

Order of Service Arklow Presbyterian 10.00 a.m.

WELCOME:

CALL to WORSHIP:

PRAYER (Adoration and Invitation):

PRAISE: 564 Praise to the Lord the Almighty, the King of Creation

PRAYER (Confession and thanks):

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

CHILDREN'S TALK:

PRAISE: Little by little every day, little by little in every way (See below)

(Announce that children leave for Sunday School after this hymn)

PRAYER (Intercession):

OT READING: **Ephesians 2: 1-10 (page 1174)**

NT READING: **Romans 8: 1-17 (page 1134)**

PRAISE: To be in your presence (See below)

SERMON:

OFFERING AND DEDICATION:

PRAISE: 689 Thine be the glory, risen conquering Son

BENEDICTION: The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit; be with us all evermore.

To be in your presence.

To be in your presence,
To sit at your feet,
Where your love surrounds me,
And makes me complete.

*This is my desire, O Lord,
This is my desire.
This is my desire, O Lord,
This is my desire.*

To rest in your presence,
Not rushing away,
To cherish each moment,
Here I would stay.

Little by Little...

Little by little, every day,
little by little in every way,
Jesus is changing me,
He's changing me
Since I made a turn about face,
I've been growing in His grace,
Jesus is changing me.

*He's changing me,
My precious Jesus,
I'm not the same person that I used to be
Sometimes it's slow going
but there's a knowing
that one day perfect I will be.*

Children's Address: The Gift of God's Spirit

Intro:

I've got a little gift for each of you today. But before you can receive this gift there's something that you have to do. You have to turn round 5 times. Get yourself a space and see if you can do that without falling over.

Well done, now come and receive your gifts (sweets).

Application:

When we turn to God. When we say I am sorry for the wrong things that I do and I really want to do what God says from now on God gives us a very special gift. It's not a bar of chocolate. It's not even something we can see! Do you know what special gift God gives us when we turn to Him and trust that Jesus died for our sins?

He gives us the gift of His Holy Spirit. We can't see the Holy Spirit. But He is God. He loves us. He wants to be with us every day. He wants to help us.

Why do you think we need God the Holy Spirit to come and live in our lives?
The Holy Spirit wants to help you to become more like Jesus. He helps us to know and to do what pleases God.

As you read the bible, as you pray as you live and play at home and school God the Holy Spirit will be with you. He will remind you what God wants you to do. He will show you if you're doing something wrong. What's more when you ask Him He will give you the power to change. He will help you more and more to do what is right. He will help you more and more to stop doing things that are wrong.

But don't expect to change all at once. The Holy Spirit will be changing us all our lives. It won't be until we get to heaven that we'll be perfect. But little by little every day, little by little in every way God the Holy Spirit will make you a much nicer person, a person who is becoming more and more like Jesus.

I hope you want to turn away from things that are wrong. I hope you turn to God and trust that Jesus died for your sins. I hope you ask God the Holy Spirit to help you every day to live more like Jesus.

Let us pray:

Dear God, Thank you that you love us. Thank you for giving us your Holy Spirit. Help us to turn away from what is wrong and to become more like Jesus every day. Amen.

Intro:

'I can't do it daddy, I need you to help me...' If we had a Euro for every time our children have asked us for help, we would be a rich parents. Whether it's getting dressed, climbing a slide, or turning on a tap; life is full of many battles for a toddler. In a sense, life is always full of battles, they just change as we get older. Unfortunately, as we get older we seem to become too self-sufficient and proud to ask others for help even when we're really struggling. This independent spirit spills over into our Christian lives and we forget that despite the battle and struggle we have with sin, that God the Holy Spirit lives within us and is always ready to help us. Maybe that's one reason why Jesus said that if we want to enter the Kingdom of God then we need to become like little children. We need to recapture that child-like capacity to rely on our heavenly daddy for help.

The wonderful hope is that you and I can live lives that are pleasing to God because God's Spirit lives within us to help us. So Paul can say to the Christians in Rome, *"You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you."* He also says to the Christians in Philippi, *"For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose."* If you and I want to walk in holiness then we must do two things. We must live in dependence on and obedience to the Holy Spirit.

1 Depending on the Holy Spirit:

We can't see the Holy Spirit, yet by faith we believe that he lives within us when we become a Christian. He is the all-powerful God, nothing is impossible for him and therefore he is able to help us to change and to obey God. He is always with us and never leaves us even though we can grieve him by our sin. Yet how do we rely on him to help us in our battle against sin?

Well, one of the primary roles of the Spirit is to highlight our need for holiness in specific areas of our lives. Normally the way the Spirit does this is by exposing our sin as we humbly read and study the bible. Therefore, if you and I want to grow in holiness we must make regular time to read and study God's word. Unfortunately therefore there are no easy shortcuts to holiness. Making time to study the bible and think about how to apply it to our lives will mean sacrifice. It may mean sacrificing a T.V program or another pleasure or even the housework. It will also mean making an effort to come to the church services, morning and evening and the midweek bible study as often as we can. We can even listen to the bible as we drive to work and buy any number of commentaries and Christian books to help us in our understanding of the bible. In other words, really we are without excuse. Jesus said, *'To whom much is given much will be required!'* It is hypocritical for us to expect to walk in holiness and to be negligent in our intake of scripture. If you and I want to make progress in holiness then we must rely on the Spirit by spending time in God's word.

Another way that we can depend on the Holy Spirit is simply to pray and ask him to help us to live holy lives. Paul prays for the Christians in Ephesus specifically that they may come to a greater personal knowledge of the Holy Spirit who lives within them and a greater understanding of the power that he can give them to live the Christian life. So he writes in **Ephesians 1 v18-20**, *“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.”* Even as we read the scriptures we need to ask the Holy Spirit to help us understand them. Above all we need to daily ask the Holy Spirit to help us to put into practice what we discover in the bible. Can I ask you as I ask myself-

Do you give the bible priority in your life? Do you talk to God and ask the Holy Spirit to give you the power to say no to sin and obey?

2 Obeying the Holy Spirit

In our pursuit of holiness we must not only depend on the Holy Spirit but we must also be willing to obey him.

Often when Erin asks me to help her, I will come along side her and assess the situation. Sometimes I may have to intervene by straightening a sock, holding her hand or lifting her up to reach, but often it will also involve me giving her a piece of guidance. This is usually a simple instruction which, if followed, will normally solve the problem. In such instances, Erin is still left with the choice to follow my instruction or to do her own thing with the corresponding consequences. In a similar way, we need to depend on God’s help, but this in no way minimises our responsibility to obey. Because God’s Spirit lives within us, we have the ability and the power to obey, but he still leaves us with the freedom of choice to obey or disobey. If you and I want to make progress in holiness then we need to face our responsibility to obey what we know to be right. Often we complain that we are defeated by some particular sin when in reality we are not defeated, we are simply being disobedient.

If you and I are to put sin to death in our lives and pursue holiness, we must not only rely on the Holy Spirit but we must also accept our responsibility to obey. Thus Paul can write in **Romans 8 v12-13**, *“Therefore, we have an obligation- but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you shall live.”*

In order to consistently obey the Holy Spirit we need to develop conviction and commitment.

Conviction as to what is the right and wrong thing to do comes again through reading, studying and meditating on the bible. As we do this we will begin to develop convictions about what God wants us to think, do or say in a particular situation. At times we will discover specific instructions like not getting drunk or not gossiping.

But more often the bible will simply give us principles which we must then apply in different circumstances and situations. So there will be many areas of our lives that there is no specific instruction for, but by applying biblical principles to these situations we can make wise and God-pleasing choices.

For example, in his letter to the Christians in Corinth St. Paul outlines some guiding principles for them to help them make decisions about how they should act and how they can live in a way that glorifies God.

In 1 Cor 6 v12 he writes, *“Everything is permissible for me but not everything is beneficial.”*

So the first principle is, ‘Is it helpful physically, spiritually and mentally?’

In 1 Cor 6 v12 he also says, *“Everything is permissible for me but I will not be mastered by anything.”*

So the second principle is, ‘Does it bring me under its power?’

It is as we apply these principles that we will begin to develop convictions about our actions and attitudes. For example, the bible may not mention T.V. but when we apply these principles to the programs that we watch, it may become rather searching. For example, we may find that a program has brought us under its power in the sense that we simply cannot live without seeing it. In such a case we may have to stop watching it for a time until we are once again able to be in control of it rather than it controlling us and so live in a way that pleases God.

Another reason that developing convictions is important is because over time we will discover that there are issues that sincere Christians will have different views about. This may be whether it is O.K. to take a drink or go to the cinema or how we should spend our Sundays.

Again the bible gives us principles to apply in these situations so that despite our diversity we may maintain our unity. When writing to the Christians in Rome the apostle Paul says that in grey areas that the bible is not specific about, we should adopt four principles- **Read Romans 14 v 1-7**

“Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone.”

Her Paul outlines four guiding principles to help us maintain our unity where we have differences of opinion. They are:

- We should not look down on someone who thinks differently from us.
- We must take time to be convinced before God about what we think.
- We must remain true to our convictions.
- We must be careful to express our freedom without causing hurt to someone else.

So if we are to walk in obedience to the Spirit we must begin to study God's word and develop convictions.

Finally, consistently walking in obedience to the Spirit will require uncompromising commitment. If a soldier enters the field of battle with the attitude, *'I hope I don't get hit very much...'* they are sure to fail. In the same way if we adopt an attitude of, *'I'll sin just a little bit'* or slip into the *'I'll only do this one more time'* syndrome, we will fail to make any progress in our pursuit of holiness. Jonathan Edwards, one of the most godly ministers of the past wrote these words in his diary, *'I resolved never to do anything which I would be afraid to do if it was the last hour of my life.'*

God doesn't expect us to be perfect. Until we reach heaven we will always be sinners. But He does call us to be committed with His help and grace to pursue holiness as a way of life. God our Father does want us to become more like Jesus every day and so bring glory and honour to His name. For me the children's song puts it beautifully when it says:

"Little by little, every day, little by little in every way, Jesus is changing me, He's changing me. Since I made a turn about face, I've been growing in His grace, Jesus is changing me."

"He's changing me, my precious Jesus, I'm not the same person that I used to be. Sometimes it's slow going but there's a knowing that one day perfect I will be."

Conclusion:

What is God's desire?

God practices quality control- He wants us to be holy (more like Jesus)

Why is holiness important?

It assures us that we are real Christians

It keeps us in fellowship with God

It keeps us clean for service

It prevents us needing God's discipline

What hurdles do we face?

Our attitude can be more self-focused than God-focused

We can forget that it's a balance between what God does and what we must do.

We can make excuse for sin.

What's our greatest enemy?

Sin

Sin adopts guerrilla tactics

Sin lies hidden in our hearts (let bible search, false guilt, real issues)

Sin works through our desires

Sin tries to undermine our biblical understanding/reason

How do we pursue holiness?

Remember we have a new heart, a new master and a new power/potential.

Depend on the Holy Spirit (pray and read the bible)

Obey the holy Spirit (Develop convictions and be totally committed)

Never give up- It's a life-long process!