



February 19, 2024

I Think I Can, I Think I Can, I Think I Can

The season of Lent is meant to be a time of deep reflection and self-examination. I am being made aware that I need to focus on how I think about and relate to God's Holy Spirit. Do I really treat the Spirit as a person who is essential to perceiving and knowing God and discerning divine things? Do I recognize that without the empowerment of the Holy Spirit I can't be the person God wants me to be and fulfill God's purpose for my life? Yet how little do I ask for and trust this power instead of my own efforts.

Our culture teaches us to depend on our own abilities and to "do it my way." Didn't we grow up with the story of The Little Engine That Could? The hero of the story is the little blue engine that pulled the train to the top of the mountain chanting "I think I can, I think I can, I think I can". We like to think that if we just persevere and try hard enough we can do whatever we put our minds to. However, we can reach the top of the mountain and fail as human beings or find that it's all meaningless.

So, what exactly does the Spirit do? First of all, he's our source of power. Without that power you and I are like a computer that is not connected to the modem or a phone that lost its charge. We may look okay but we're pretty useless to God. Secondly the Spirit enables us to experience the presence of God in and around us. Third the Spirit imparts inward illumination which goes beyond intellectual knowledge. Oswald Chambers puts it like this: "The only possibility of understanding the teaching of Jesus is by the light of the Spirit of God on the inside. I want to know God not just know about God, don't you? Experiencing a personal relationship with God imparts the gift of wholehearted faith rather than a divided heart. It says in the book of James- when a person asks God they must believe

and not doubt, because those who doubt are like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed about by the wind. That person should not think they will receive anything from the Lord because they are double-minded and unstable in all they do. In other words, we can't face two ways at once and get anywhere.

The Bible warns against grieving and quenching the Holy Spirit (another indication this is a person). I know I do this often when I disregard what he is trying to teach me or nudge me to do. I feel numb and like I'm going through the motions but not sincerely loving God and others with all my heart and mind and strength. This happens when I get distracted by worldly pleasures and when I rely on myself without asking the Spirit's help. If I am filled up with the world and the flesh there is no room to be filled with the Spirit.

Jesus gives the answer to this dilemma. He tells us to repent and surrender control. Of course, he knows this is the hardest thing to ask! That's why he gives his Spirit to live inside of those who want to follow him. Over and over he says we must deny ourselves and give up all to obtain all. For example, He tells the story of the rich ruler who followed the rules but loved his stuff too much to go with Jesus and the parable of the pearl of great price that is worth selling everything to obtain. The more we are willing to empty our hearts of other loves the more the Spirit of Jesus can fill us. Then Jesus' love, peace and joy will flow out of us to the world around us and our lives will have purpose and meaning.

Being filled with God's Spirit matters!

Therefore, my intention during these weeks is to pray as Jesus taught in Luke 11: 9-13:

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you...If you then who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him."

I will be singing in my heart - Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me. Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me. Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me.

I'm trusting that when Easter comes my heart will be wide open to receive the living Savior through the power of his Spirit working in me.

~Written by Marilyn Whisner

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