

The American writer Annie Dillard, in her Pulitzer Prize-winning memoir *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, says of the Holy Spirit:

‘I cannot cause light; the most I can do is try to put myself in the path of its beam. It is possible, in deep space, to sail on solar wind. Light, be it particle or wave, has force: you rig a giant sail and go. The secret of seeing is to sail on solar wind. Hone and spread your spirit till you yourself are a sail, whetted, translucent, broadside to the nearest puff.’

Throughout spring, we have been exploring what it means to be a new human being in Jesus Christ. The turning, the repentance, from our old life in the world, to our new life in Christ Jesus, is like the turning, of winter into spring.

In the first week of spring, we saw of this new life that, established in baptism, it is affirmed in the Eucharist. In baptism we are transferred ‘out of darkness, into marvellous light’. So that the Apostle could say of all who have been baptised:

‘If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!’

We saw that this baptism is with us, throughout the whole of our life. So that the whole of our life is the canvas upon which the shape of this baptismal life takes shape. Dying to the old nature, the new nature is able to come forth. Our new life in Christ Jesus, beyond this world of sin and death.

We saw that to be a new human being in Christ Jesus, is to seek to do the righteous will of God. In a world of the old Adam, of disobedient human being, we do and proclaim the righteous will of God. And so fulfil our mission, to testify to the righteous will of God in the world, so that the nation may flourish.

Until such time as there comes to pass, the new world of Saint John the Seer. The good news of the Kingdom of God:

‘For I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

"See, the home of God is among mortals.

He will dwell with them as their God;

they will be his peoples,

and God himself will be with them;

he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for the first things have passed away."

And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.'

It is this new creation of God, this new heaven and earth, that has now entered into the world, through the crucifixion of Jesus. The saving event of God, in Jesus Christ, his Messiah. In him, the new day has dawned, in this unbelieving, and unsuspecting world. Out of his side, now crucified, now glorified, to the thirsty there now flows living water, as a gift from the spring of the water of life.

The Holy Spirit is the source of the new life of the Christian church. The source of the new life of each individual Christian. The source of the new life of the new heaven and the new earth that has now come in Christ Jesus.

The western church has neglected the Holy Spirit. At an ecumenical gathering in Uppsala, Sweden, in 1968, an eastern orthodox bishop made this statement on the Holy Spirit. In it he expresses a beautiful awareness of the way in which the church is to be animated by the Holy Spirit:

‘Without the Holy Spirit, God is far away,
Christ stays in the past,
The Gospel is a dead letter,
The Church is simply an organisation,
Authority a matter of domination,
Mission a matter of propaganda,
The liturgy no more than an evocation
Christian living, a slave morality.

But in the Holy Spirit:

The cosmos is resurrected and groans with the birth-pangs of the
Kingdom,
The risen Christ is here,
The Gospel is the power of life,
Authority is a liberating service,
Mission is a Pentecost,
The liturgy is both memorial and anticipation,
Human action, is divine action.’