

TITLE: "Are You Plugged In?"

TEXT: Acts 2:1-13a (NT p. 119)

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"

Introduction – Power

Flashlight and a drop light.

Both these lights have the power to illuminate. However, the flashlight dims over time. The droplight remains just as bright for hours, days and even weeks because it is connected to an inexhaustible source of power. We are like flashlights. We have a certain amount of power to do what God asks us to do but, eventually, our batteries run down. That is what happened to the disciples. When Jesus was with them, they were connected to his power and were fearless. But when Jesus was no longer WITH them all the time, they lost their power and they huddled together and hid from the authorities.

When they were filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the disciples were once again filled with amazing power. They spoke in other languages, left their hiding place and went out into the streets to boldly tell people about God. Because of the POWER of the Holy Spirit, that small group of people changed the world. We are here in church this morning because those eleven people were filled with the POWER of the Holy Spirit 2,000 years ago today.

This morning, God wants to fill YOU with the Holy Spirit. And if you invite Jesus Christ into your life, the Holy Spirit will give you the power to do 3 things:

- 1) the power to have integrity;
- 2) the power to resist temptation; and
- 3) the power to keep commitments to God.

1. The power to have integrity

This morning, I also want to talk about golf. Now some of you may not be interested in golf. Princess Anne was not. She said: "Golf seems to me to be an arduous way to go for a walk. I prefer to take the dogs out." Others take golf pretty seriously. Bob Hope, himself an avid golfer, said: "Watch a game, it's fun. Play and it's recreation. But if you WORK at it, it's golf." I hope what I have to say about golf will appeal to each extreme.

When a person asks Jesus Christ to come into his or her life, something amazing happens. What happens is the Holy Spirit, the very presence of God, begins to live in the person. The Holy Spirit has BOUNDLESS power. Some Christians do not have access to this power. Why? Just as a drop light will not have any power until you turn on the switch, so too must WE turn on the switch to get the power.

We turn on the switch of the Holy Spirit through prayer. Spend time with the Lord. Ask the Lord for the power of the Holy Spirit and if you want it for the right reason, the Lord will GIVE you that power. One thing the Holy Spirit will start giving you is INTEGRITY.

What do I mean by integrity? I spent a lot of my younger years around boatyards. Boats were all made of wood in those days and a few coats of paint on a boat's hull could hide a LOT of strakes that were punk with wet or dry rot. Many who bought boats did not find out they WERE punk until their boats started leaking.

But there was an old man who could test a boat's hull. He would take small wooden mallets and gently tap-tap-tap the whole hull, listening intently as he did so. If the hull had rot, he said it was bad. If the hull was sound, he said, "This hull has INTEGRITY." By that he meant the hull was as sound on the INSIDE as it looked on the OUTSIDE. That's what integrity means to me in reference to a person. A person with integrity is as sound on the Inside as she or he appears on the OUTside.

Tiger Woods was a great golfer, but he lacked integrity. On the golf course, doing commercials and with his wife and children, he was the model of one of the world's most successful athletes. After numerous affairs came to light, he was forced to reveal the fact that the Tiger we saw in public was NOT the same in private. I watched on television as he confessed that he was a liar and a cheat and then apologized to his family, friends and supporters.

Whether Tiger Woods regains the trust of his wife, family and friends and whether he achieves his former success on the PGA tour, remains to be seen. But to me, Tiger Woods is a better person today because he is working on integrity; working toward making his INNER self match his OUTER self.

That is what the Holy Spirit does in the life of Christians. When we try to have integrity by ourselves, we often start out great but soon lose power. But if we plug into the Holy Spirit, we will get the POWER to begin being the person of integrity God wants us to be.

2. The power to resist temptation

I have here a calendar with glossy pictures of some of the most beautiful golf courses in the country. Each picture has a quote from some famous person:

“Why am I using a new putter? Because the old one didn’t float so well.” Craig Stadler

“The other day I broke 70. ...That’s a lot of clubs.” Henny Youngman.

“It took me seventeen years to get 3,000 hits in baseball. ...I did it in one afternoon playing golf.” Hank Aaron

In the Old Testament and the New, idol worship is condemned as a sin. Today, we no longer make images of wood, stone or metal. Today we make idols in our minds. One of the things that PUT those images in our minds is pictures.

I am attracted to a particular species of glossy pictures and they are the ones found in car magazines. I read the April edition of *Consumer Report* cover to cover. It’s the car issue that has a picture of every car available in America and various ratings about each one. I pick up new car brochures at dealerships. Once in a while I buy a car magazine like *Consumer Guide*. I have noticed there are also magazines about sewing, boats, money, travel, food and many other hobbies.

Now, some are saying to yourselves, “O come ON, Dave, are you saying looking at hobby magazines is bad? Not when taken in moderation. Moderation is the key. One of the sayings in this calendar is: “I’ve spent most of my life playing golf. The rest ...I’ve just wasted.” THAT’S my point. The more we hold images before our faces, the more they grow in our minds until we are THINKING about them too much of the time.

What’s so bad about that? Jesus says: “Sell your possessions and give [to the poor]. Make [wallets] for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief [steals] and no [rust] destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Luke 12:33-34).

God wants your heart. God wants you to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and to love others as yourself. It’s fine to have hobbies, but God wants our PRIMARY FOCUS, our hearts, to be on loving God and loving others. The Holy Spirit will give us the POWER to do this.

3. The power to make and keep commitments

Here are a few more golf quotes: “I regard golf as an expensive way of playing marbles,” said G. K. Chesterton. ...Don Carter says, “One of the advantages bowling has over golf is you seldom lose a bowling ball.” ...“I don’t care to join any club that’s prepared to have me as a member.” Grouch Marx.

I was at a meeting of Dryden clergy this past week. As you may know, there are many changes that have either happened or will be happening soon, among Dryden Clergy.

The Assembly of God Church is now a satellite of the Asbury Assembly of God Church in Lansing and Pastor Tom Gordon is now looking for another church.

Alan Kinney next door is going to Greece, NY and a new minister, Rich Sivers, will be coming in July.

In July, the Freeville Methodist pastor, Dale Austin, will be going to half-time in the Freeville and half-time at the Groton Ave. Methodist Church in Cortland.

Father Scott Kubinsky of Holy Cross will be leaving in June to serve parishes in Elmira. The church does not know who will replace him yet.

Leslie Smith, the pastor at McLean Community Church, is retiring next week.

One pastor at the meeting said, "In my church, 20% of the people do 80% of the work. And that 20% is burning out." The percentage is different in our church. I would say that 60% of our congregation does 90% of the work. I would agree that some church leaders are getting burned out. That happens each year as we wind down to summer and there are time when church leaders need a rest from responsibility.

The problem these days is commitment. People no longer have time to agree to long term commitments. That is why it is difficult to get people to serve as elders and deacons and Sunday school teachers. And I want THANK each of those who ARE currently serving as leaders in our church.

So, what do we do? We are trying some new things. For the fall we are looking for Sunday school teachers who will commit to teaching for a month. We hope that will attract some people for this vital role in our church. But we DO need people to take on some VERY important jobs in the church as elders and deacons and other positions.

One of the things the Holy Spirit empowers people to do is to make and keep commitments. I have found that I NEVER have the time, and sometimes not the motivation, to take on ANY new commitment. I'm way too busy already. But I have to give that up and ask God if it is something that GOD wants me to do.

If it IS, and I say, "Yes," then God gives me the power, through the Holy Spirit, to DO the job and God works things out in my life so that I have the time and motivation to do it. I know some of you will find this to be true if you agree to serve in the positions that will be open soon in our congregation.

Conclusion – Where is your treasure?

Let me close with a story. (email from Dave Smith 5/29/02, filed under “God’s Guidance” last used 6-16-02)

The cheerful little girl with bouncy golden curls was almost five. Waiting with her mother in the checkout line at Wal-Mart, she saw them, a circle of glistening white pearls with a small black box. "Oh please, Mommy. Can I have them? Please, Mommy, please?"

Quickly the mother checked the package and then looked back into the pleading blue eyes of her little girl's upturned face. "Nine ninety-five. That's almost \$10.00. If you really want them, I'll think of some extra chores for you to do. Also, your birthday's only a week away and you might get some money from Grandma."

As soon as Jenny got home, she emptied her penny bank and counted out eight quarters, seven nickels and four dimes. After dinner, she did more than her share of chores and she went next door and asked Mrs. McJames if she could do some weeding for a dollar. On her birthday, Grandma gave her a new five dollar bill and at last she had enough money to buy the necklace.

Jenny loved her pearls. They made her feel dressed up and grown up. She wore them everywhere, Sunday school, kindergarten, even to bed.

Jenny had a very loving daddy and every night when she was ready for bed, he would stop whatever he was doing and come upstairs to read her a story. One night, as he finished the story, he asked Jenny, "Do you love me?"

"Oh yes, daddy. You know that I love you."

"Then give me your pearls."

"Oh, daddy, not my pearls. But you can have Princess, the white horse from my collection, the one with the pink tail. Remember, daddy? The one you gave me. She's my very favorite."

"That's okay, Honey, daddy loves you. Good night."

About a week later, after the story time, Jenny's daddy asked again, "Do you love me?"

"Daddy, you know I love you."

"Then give me your pearls."

"Oh Daddy, not my pearls. But you can have my baby doll. The brand new one I got for my birthday. She is beautiful and you can have the yellow blanket that matches her sleeper."

"That's okay. Sleep well. God bless you, little one. Daddy loves you."

A few nights later when her daddy came in, Jenny was sitting on her bed with her legs crossed Indian-style. As he came close, he noticed her chin was trembling and one silent tear rolled down her cheek

"What is it, Jenny? What's the matter?"

Jenny didn't say anything but lifted her little hand up to her daddy. And when she opened it, there was her little pearl necklace. With a little quiver, she finally said, "Here, daddy, this is for you."

With tears gathering in his own eyes, Jenny's daddy reached out with one hand to take the Wal-Mart necklace, and with the other hand he reached into his pocket and pulled out a blue velvet case with a strand of genuine pearls and gave them to Jenny. He had them all the time. He had just been waiting for her to give up the cheap ones so he could give her the genuine treasure.

Jesus says: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but [rather] lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moths consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"(Mt 6:19-21)

It's tough to give up what you want for what GOD wants. If you try to do it by yourself, you WILL run out of power just like this flashlight has run out of power. But if you plug into the Holy Spirit through prayer, the Holy Spirit will give you;

the POWER to have integrity,

the POWER to resist temptation and

the POWER to make and keep commitments to the Lord.

Then, just like this drop light that is plugged into an outlet, you will have the power to shine now and forever and ever. ...Amen.