I love the twenty-fourth chapter of the Gospel of Luke. It begins with the resurrection of Jesus, and the resulting impact on the lives of the disciple followers of Jesus just keeps getting better and better. The women who went to the tomb saw the burial wrappings were still in the tomb but there was no body! Men in dazzling clothes tell them, “He is not here. He is risen.” They run to the disciples, who think they are crazy! Peter and John run to the tomb and realize something extraordinary has happened. Meanwhile, two of the disciple followers of Jesus, walking to the town of Emmaus, are joined by a stranger, who reveals himself to be Jesus. The two rush back to Jerusalem and as they are telling the others, Luke describes what happened.

36 While they were talking about this [you bet they were talking about these events], Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”

37 They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. Well, yeah! They’d seen Jesus killed and, while some of their group reported various incredible (incredible meaning not credible) experiences, they knew dead means dead and dead stays dead. So they were terrified and very uncertain about what was going on. 38 He [Jesus] said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” 40 And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. 41 While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering [I love that. They are still super uncertain. A very normal reaction.] he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate in their presence. That seemed to settle them down. Something about seeing Jesus eat actual food told them he was no ghost, no spirit. This is Jesus in an actual physical body, which tells us that when we die and Jesus raises us from the dead we also will have actual bodies.

44 Then he [Jesus] said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.”
I think it’s helpful if we think for a moment about just who and what this Holy Spirit is.

45 Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures [what we call the Old Testament,] and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. So, in his closing words, Jesus explains what has happened to him and how he is the fulfillment of all our Old Testament foretold.

However, Jesus wasn’t quite done. In essence, he says to his disciple followers, “Now look I’ve explained about me. It’s time to talk about you!” 49 And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high. In the Book of Acts, Luke adds a few more words Jesus spoke, 4 While staying with them, Jesus ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. ‘This’, he said, ‘is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’

So the story line shifts from the life of Jesus to the lives of the disciples, who are first being asked to stay in Jerusalem for a while to receive the power of the Holy Spirit, and then they will be sent to be witnesses to the life of Jesus. Of course, the full story of how all that happens is captured in Luke’s continuing record of these events known as the Book of Acts. This morning, our focus will be what Jesus commands before his disciples may be sent—and that is to stay put and receive the power of the Holy Spirit.

I think it’s helpful if we think for a moment about just who and what this Holy Spirit is. We know the Holy Spirit has often received less attention than God the Father and Jesus, the Son of God. Alister McGrath wrote, “The Holy Spirit has long been the Cinderella of the Trinity. The other two sisters may have gone to the ball; the Holy Spirit got left behind every time.” 51 We just don’t talk much about the Holy Spirit.

So, just who is this Holy Spirit? We know our God is one God in three persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There are a variety of Bible verses mentioning all three together, such as: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen (2 Corinthians 13:14). Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). We learn that the Holy Spirit, as the third person of the

The Holy Spirit in...dwell, lives in, every believer in Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit in...dwell, lives in, every believer in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is not an “it.” The Holy Spirit is someone we may know and communicate with and love. The Holy Spirit does many things. The Holy Spirit brings honor to Jesus Christ and leads us to believe in Jesus Christ and leads us to truth. He is the Spirit who is Holy and, when you are unholy in your thoughts and actions, the Holy Spirit draws your attention to your unholiness so that you may confess it, and turn from it and know the grace, and forgiveness, and the incredible love of God for you, personally. Understand this: the Holy Spirit is not the human spirit you have already within you naturally. The Holy Spirit is a unique person, who brings strength and joy to your life, who comes alongside to encourage, comfort, and counsel you. The Holy Spirit indwells, lives in, every believer in Jesus Christ.

Charles Stanley does make this interesting comment: “The King James Version of the Bible refers to the Holy Spirit in a number of places as the Holy Ghost. While that may have been an accurate translation at the time of King James, the word ghost has come to mean other things. The Holy Spirit is not an apparition, floating about here and there and manifesting Himself in a mysterious, now-you-see-Him, now-you-don’t manner. The proper translation of this term for today is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the very essence of God.”

In fact, the first mention of the Holy Spirit is in the second verse of the Bible. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters (Genesis 1:2).

Jesus Christ often talked about the Holy Spirit. For example, the Hebrew people celebrated a fall festival known as the Feast of Tabernacles. During Jesus’ ministry, the time for the Feast of Tabernacles came and gigantic crowds were gathered in Jerusalem, much as crowds gather here for the Cherry Blossom Festival. One of the rituals of that feast, which took place each of the first seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles, involved water. The priests would pour water out of a golden pitcher with the words from Isaiah 12:3: With joy you shall draw water out of the wells of salvation. On the last day of the feast, the great day of celebration, Jesus speaks to the crowd. Against the feast’s symbolism of the pouring out of water and Spirit, Jesus said, Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water’ (John 7:37).

The Holy Spirit moves from only indwelling you to filling you, becoming that flowing river of God in you, when you yield yourself and your actions to Him.

In other words, the Holy Spirit will not merely live in you when you open yourself to him, the Spirit will fill you, surge through you, and cascade out of you. Have you ever heard of a place called Cherrapunji, India? The Guinness Book of World Records calls it the wettest place on earth. During the Monsoon Season, Cherrapunji can receive nearly a yard of water a day. Imagine that! The first person to call attention to Cherrapunji was a Mr. Yule in 1841, who reported that during five successive days, thirty inches of water fell every twenty-four hours. Wow! That’s the kind of flood Jesus speaks of. He intends you to be a Cherrapunji of the Holy Spirit. ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.’ The Holy Spirit indwells you, lives in you, when you trust in Jesus. The Holy Spirit moves from only indwelling you to filling you, becoming that flowing river of God in you, when you yield yourself and your actions to Him. When you resist the Spirit, he still indwells you but his influence on your life and actions is diminished. The Bible says in that case, instead of being filled with the Spirit, you have “quenched” the Spirit.

Now, when Jesus said, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water,’ the Apostle John added this footnote, Now he [Jesus] said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified. However, in our text this morning, Luke, chapter 24, Jesus has been raised from the dead and soon will receive the glory of his Father. Jesus is telling his disciples to stay put in Jerusalem and receive the power of the Holy Spirit before being sent to serve. The joy of the Christian life is that the Holy Spirit given to the disciple followers on Pentecost is given to every single one of us who trust in Jesus and follow him.

Now it was the apostle Paul who gave us clear, helpful advice on the matter of being filled with the Holy Spirit when he said, Be not drunk with wine, for that is excess, but be filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). The verb Paul uses, “be filled,” “be filled with the Holy Spirit,” tells us four things about our relationship with the Holy Spirit. I consider this to be one of the basic essential teachings of the Christian faith. I call them the four P’s (like four peas in a pod).

“Be filled” is in the imperative (im-P-erative) which means it is a command. It is God’s will we be filled with the Holy Spirit when he said, Be not drunk with wine, for that is excess, but be filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). The verb Paul uses, “be filled,” “be filled with the Holy Spirit,” tells us four things about our relationship with the Holy Spirit. I consider this to be one of the basic essential teachings of the Christian faith. I call them the four P’s (like four peas in a pod).

We cannot fill ourselves with the Holy Spirit. We have to be filled.

We are commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit but because it is passive it means we cannot fill ourselves, it has to be done to you. Think of yourself on a sailing ship on a windy ocean. When you raise the sails there is absolutely nothing you can do to make the wind fill the sails. All you can do is raise the sails and allow the wind that is already blowing to fill the sails and your ship is wind-powered, wind-driven. The ship with sails unfurled is a ship yielded to the power of the wind. To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to open yourself to the Spirit of God and to trust that the Holy Spirit will fill you. So, we are merely the receivers, the vessels, the containers of the Holy Spirit. Wonderfully, our Lord says that when we pray according to God’s will He hears and gives what we ask and, clearly, being filled with the Holy Spirit is God’s will for you and for me.

So, the filling of the Holy Spirit is in the imperative, it’s a command. It’s Plural—we are all to be filled. It’s present tense—are to be filled right now and every now. It’s in the passive voice. We cannot fill ourselves with the Holy Spirit. We have to be filled. How can you know if you are filled with the Holy Spirit? Is it how you feel? Being filled with the Holy Spirit, as all aspects of our relationship with God, is not a matter of feelings, but it is a matter of faith, of trusting God with the Holy Spirit. In essence, God is saying, “I order you, I command you, I expect and require you to be filled with Me—filled with the Holy Spirit.”

“Be filled” is in the imperative. It is also a Plural verb, which means we are all to be filled, that every follower of Jesus is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. No exceptions. Being filled with the Spirit isn’t reserved for the Mother Teresas, Billy Grahams and the great saints of the ages. If you follow Jesus Christ, you are designed by God to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Period!

“Be filled” is in the imperative. It’s Plural. Third, it is in the Present tense, meaning we are all to be filled with the Holy Spirit right now and every now. Moment-by-moment-by-moment. Not every now and then, not in special religious moments or in church or when you read your Bible but in every moment whether you are singing a hymn, praying, washing the dishes, changing a diaper, phoning a friend, or coping with a very frustrating situation at work or at home. So we have imperative, Plural, Present, and finally:

“Be filled” is in the Passive voice. If it was in the active voice it would mean you do it. If I say, “I eat the Five Guy’s hamburger,” then I am active and the hamburger is passive. Now this is interesting. “Be filled with the Spirit” is in the imperative. It is a command.
to do what God says He will do.

Oswald Chambers tells of a time he claimed the gift of the Holy Spirit. He said, “I had no vision of heaven or of angels; I had nothing. I was as dry and empty as ever, no power or realization of God, no witness of the Holy Spirit. Then I was asked to speak at a meeting and forty souls came out to the front! I came to realize that God intended me, having asked, to simply take it [the filling of the Holy Spirit] by faith, and that power would be there.”4 You are filled with the Spirit, not by how you feel, but by your trust in Jesus to fill you with the Holy Spirit. In fact, you could feel very close to God or feel utterly distant from God, but if you trust the Spirit to fill you, he will fill you regardless of your feelings.

Jesus told his disciple followers to stay put and wait for the power from on high, the power of the Holy Spirit. I invite you to open your own life to the filling of the Holy Spirit and allow the cascading power of the Spirit to pour through you, too! God our Father, we yield ourselves to you. We now open our hearts to be filled with the wonderful Holy Spirit of God for this moment and for every moment.

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4 Robert J. Morgan, Stories, Illustrations and Quotes, p. 441.