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June 7, 2020
How to Hold the Spoon?

1 Corinthians 3:1-4

Brothers and sisters, I couldn't talk to you like spiritual people but like unspiritual people, like babies in Christ. 2 I gave you milk to drink instead of solid food, because you weren't up to it yet. 3 Now you are still not up to it because you are still unspiritual. When jealousy and fighting exist between you, aren't you unspiritual and living by human standards? 4 When someone says, "I belong to Paul," and someone else says, "I belong to Apollos," aren't you acting like people without the Spirit?

Matthew 4:4

4 But Jesus told him, "No! The Scriptures say, 'People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Last Sunday we celebrated Pentecost. Today is known as Trinity Sunday.

In Genesis 1, the earth was without form, a dark empty nothingness, a soup of chaos. Ruah, the Spirit of God, was hovering, brooding like a mother hen, over the face of the deep. On the last day of creation, God formed humans out of dirt and breathed Ruah into man and woman and we became living souls.

Everything fell apart because of sin.

In Acts 2, Ruah breathed new life into thousands upon thousands of people. This was the first day of a new creation. The Spirit of God is still breathing new life into followers of Jesus.

While we were celebrating Pentecost, we were watching on TV, the breath of a man being taken away by a police officer in Minneapolis.

We look around us and see only formless, dark nothingness and soup of angry chaos.

The Bible talks about the priesthood of all believers. In other words, God is calling all Christians to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. If ever the world needed hope, joy and peace, it is now.

In order to do that we must be alive by the power of the Holy Spirit and growing continually into spiritual maturity.

How do we do that?



One of the most popular exhibits at the aquarium is the shark. Did you know if you catch a small shark and confine it, it will stay a size proportionate to the aquarium? Sharks can be six inches long, yet fully mature. If you turn them loose in the ocean, they grow to their normal length of eight feet. That also happens to some Christians. You can be the cutest little six-inch Christian who swims around in a little puddle or you can swim in the ocean and grow.

Many of us would rather stay in a little puddle. Often we do not want to look at ourselves and admit we need to grow? For the last three months we have been confined to a small aquarium tank. We have been watching the world through the glass but not able to go out. What we see out there is not pretty and we are not sure we even want to venture into all that anarchy and bad news.

We all know and agree that God's intention is for us to grow. We do not want to be stuck in the aquarium forever and remain six inch Christians for the rest of our lives.

We need to grow in our spiritual lives. I am certain many of us have been challenged by adapting to these new ways of worship and daily living. When can I come back to worship in a church building? How do I grow in my faith? During the month of June, we will be exploring different ways to worship the triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I encourage you to swim in the ocean and grow in your personal relationship with Jesus Christ like never before. Join the challenge. Sundays are the day we gather to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. We report how we have seen God at work. We encourage one another. The building is our gathering place. It is important for our faith development, but it is not the entire story of our faith. The other parts include daily receiving of the power of Ruah by practicing Christian disciplines so we can go into the vast of ocean of life to make a difference in the lives of so many hurting people.

I used to be able to talk in Russian as fluently as in Lithuanian. I used to be able to translate from English to Russian. Now, it is a different story. Sometimes, just for fun, I start to talk with my mom in Russian. It is so sad that I am having such a hard time making a sentence. Why is that? Because I no longer use it on a regular basis. Have you ever tried to learn another language? My advice would be to-use it frequently. Practice it even if it is hard or embarrassing.

It is the same way with living a Christian life. If you only practice on Sunday, you cannot expect to improve.

Jascha Haifetz was an American who was born in Vilnius, Lithuania in 1901. Many considered him to be the best virtuoso violin player the world has ever known. He started taking lessons when he was 4 years old. At the age of 7, Jascha played his first public concert in Kaunas. When he was 16, he performed in Carnegie Hall in New York and became an immediate sensation. One day he made a statement. "If I don't practice one day, I know it; two days, the critics know it; three days, the public knows it."

After I quit medical school I had to return home. It was hard to come home. Definitely, my nose was not up in the air. I felt like a failure. My mother was disappointed. I had no clue what I would do with my life. I only knew that the world of medicine was not for me. I had nothing and nowhere to go so I returned home. That summer my mom found me a job. I had to work as an assistant in the dentist office. I will never forget how hard it was my first day and my first week. I knew I had to learn. The only way to learn is to not give up and continue to learn by sticking to it. One thing I did learn for sure: this was not my job for a lifetime. God used the dentist to encourage me not settle but to continue to search.

This month we, as the New Life family are making extra effort to search and take steps to help ourselves to grow.



I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal.

Paul uses strong language in his letter to the Christians in Corinth. "I could not talk to you like spiritual people but like unspiritual people, like babies in Christ". What does this mean? First, Paul is upset because the Christians did not grow in their faith. Paul is saying that they are still infants in Christ. It is very exciting when we first believe in Christ. It is such a joy when we realize we are forgiven and that God is love. How many of us stop at this first stage? I am forgiven. I am saved. Good. Now I can go on with my life. I can continue to sin because God forgives. But "The message of the Cross" is more than justification. It is also sanctification. It calls for righteousness in thought, word and deed.

If it would be enough to just accept Christ, why would Paul be writing this letter? Jesus said: "My Father is glorified when you produce much fruit and in this way prove that you are my disciples" (John 15:8). Growth are required from every believer. Bearing fruit is expected and not optional.

I think now we have to ask questions: How do I know if I am an infant? How do I know if I am bearing a fruit? Growth starts when we are starting to ask questions and are not afraid to examine ourselves.

Paul writes: Now you are still not up to it because you are still unspiritual. We all live in the flesh, but we are not to live according to the flesh. We have the Holy Spirit living in us, but have trouble allowing the Holy Spirit to work and influence our lives.

There is nothing wrong with drinking milk and being fed when you are an infant. It is not wrong to start playing the piano with just one finger, but surely you will not call

me a piano player if I continue to play with one finger. You start learning a language with a few words, but it takes more than a few words to attain fluency.

So I have to ask tough questions: Are we maturing as Christians? Is the love God shining through you more brightly? What efforts are you making to practice the continuous presence of God's Spirit?

It is acceptable not to know all the instruments at the dentist office on your first day, but after a year you need to know a lot more or you will be fired. We expect babies to grow and start walking, talking, and hold their own spoon when eating. We expect a mess and we welcome a mess because it is a part of growing. Where are you compared to a year ago?

"I have to continue to give you milk because you are still infants". He points to quarreling and jealousy as indicators of spiritual infancy.

Apollos was a Jew from Corinth. He was an eloquent speaker and he ministered in Corinth for a while after Paul was there. A division arose in the church: Some claimed to be following Apollos and others claimed Paul as their teacher. Paul was annoyed. It is all about Jesus and not about the messengers. He is telling them to stop being so immature and losing focus.

Second, Paul is saying if you argue just for the sake of arguing it is infancy. Are you concerned with argument more than action? Think of the last time you argued? What was your reason? To win the argument? Did you fight to prove you are right? Paul says quarrelling is infancy in faith.

As you go through the week you will hear and see things with which you disagree. There are many, many different opinions. Before you share your thoughts or stand up for what you believe, pray for guidance by God's Spirit to show how you can love. Instead of looking at people, let us be determined to look at the Master and follow His example.

Therein lies the challenge for us all. We must set aside time to get better and better acquainted with the one who cares more about you than you care about yourself. Do not say you do not have time. If think you have no time, I ask you to make time. We all have time. Our priorities might need to be rearranged.

Plan and put in your schedule a time when can be alone with God. Everyday set 15 minutes to read Scripture. It is good to listen to great preachers. It is good to listen to many good devotionals, Podcasts, you name it, but if you are not reading the Bible you will not know how the Spirit can teach you many things. If you are not reading the Bible you are not letting the story of God be your story.



Jesus quotes Deuteronomy when he says: 'People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" I want us to take that spoon in our hands and become adept at feeding ourselves. It is not easy. It might even be messy with more food around than in our mouths. Make it a habit. It takes time and practice, but I promise it is the best habit you will ever want to develop. Your soul will flourish. You will notice a big change in your thinking. Your life will change as you will start feeding yourself on the words of God. Beginning tomorrow, June 8, we, as a church, will be reading one chapter each day from the book of John. John has 21 chapters. That gives us 23 days in case you miss reading on a day or two. The chapters take less than 5 minutes to read. I encourage you to meditate on the chapter of the day. Ask yourself, what is God saying to me in this passage?

I know it can be hard to walk and alone, so we are doing the reading together. I encourage you to join a small group. Even if you do not need a group, the group needs you. Let us be one body in Christ. Let us grow and bear much fruit so God will be glorified.

We live in a world filled with violence, anger and hate. Bedlam and uncertainty surround us. Many are suffering from injustice. God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, wants to use you as His instrument to bring Good News of peace and joy and hope. That happens as we use every opportunity to train and practice and learn from the Prince of Peace.