

Built by the Spirit (Bedford)

9/20/2026

And I love Are You Washed in the Blood. I— and I usually sing it, are you washed in the blood? And the— but we won't repeat it. So it's good, a great question. Are you washed in the blood?

Uh, we're glad you're here this morning. I was told about a prayer request right before I walked up here. A guy named Joe Chapman, a youngish guy, 2 small kids, dealing with some major, major, major life-threatening And I— they said, can we pray as a church? I said, absolutely. But before we pray for Joe Chapman, I just want to open it up again.

The call of the church is to be a place of prayer for the nations, but also for just people from Bedford. So, this is a house of prayer. So, let's pray. Is there something that we can pray about besides Joe Chapman? Certainly.

Anything else going on? Dave Pruitt has a broken leg back there. Donna has beat him up really badly, he said. So we can pray for Dave. Rich, you had something?

Your daughter April. Okay. Yes.

Shannon Phelps. Yeah. Yep. Joe.

Yeah. Okay. Okay.

Okay, well, we will keep— we will keep praying about that situation there.

Lord, we lift up all of those that concern us. We lift up Joe and April, people we love, people we care about, um, going through stuff, uh, scary stuff, confusing stuff, frustrating stuff, um, scary, scary, scary stuff. You are the God of peace, and as we learned last week, we are to be people of peace that enter into the world's chaos and bring the peace of God, from the God of peace, to the people and situations that we are surrounded by. So right now, we just pray your comfort, your peace, your healing over these people and situations that, that, that scare us, that concern us. We pray for comfort for Shannon.

We pray for healing for those who need healing.

Ultimately, we pray that you would be glorified in each of these situations, no matter the outcome on this side of heaven. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, we are glad you're here. If you're visiting with us for the very first time, Welcome to church.

Good job. Coming to church as a newcomer is a very, very challenging thing, so I'm not going to ask you to stand up. I'm not going to ask you to give us your name, date, serial number, any of that. Even if you're sitting beside someone that you're not sure whether this is their first time or not, I'm

not going to ask you to do anything weird like ask them out to lunch. If you want to do that, you can, but if you're visiting here for the first time, Here's all we're gonna do.

We're gonna say welcome to church. You took a big jump getting in your car this morning— well, getting out of bed this morning, getting dressed, brushing your teeth, hopefully combing your hair, maybe putting on clean clothes. You look like you did. And showing up here with people you don't know in a place that you've never been before, not sure how things are gonna run here. Are they gonna do weird stuff?

We do not have any snakes that we keep in the building. You just need to know that. No, we don't have snakes. We don't have snakes. Well, there was a plastic one floating around here somewhere, but that's neither here nor there.

We're glad you're here. Church is an interesting, interesting concept. I don't know what you think of when you think of the church, but when Jesus speaks of the church, he's not talking about a building. He's not even talking about, like, the things you do in the building. He's talking about a people.

People formed into a community that embodies his love, carries his message, and reveals— ultimately reveals his kingdom to the world around them. Alan spoke this last week, and he said, in a world of panic, Jesus calls us to be a place of peace. No matter how desperate the situation is, Jesus reminds us calmly but firmly, I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. So us, peace-filled people, we make up a new kind of community that would again embody his love, carry his message, and reveal his kingdom to the world. And the gates of hell will prove no match to the power that that community embodies.

But today we're going to look at where that power comes from and why God gave it. And we're going to travel in our little time machine— I wish I had one— A little time machine back to Jerusalem shortly after Jesus's death on the cross, his burial in the borrowed tomb, rising from the dead and revealing himself to multitudes of people, and then finally his ascension into heaven. We're past— we've— all that's happened, and now we're sort of in the aftermath of that moment right there before anything else has really happened. We're right there in that scene. Spot.

So if you've got your Bibles with you, turn to a book called Acts. Acts comes after Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in your New Testament, and there's lots of chapters there, but we're going to go to one of the earliest ones, Acts chapter 2. So if you've got your Bibles, open to Acts chapter 2. If you don't have a Bible, you can open up a Bible app on your phone. You can Google Acts chapter 2 and it'll come up as the scripture there, and you just open it up and you can read along.

Or We will have scriptures on the screen for you to use as well. But there's a couple of things that are gonna be worth underlining, and that's why if you have a Bible you can write in, that's always optimal. So I'm gonna pray and then we're gonna get started. Heavenly Father, we thank you for this day that you have made, a day to rejoice and be glad, a day to remind ourselves that we've

been washed in the water and washed in the blood. And so we sing out, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, we belong to you.

As we open your word, remind us of where we've come from, where we are, and ultimately where you desire to take us. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Okay, we're in our little time capsule. We're traveling back to Jerusalem.

We've set the— we've set the dial to like 1 AD, and we're gonna hit there. But before we go to 1 AD, we're gonna spin it even further back, and I want to take you back to the time right after Noah steps off the ark. Now Noah is the guy who God said, listen, the world around you is so corrupt, it is so evil, the culture is so, so depraved that I'm gonna need to just start fresh. And so God says, I'm gonna wipe out the current state of affairs, but there's one guy that I think I can count on to start all over again, and this guy's name is Noah. And so God calls Noah to build an ark, and you know what he did.

God brought animals on the ark to help repopulate the earth. God saved him and his family, and after that, when they left the ark, the water subsided, Noah and his family walked off the ark, and God gave them a command. And the command is found in Genesis chapter 9, verse 1, and here's Here's the command: Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth. Now, that seems to be a pretty straightforward command. The commands of the Lord are not onerous, the old Bible says.

They're not hard. They're not challenging. In fact, be fruitful. A lot of you guys understood that and you have done it, and we're very happy. Our nurseries are overflowing with Your obedience to God.

Thank you very much. They did the same thing. They, they managed the first part really well. They increased in number, so they got the second part. It followed very closely on the first part, but the second part was a real challenge for them.

They could obey a little bit but not everything. And here's where we get to Genesis chapter 11. Here's what the scriptures say. Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. And as people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there.

And they said to each other, come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly. They used brick instead of stone and tar for mortar. Then they said, come, let us build ourselves a city with a tower that reaches to the heavens. Y'all are— who is unfamiliar with this story? I quizzed the boys in the car this morning, and they managed to get most of the details right on this one.

They said, we're gonna build a tower that reaches to the heavens so that we may— let's say it together— make a name for ourselves. That phrase is pretty important. Otherwise, we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth. Otherwise, we might inadvertently fulfill the command of God. To go and fill the earth.

And we don't want that to happen. We don't want to be scattered. We want to stay tight because we

can accomplish more together than we can apart. And so far you're like, yes, yes, they're absolutely right. Why would they scatter?

That's scary. Stick together. But unfortunately, this is, this is a rejection of God's command. Instead of filling the earth and making God's name known, They stayed together and decided to make their name known, and they decided to build a tower. Now, the tower— I don't know what pictures you've seen of this.

I was going to put a bunch of artwork up, but time got away, and, and I thought we can use our imaginations. When we think of a tower, I don't know what you think of as a tower. There's lots of, lots of famous paintings out there, but this tower is probably more like a ziggurat than a potential skyscraper. A ziggurat is a— is an ancient architectural form. It's a mound of earth, and it's got ramps and levels and tiers.

And if you can picture that in your mind, just nod your head and say, I think I know what you're talking about, Tim. If you don't, look it up. It starts with Z and ends with T, and in between you'll figure— you'll find something out. But this ziggurat is not intended to be a skyscraper. There was no These, these early people are not idiots.

They know they're not going to reach the heavens, but this is a, this is a wordplay. And what this word is saying is they're, they're going to create a place that's intended for heaven and earth to connect. And the way they're going to do this is they're going to build this building, and on top of the building— and you can go to these in other places, we've got, there's some still in the Middle East— there you go to the top, and what they create there At the top is a house. It's a small house, a room with a bed, table, chair, food that will be delivered there. And this is all a way to say, hey, hey, gods, someone up there, whoever's up there listening, we've prepared a place for you here.

Come down and you live here. So this is— this building is an attempt to reach the heavens or get the gods' attention. I say the gods, not gods, because who knows which god they're actually trying— well, we know they're not trying to get God's attention. They're trying to get a god's attention. And if they do that, if the god says, oh, oh, that's a nice comfy bed.

Oh, I like what you put out on the table there. Then the god will come down and attach himself to this city and these people. And they will be— he will be their god, and their god will give them his protection. And he will reward them with wealth and security if they provide— it's sort of a contract. We give you this and you give us that.

So the city and the construction project is not— it's not an act of worship. This is not something they're trying to do to go, oh Lord God Most High, we want to do this thing. We're going to build a cathedral for you. No, this is not what this is about. And it's not just a monument to sort of human pride, which is what I grew up thinking this was all about.

It's not just that. There is some of that, but it's not just that. What this really is is a direct challenge

to the authority of the one true high God, an attempt to bypass him and get, get another god's support and direction and not have to do what God Most High has asked them to do. It's a direct challenge to his authority. But God's watching.

He knows what's going on. And here's what the scripture says. The Lord comes down to see the city and the tower the people were building. And the Lord said, if this one people speaking the same language, they've begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. So come, let us go down and confuse their language so they'll not understand each other.

And an early reading of this, when I was 3rd grade in Miss Ori's class, I thought, wow, is God that intimidated by these little Babel people? Is he that scared of them? Is he worried that they're actually going to accomplish this and maybe do something he doesn't want them to do, maybe overpower him? No, this is not what's going on here. The issue is not these people might do something scary and I won't know what to do.

The issue is that they've already intentionally planned in their hearts to disobey God's command. And we've gone through this already, haven't we? This is why Noah shows up in the first place. This is why an ark was necessary. God says, I've already done this with these people.

And we try again and again and again, and yet every time their hearts are inclined towards evil and they're already attempting to displace my authority with this tower to an idol, this, this temple to an idol. Once again, the inclination of their hearts is towards evil. But he made a promise to Noah to not destroy the earth with the flood again. And so what's he going to do? He says, I'm just going to divide them.

I'm going to split them up. We've got to make it happen one way or another. We've got to get these people to fill the earth. This is my and this is what's going to happen. So he divides them.

In verse 8 says, so the Lord scatters them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. This is why it was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the earth. And some would say, well, we've been divided ever since. And, and we have.

Like Humpty Dumpty, can it ever be put back together again? Well, God says yes. It will be put back together again. I have a plan. I have a plan.

It's a long-range one. You got to work with me. But from the entirety of Scripture, we see God working this long-term plan. And the first thing he's going to do, if you're reading in your Bibles—we've got a Saturday morning men's group that meets on the porch, and we, we talked about this—God scatters the people of the earth. And Deuteronomy says he, he scatters them according to the, to the, to the number of the sons of God.

So he said, I'm putting them out there, and however many that number is, that's what God's doing.

But he says, I'm keeping one people for myself, a people that doesn't even exist yet. I'm going to create a people for myself. And so he looks around, he says, I'm looking for the man who will be the father of my people. And he lands on a guy named Abraham.

He says, I'm going to call this man Abraham, to Follow me by faith. And the promise that he makes to Abraham is so similar to what these people in Babel were trying to achieve. They're trying to achieve a name for themselves, to become a great nation. And God says, I will make you a great nation, and I will make your name great.

Through your descendants, I will bless all the other nations. Now, if you do a dive into this— science, technology, medicine, health, philosophy, ethics, law, arts, culture. God says, listen, in all these fields, the world will be a better place because of your descendants. But my ultimate gift will be to restore these wayward tribes, these scattered people, back into my family. And I'm going to do it this way.

And you know this scripture: For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever, no matter nation, tribe, or tongue that believes on him would not perish but would have everlasting life. And this is where we get now in our time machine, and we land in Jerusalem right after the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. We're here in Jerusalem, and we're in an upper room during a festival called Pentecost in Acts chapter 2. Are you still with me? Do you know where we're at now?

Where are we? Acts 2. What, what city are we in? Jerusalem. Thank you, this side.

Thank you for paying attention. Over here, what's the festival that we're, we're in the middle of? Excellent, you guys are doing so good. Acts chapter 2 reads this way: When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.

They saw what seemed to be tongues of that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Now, this festival, this Pentecost festival, is a big stinking deal, and it's not just the Jews in Jerusalem who get excited about this, but outside of the city and even outside of the country, even across the waters. People from— well, we'll find out where they're from, but they're from Italy, they're from Turkey, they're from Asia Minor, they're from out in the, in the deserts of the far Middle East. They're coming in from Egypt and other parts of Africa.

They're traveling into this city to celebrate this holy day, and God says, what perfect timing! I'm going to do something amazing while they're all here. And this is what happens. These crowds of people from all over the, all over the, all over the known world who speak different languages in their own home countries, all of a sudden verse 6, they hear the people— these, uh, Peter and the apostles, the disciples, proclaiming the wonders of God in the language they understand. Let's read what they say.

When they hear this sound, the crowd came together in bewilderment because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they said, hold on, hold on, aren't these all Galileans? Galileans are like, who's from Kentucky? I'm sorry, but, but this is, this is, this is what they're saying. Aren't these sort of hill jacks?

How do they know? They're from Heltonville. What do they know about French? What do they know about— sorry, Heltonville people. Where we got some Heltonville people?

I'm Springville. I got no, no leg to stand on. Listen, how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, residents of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, are here in this city, Cretans and Arabs. We hear them declaring the wonders of God— underline that— the wonders of God in our own tongues.

An amazed and and perplexed, they ask one another— what do they ask them? Say it with me: What does this mean? Well, here's what it means. Pentecost reverses Babel. Babel confuses, but the Holy Spirit clarifies and convicts.

At Babel, misunderstanding was the rule. No one knew what was going on. No one could stand one another. Could understand one another or stand one another, as it came to be. No one could understand their neighbor.

So this gigantic citywide project failed, and they scattered. But at Pentecost, Peter stands up and preaches the gospel clearly. Now, outside the room, people are listening to this, and they think— they think they've been partying. Pentecost is a big deal. It's a fun party.

They think they've stayed up all night long getting drunk, I guess, from the party.

But Peter says, no, no, we're not drunk. Here's what's going on. And he reads them this. Here's what's going on. This was what was spoken by the prophet Joel.

Acts chapter 2, verse 17. In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. And then he preaches, he preaches the gospel. Fellow Israelites, listen to this. Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.

There are people in the crowd listening right now wondering what's going on. You saw it too. You were there on the hill when he fed 5,000. You were there when he was healing the lame man. You were there when all— you saw the guy at the Pool of Siloam get up and walk off his mat.

You saw it. You all know. You all know. And this man was handed over to you by God. God trusted you to him, and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to a cross.

But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. God has now raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. We've seen it. And hey, you people in Jerusalem, you saw it too. You know it's true.

Exalted to the right hand of God, he's received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. This sound of drunkenness, this is the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Messiah. And then the crowd asks, What shall we do? Well, here's what you need to do.

Oh, did you catch how the Holy Spirit convicts the heart and points directly to Jesus Christ? Instead of confusion, we have clarity and we have conviction. Babel scattered, but the Spirit begins the act of regathering. At Babel, the people said, let us make a name for ourselves. Did you underline it in your Bibles?

It's a big phrase. We have— we wrestle with that, that temptation ourselves, don't we? Let us make a name for ourselves. Human pride and arrogance always divide us from God, and it divides us from our families and other relationships. Human pride divides.

These rebellious people rebelling against God, were divided and scattered over the face of the whole earth. But at Pentecost, something happens. The Holy Spirit arrives, first of all. Ah, look, look, God descends to man, but on his terms, not our terms. The Holy Spirit descends, and the purpose now is not to make a name for ourselves, is to make great the name of God.

Did you hear what they're doing? What are they declaring? They're declaring the great name of God. They're declaring the wonders of God in every native tongue. What does this mean, they ask?

Here's what it means. Acts 2:38, repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off. You know who the far-off people are? You all.

Me. We're the far-offs. It's for us too. The Holy Spirit is for us. I don't know what church you grew up in.

Alan spoke at a— preached at a Church of Christ for a long time. His daughter said they never talked about the Holy Spirit at your church. Is that true? It's not true? Now take it up with your family.

See, it divides families.

Listen, we do have a tendency to get confused over the Holy Spirit, but here's what the Holy Spirit is going to do, and we're going to unpack this as we go through the church and the purpose of the church, because we're going to see the Holy Spirit working over and over and over and over again

in different ways. But right now, the Holy Spirit is doing something specific, and that Holy Spirit is the same thing he's doing there is what he's calling us to do as well. So let's go back to Peter. Peter's there, he's preaching. He says, with many words he warned them and he pleaded with them, save yourselves from this corrupt generation.

Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about 3,000 were added to their number that day. Last 2— last month we celebrated our 10-year anniversary, 10— our 10th birthday. That was a great day. But the true birthday of the church is this moment right here, where the Spirit begins this great reversal, bringing home those who have been scattered, bringing home those who have been lost through their own disobedience, saying, come back, come back, there's a place for you. And the Holy Spirit is doing the work.

Here's what the Holy Spirit empowered them to do that day in the upper room. The Holy Spirit empowered them to speak, and they preached, and they shared the gospel. There are going to be moments in your interactions with the world out there, your friends, your neighbors, your family, where you're going to engage in conversations, and you're gonna realize at some point in time that something is happening beyond just the words you are sharing. There's more happening. There's more churning underneath the surface, and you're gonna realize, I believe the Holy Spirit is now empowering this conversation.

You may not speak— be speaking in German or Arabic or Mongolian. You may be speaking in English, but you are speaking in a way, and the Holy Spirit is empowering that conversation conversation so the people listening are understanding in ways that they have never understood before something God wants them to understand. That is a work of the Holy Spirit. Now, you may not be getting the Holy Spirit in your little earbuds saying, and now say this, and now say this. That may, that may not be happening, but the Holy Spirit's working through you.

That's a work of the Holy Spirit. That's you being used by the Holy Spirit. Okay, enough of that. Let's go back. So, so the true birthday of the church is this moment right here, where God's bringing people back, and you get to be part of that.

You get to be part of it.

What we find, and I look around this room right here, is that who the Holy Spirit draws, it's a very diverse group of people from all different places. And the truth of the matter is that God's grace does not erase differences. It doesn't erase our diversity. It doesn't erase the way we comprehend and understand the world through different viewpoints and perspectives. It doesn't erase that, but it does humble it.

It does humble it. It says, okay, I don't totally get it, but what must I do and what does this mean? That's humility to ask those questions. It humbles it and then it redeems it. It says, listen, I'm going to, I'm going to create something amazing with all the differences.

And then it unites and it creates one bride out of so many different little personalities. 3,000 believed that day. They believed, they were baptized, and they were gathered back to the family. And I just want to go back to their questions because their questions are our questions. Those questions: what does this mean?

And what should we do? These are important questions because Babel sin still grips the world we live in. It's all around us— confusion, division, anger, broken communication— all around us. Do you experience that in your life? Do you see it in your neighbors and your friends and your family?

It's all around us. But here's what it means: the Holy Spirit who came at Pentecost is still at work in you and I, gathering people to Jesus and forming them into a new family. The second question is this: what should we do? Trust Jesus. If you've never trusted Jesus for your life, for your salvation, for your purpose and meaning, if you've never trusted Jesus to do his good, perfect work through you because of the work he did on the cross, trust Jesus.

That's step one. Be baptized. For the forgiveness of sins. And Peter says, for the reception, for the receiving of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit somehow is connected to these waters here.

And then you be fruitful and you multiply. That command has never changed. Be fruitful and multiply. What does it mean for us? Well, be fruitful.

Be the church. Don't merely attend a church. What do I mean by that? Serve sacrificially. Find a place to expend your energy and your time and your resources.

Speak life whenever you get the opportunity to. The Holy Spirit speaks through you when you speak life. The Holy Spirit will take life speech and do transformative things in people's lives because of it. Give generously. Generosity is at the very heartbeat of God.

God gave his only begotten Son, and we can give as well. When we give generously, we mirror the character of God, and then live in authentic community. The Holy Spirit is drawing people to us to do what? Together in a big room, rub shoulders with each other, get irritated because someone beside us didn't use enough deodorant this morning? No, that's not why he gathered us together.

He gathered us together because he wants to create a family. And a family squabbles, a family gets ticked off at each other. But you know what a family does through thick and thin, good times and bad times? They love each other. That's a good family.

A good family loves each other, and, and we love each other despite our differences. Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, you got a sibling that you are— you don't understand at all? You got a brother or sister that's like, oh my word, I don't get them, they're nothing like me? You know what? That's all right.

They're not like you. You both got something to learn from each other. You love each other just like siblings love each other. Despite their differences.

And then you, you fill the earth. You be fruitful, you multiply, and you fill the earth. And how do you do that? You let his love flowing through you through the Holy Spirit start to break down walls all around you and bring those people into the family of God. Go, Jesus says, go into all the world.

Go do it. Go fill it. With my gospel, my good news. This is how the Holy Spirit transforms scattered people into a gathered community, a gathered family in Jesus Christ. Now we're coming to a time of communion, and as we come to what we call the Lord's Table— we call it the communion moment is what we normally call it here, but you may have grown up with different understandings: the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Table.

You may have grown up in a church where use the term Eucharist. This is just the moment where we remember the love of God poured out for his people in Jesus. This bread that you're going to take, it's a small little bread. It reminds us of Christ's body given for us sacrificially. The cup reminds us of his blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins.

We talk about it being a cup of covenant, that pouring out of his blood, that, that, that forgiveness of sins is, is a promise he makes to us that will last forever.

In this moment, remember Babel, where humanity tried to rise to heaven and make a name for itself.

But in this moment, remember Pentecost, because in Jesus' name Heaven came down to us and he gave us a new name: forgiven, redeemed son, daughter, brother, sister. Around this table, our differences do not disappear. Look around. We got a bunch of weirdness in this church.

We're all different in interesting ways. That is by design. This is what God intended. God says embrace it. It's a good thing.

Our differences don't disappear, but they don't divide us, and we come as one body because we have one Savior. As we eat and drink, we remember his sacrifice, remember his grace. We ask the Holy Spirit to make us into a people who reflect the unity that Jesus prayed for on the cross. Make them one. This is what we want.

Holy Spirit, fill this place. We may not see tongues of fire this morning, but we do pray that we would see transformed lives who understand your call to be fruitful and multiply only happens when we allow the Holy Spirit to empower our lives. So Holy Spirit, fill this place and fill this people. In this moment, remind us of your love for us, and in this moment, compel us, empower us, propel us out to be people who are fruitful and who multiply and fill the earth with you and your great name. In Jesus' name, amen.

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