, and as I forced students to read great literature, and they give the sigh, I want to go home. Yes! That is the point. You get the whole point of *The Odyssey*. If you pay attention to stories, you know this is a theme in novel after novel, movie after movie. Even some of these apocalyptic stories with Zombies are all about life on the road or entail this ache to get home.

But what does this hunger and hope for home that we see in the world show us about being human? How did we get here, and will we ever feel at home?

In the first pages of the Bible, men and women were made to live and worship and work in gorgeous place made for them. A home, land, a place to tend gardens and raise children, on the condition they follow God's one command, and they don't. The consequences are catastrophic as they are sent into Exile, catastrophe beyond calculation, and all of humanity along with them. And this story plays over and over in the story of God's people.

Exile from the garden and exile from Israel's promise land is interconnected, to show it another way,

If you remember the exile from the garden led to humanity's building of what city? Babylon. Do you remember who has conquered Israel to get us the Book of Ezekiel in the first place? Ezekiel is writing from Babylon.

But the tower of Babel isn't the end of the story. After Babylon, Abraham is called to go to the Promise Land, a place he has never been to, and it is a story that is designed to give hope to the Israelites exiled in the later Babylon.

But even when the people of God were back home, freed from exile, they kept living in ways that got them exiled to begin with. Exile becomes an image, of something more universal—that feeling of alienation and longing for something more no matter where they live. Exile is the human condition. We all live and work in Babylon and we all keep repeating this pattern leading to a Babylon that we can't escape. How we are given a Promise Land and were able to stay there if they were faithful. We like to think of ourselves as good, faithful people. But we can't do it.

And your address doesn't matter; we are all longing for a better home, even though we have never been there. A pristine view of Pike's Peak with your morning coffee doesn't



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save you from the ultimate ache in our souls. We are all cosmic refugees. But we are not alone.

The prophets have a unique role in their exile. Remember, Ezekiel is our priestly prophet, a tour guide of the human condition, the human heart. And for much of this book he does some weird things to show God's people, to show us, the state of our heart. But this is the job description of the prophet, and he shows us what God does in Exile.

What does God do in Exile? In our passage, this passage with prophet and priest, we have Ezekiel expanding our prophetic imagination, helping us believe that the world envisioned in these pages is the real world. That the life God sets before us is the good life, and that our world revolving around anything other than God is no good for us.

Danny Carol, one of my Old Testament professors at Denver Seminary who is now at Wheaton, describes the two prophetic roles this way: prophetic criticizing and prophetic energizing. Prophetic criticizing is "confronting a culture's reigning, assumed narrative about what the world is and will be." We have seen that several times in our series, as you get the passages, as Pastor Tim has said, "you would not stitch that on a pillow this afternoon."

Ezekiel's job is to say you have been living this one way, but turn, there is a truer way. "Therefore say to the Israelites, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: It is not for your sake, people of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone.'"

Ezekiel says you exist to be a blessing to the nations, but you have profaned my name among the nations. You might want Ezekiel to chill out, but this honesty is a gift. Ezekiel tells Israel, "You are not great!" To name and give permission to know and feel the state we are in, an invitation to look at the world and ourselves as we are and in turn learn something about ourselves. Learn something about who we are and what we are doing here because, we will learn, it is in God's faithfulness and not our efforts where our hearts find rest, and it leads us to the prophetic energizing. This quote from Carol again:

"The second task, 'prophetic energizing,' entails offering hope of new possibilities beyond judgement, of a world no longer held in the grip of dehumanizing systems. In the Old Testament prophets, this hope includes the expectation of a righteous king instead of a rebellious monarch, a just social life instead of corruption and exploitation, the peaceful rebuilding of ruined cities instead of incessant

war, and abundant food and drink instead of want... The prophetic imagination can carry the people of God through sorrow to the joy of a different tomorrow it can help move them from lament to doxology."

And in this prophetic imagination, we are not alone. When we find ourselves in the in-between, let us remember it is a gift to see the world as it is, and turn, repent, to join the caravan of sojourners who span across space and time and who are fellow travelers.

One of our fellow travelers would be Augustine, who was so acquainted with this restless heart. Augustine is the one who penned the phrase, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in thee."

For Augustine, so much of our restlessness and disenchantment is the result of trying to convince ourselves that this is home. But the truer way of thinking this road is all there is not thinking we will abandon the road entirely; the escapism of thinking there is no road. No, it is a "refugee spirituality"—unsettled yet hopeful, searching through adversity, eager to find the hometown we've never been to.

But God renews hearts in exile. We see an invitation to a prophetic imagination, to a refugee spirituality, and we see our tour guide calls upon the past, the past where Israel failed, but calls upon promises of the past to give hope for the future.

"For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you"

God renews hearts in exile. Gives a new spirit. Sprinkles us with water. Sprinkling was a rite of purification to remove the impediments to fellowship. Sprinkling points directly to the application of the blood of Christ, the only means of cleansing the soul from the guilt and shame as the Spirit makes our dead hearts alive. This reconciliation creates covenant fellowship: "You shall be my people, and I will be your God" (v. 28).

This is not hot-off-the-press news for those listening to Ezekiel. It has been God's heartbeat for you since the beginning. We hear promises like this to Abraham, we hear this through Moses at the end of the book of Deuteronomy. Ezekiel tells us this back in chapter 11, God is going to remove their hard hearts and send His Spirit into His people and give them soft hearts. A new act of creation. A new definition of home that we are born into. Our passage today is a clear enunciation of God's plan of salvation as our passage today



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echoes Jesus' chat with Nicodemus in the dark. You must be born again.

Our passage today might have been the Scripture Christ had in mind when He spoke to Nicodemus in the dark.

Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.[a]"

"How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!"

Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit[b] gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You[c] must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (John 3: 3-8).

No one can come to this text without being confronted with our desperate need. We see in both Ezekiel and with Nicodemus this steady beat of Scripture—our hearts can't beat for what is good, true, and beautiful on their own. We try and we can't. Unless there is a radical transformation of heart there can be no spiritual life. Without the Spirit, there is no beating heart but only stone. The requirement to keep the commandments to stay in Eden, to stay in the Promise Land, is an impossible demand if we are left to ourselves.

But the beauty of the gospel is that God does not leave us to our own devices: God does for sinners what sinners cannot do for themselves. Like in C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, the creatures had been turned into stone by the witch, and what made their hearts beat? The lion's breath.

Jesus continues in John 3 a familiar verse; let me read it in another translation so we can hear it anew this morning: "This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again."

Salvation is a work happening to you; we are the recipients and participants in salvation, not its makers and shapers. The promise of a new home where grace and mercy flow. Where the needs for striving cease as we can rest in the peace of Christ. We are not made for the distant land of the prodigal, but for the Welcome Home of the Father.

And what does God say He will do?

"I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God"

And the path between here and there, between being lost and being found, between stone and flesh, that path is made because a stone moved away from a tomb. Christ lived the life we couldn't live, died the death we deserved to die, and was buried in a tomb sealed by stone. But then, His heart beat. And because that stone moved, our hearts of stone can beat again. You see our hope for arrival is not dependent on our goodness but in God's faithfulness. He has promised He will do it, and God will keep His promises.

Salvation in Christ means the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within you. A heart of stone is removed; a heart of flesh is installed. This is more than open heart surgery; this is whole heart surgery. It is only possible because of Jesus Christ whose sacrifice on the cross makes the cleansing possible. Water cannot remove sin. Only the cross. We pray **Come Holy Spirit** and make our hearts new!

And of course, hearts beating again is not the end of the story, the end of the road. It's the beginning of one. "The disciple as much as anyone finds herself between, on the way, fatigue yet hopeful. Baptism isn't a capsule that transports us to the end of the road. Conversion is not an arrival at our final destination; it's the acquisition of a compass."—James K. A. Smith

Life of following Jesus begins as you feel that new heart beating in your body, but it does not end there. It is invitation to a Kingdom life where we say come Holy Spirit, and we ask it again, and again, and again, our new heart beating for Kingdom ways for God's eternal glory which, strangely, has become our eternal delight—come, Holy Spirit.

And when you still find yourself asking, "Will I ever get home," take a moment and be curious about what that heart of yours is beating for. Let it not beat for life on the road, that would be distracting yourselves, amusing ourselves to death. Let it not beat for a neat and tidy Odyssean return, that would be living in a sentimental fantasy. But may this be the Sunday where your heart beats for a Kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven, the Sunday when you set out to arrive in a strange land and be told, "You belong here."



By Pastor Jennifer Holz

Call to Confession

As we come to a time of confession this morning it seems important to say a few words about the sanctity of life and what happened on Friday at the Supreme Court

As followers of Christ Jesus, we affirm the sanctity and dignity of life in everyone at all life stages. Each person is created in the image of God; each person is an image bearer from the beginning of life at conception to natural death as Scripture affirms, and our ECO Presbyterian Theology upholds. We affirm and celebrate when the law strives to protect life in its most vulnerable places.

As we spend these weeks growing together in our understanding of and encounter with the Holy Spirit, we come to know the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of life and Giver of life. If it wasn't for the Holy Spirit breathing into us right now, none of us would be here. We don't exist on our own.

As a pastor, I know this ruling is already at work dividing us into false camps: pitting the value of a woman's life against the value of a baby's life. And I want to encourage us not to let false dichotomies take root.

We are Kingdom people, and the people of God value the lives of women and unborn babies. Nurturing a culture that protects, values, and becomes a place where all life can flourish is hard work, but the people of God are always up for that work by the power of the Holy Spirit.

As the church we get involved in every way we can to care for, love, provide help and do the work it takes to nurture and cultivate environments where all lives can flourish from beginning to end. This includes the unborn and women in the vulnerable situations of having an unwanted, an unplanned, or a crisis pregnancy, and women who have had abortions or are thinking about having one. We lovingly acknowledge complexity and real suffering, and we love our neighbor as ourselves because Christ enables us to do so. Regardless of what the law of the land is, this is who we are.

Women of First Pres, as your female pastors, Claire and Junior and I worked through and prayed through what to say today. We want you to know that our doors are always wide open to you for conversation and prayer and confidential stories, struggles and anger and grief. We have incredible women elders who will do the same. We are with you and for you in the name of Christ.

Having said all that, we come to this confession moment today, acknowledging that we find ourselves in the best posture to love our neighbors well when we are honest before

God about our own sin and when we get really clear before the Lord that we are all sinners in desperate and ongoing need of God's life and grace and rescue. Only from that humble place can we minister grace and life and help to those in pain and need.

With open hearts before God and knowing that the Spirit is at work, I invite us together to pray our community prayer of confession.

Prayer of Confession

Heavenly Father, merciful and everlasting God, we acknowledge and confess before Your divine majesty that we are poor sinners, prone to evil and ever falling short of goodness. We have transgressed Your commandments and are worthy of Your anger. But, O Lord, we repent and are sorry from our hearts that we have so displeased You. We pray that Your grace may bring help to our distress. Be pleased therefore, to have mercy upon us, O most gracious God and Father. Forgive us all our sins, through the holy sufferings of Your dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and grant us now the gifts of Your Holy Spirit. Increase these in us each day, that we may repent, that sin may be destroyed in us, and that we may bring forth the fruits of righteousness and a pure life that are pleasing to You. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

In Psalm 130:3-4, we read these words:

If you, LORD, kept a record of sins,
Lord, who could stand?
4 But with you there is forgiveness,
so that we can, with reverence, serve you.

The good news is this: in Jesus Christ we are forgiven; you are forgiven. And because of Christ's forgiveness, we stand ready to serve the Lord in everything we do. May you receive the forgiveness of Christ today and know your freedom in Him.

