

## Evotional

**Sermon title: "Christ plays in 10,000 places – 3 texts."**  
**Bible passages: Genesis 1:1-3, Mark 1:9-11 & Acts 2:1-4.**

**Speaker: Neil Durling.**  
**Date: 16.11.14.**

### **Message:**

**G.K. Chesterton once said** that when people see trees waving wildly in the wind they have one of two responses. They either think the wind moves the trees, or that the motion of the trees creates the wind. He said that, sadly, most people think the visible accounts for the invisible! As Christians we believe that, largely, it is the invisible that accounts for the visible.

**Scripture is littered with the Holy Spirit.** The Holy Spirit wasn't spiritual to our ancestors; she was sensual (bodily, physical). She was the 'invisible' that had visible effects. The three texts we're going to look at can help us "un-spiritualize" the Holy Spirit and show the range of her work. Each text marks a beginning, and it is the Holy Spirit who initiates each new beginning.

#### **1: The beginning of creation (Genesis 1:1-3):**

The Hebrew word for God, which Jews refuse to utter, is Yahweh. Hebrew doesn't have vowels and so it is actually spelt YHWH. The point has been made that each letter is a breathing sound, and that God is in essence 'breath'. God creates something from nothing in this creation poem by breathing over the waters. The breath of life is life-making. This poem isn't about how God did it, but making it plain who did it – the Holy Spirit.

God then uses words to create. Eight times God speaks and it accounts for everything that is. The word 'create' is used exclusively for God in the Bible, not for women, men or angels, only for God.

In the Old Testament the word 'create' is used mostly in a prophetic/pastoral ministry when the Jews were exiled to Babylon in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. They'd lost virtually everything (political identity, place of worship, homes, communities and farms). They were marched six hundred miles across a desert to a strange land. They were stripped of everything, and into this context Isaiah speaks to them of the Creator who creates; he says it seventeen times. What the Holy Spirit did in creation she does in Babylon - life out of nothing. You see, it's not just what the Holy Spirit did; but what the Holy Spirit does.

#### **2: The beginning of salvation (Mark 1:9-11):**

A lot has happened between Genesis and Mark. Creation has been battered around a bit. Death has become a major factor. Death, which is anti-creation, a denial of life and has no positive energy. Death slithered in and brought words with it like 'sin, rebellion, lawlessness and greed'. But God is always battling and countering death with words like 'love, hope, obedience, faith, salvation and praise'.

The Mark passage sees a second beginning, if you like, when God validates his son Jesus. In Genesis the waters were formless and nameless. In Mark it is a local, named river in which Jesus is baptized. But his baptism is a replay of creation. As Jesus is lifted from the water God breathes into him (In Luke we are told that Jesus is filled with the Holy Spirit). The dove is a visual link to Genesis 1, where the Spirit of God was moving (hovering) over the face of the waters. Also, in Deuteronomy 32:11 a bird hovering in a nurturing way over its young in the nest is a picture of God; a picture that chimes with the eagle of creation and the dove of baptism. As in Genesis, God speaks after God breathes.

#### **3: The beginning of the church (Acts 2:1-4):**

On his ascension Jesus said he would breathe life into his followers (Acts 1:5). They would be "baptised in the Holy Spirit". I believe this term has been hijacked by certain streams of the Church. I think Jesus meant we would receive the strength and energy we need to continue to witness to the God-breathed creation and God-breathed baptism of Jesus: God made it all and God loves us all so much that he sent Jesus.

They believed Jesus' words, as did others, numbering one-hundred and twenty. They waited on the promise. They waited for ten days...

And then God breathes on them and creates the church! It happened but there were surprises! A violent wind/breath and fire. In scripture fire is associated with the presence of God. Interestingly, here it is distributed to everyone in the room; God was present with them both collectively and individually.

### **Conclusion:**

The God who created the heavens and the earth, who validated his son Jesus, now breathes into the lives of ordinary men and women. God's Spirit isn't marginal to the main action – she is the main action.

### **Questions:**

1. What do think of G K Chesterton's comment at the start of this evotional?
2. Which of the three beginnings grabbed you the most and why?
3. Did anything annoy you in the evotional? If so, why?
4. What do you understand by the phrase "baptised in the Holy Spirit"?
5. Do you agree that God's Holy Spirit is "the main action"?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, Thank you that you give us life through the Holy Spirit. Amen.