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Inspired Living

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TEXT: Acts 2:1-4 (NIV)

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 fire 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.

Isaiah 40:31 (NIV)

...but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Well, the question I have for you today is who or what has brought you any kind of inspiration in your life? I mean, who has stirred you up to do something different, to change? You know, when I was younger, I was inspired by numerous people. I remember the first time I visited a concert, a Christian concert that I went to was put on by a famous musician. You probably recognize the name Amy Grant. And as I sat there in the stands, I was inspired by her music and stirred on the inside to worship and praise God in a way that I had never sensed before. It was it was inspiring to me. When I was even younger than that, in elementary school, I was a fan of the Dallas Cowboys, and I watched them on the TV, and I saw Drew Pearson and Roger Staubach and Tony Dorsett and Ed "Too Tall" Jones and all of these players in the 80s that as they played as they ran the ball, as they caught the ball, as Roger Staubach threw the ball. I was inspired by their athleticism, by their hard work, by their passion. And it was an inspiration to me, which flowed right into my high school football coach, who was such an inspiration in his halftime speeches and his practices. Who in your

past has inspired you the most? You know, in life, we're generally motivated by either inspiration or desperation. As a matter of fact, motivational speaker Tony Robbins has said, "In life you need either inspiration or desperation." And someone has said, "If you don't act out of inspiration, desperation will eventually make you act."

You know, where does this inspiration really come from? You know, the world asked this question and may have answers like perhaps it does come from desperation or perhaps it comes from some sort of fluke of the universe or some other way that just people are just inspired out of nowhere. But today, as we look at the text, we see some things God has told us about true inspiration. What does it mean to be inspired? To be inspired is to be spurred on, according to Webster. It's to inspire someone and to exert an animating, enlivening, or awakening influence on someone. It literally means to breathe or to blow into. True inspiration makes some people nervous because it often shuffles the deck on the status quo – it brings about change it can be hard to control. Truly inspired people often live with a passion beyond sometimes what seems to make rational sense. Are you living an inspired life and where is that inspiration coming from if you are?

I want to talk to you today about what the Bible tells us about inspiration, what God has told us about inspiration, and then at the core of good, sound, pure inspiration for all that is good and right and true and pure and holy. God has clearly told us that He Himself is willing to inspire us to be our inspiration for good. As a matter of fact, he created us and he knows exactly how he created us in such a way that that you and I can be inspired, really fully, most fully by him, because he's the one who knows how he designed us. The scripture says in Isaiah 40:31, "Those who wait upon the Lord," you seek the Lord and you wait for Him and you, you cry out to him and you move toward him. Those people, no matter where they're at in life, they'll renew their strength. They'll mount up on wings like eagles. It's an image of someone having vision renewed, because now they're above the muck and mire, flying like an eagle with great vision for what lies ahead. They'll run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint. God has said he would love to, is willing to, and will be our inspiration if we'll seek him. The prophet Isaiah said he the one who created the heavens and spread out the earth. This is the one who gives breath to its people and life to those who walk on it. The scripture tells us in 2 Chronicles 16:9 "The eyes of the Lord range to and fro across the earth, looking for those whose hearts are fully surrendered to him, that he may strongly support them." How does he do this?

As we head towards Pentecost Sunday, we're getting our hearts and minds ready for the celebration of the coming of the Holy Spirit in a whole new way into our world. Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, he compared it to the wind. You can't see the spirit of God, but you know it's there when you sense it. And as Jesus said in John 3:8, "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it's going. So, it is with everyone who's born of the spirit." And in the celebration of Pentecost, it is a fulfillment of the prophecy from Joel, where God told us in the last days, He would pour out his spirit on all people. And the sons and daughters – His sons and daughters – would prophesy. Young men would see visions. Old men would dream dreams. Both men and women would experience this kind of inspiration from God by the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Having believed, you are marked in him with a seal – the promised Holy Spirit. It's a new time when God is pouring His Spirit on all those who would believe.

And the Scripture tells us, as those disciples were waiting in this transition from the old covenant to the new covenant started to occur, and Christ had paid the debt for humanity on the cross, and now they're waiting for the gift of the spirit. When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like a blowing and violent wind came from Heaven and filled the whole house. Inspiration was coming here – filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and they were so inspired that they began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Remember, inspiration is an animating, enlivening experience. It's a breath coming into you. It's breath being breathed within.

Who in the past again has inspired you? And more importantly, where or to whom are you going for inspiration today? God himself wants to be our inspiration, and his inspiration comes in the way of him showing himself who he is through us and in our world. He wants to inspire us in love and service and unique ways that he's created us. There's a divine inspiration for you. I remember when my wife was praying after our children got on the bus and started to go to school. She was praying for God to show her what was next in her life, and the inspiration came into her heart from the Lord about a business that we could have on our property and our barn that was just designed for her gifts and her talents. No one knows us like the Lord. No one can inspire us and lead us in love and service and stirring up hope and joy and helping people move down the road of freedom and liberty. No one can do this better than God. Where are you going for your inspiration these days, friends? Are you going to the one who holds all inspiration, all good inspiration in his hands? Are you seeking his face? Are

you waiting on the Lord, the one who can stir you and move you in a way no one else can – who loves you more than anyone else? He wants to bring about internal and external freedom in our lives. He wants to bring about the fullness of life in all of us.

The Scripture reveals to us that God is willing to inspire us, but it's hard for his inspiration to flow through dirty and unbelieving vessels. You know, it's interesting when Jesus visited his own hometown, when he started his ministry and was anointed by the Holy Spirit after being baptized by John and then he went to his hometown. And the Scripture tells us, Matthew 13:58, he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith. You know, there are so many things that can short circuit or squelch true inspiration flowing into our lives from God. Clearly, we see that the work of God is hindered by doubt. And what you might say those people in Jesus' hometown, the intellectual pride, they thought they knew better. They thought what was there and what made sense to them about who Jesus was, was more important than actually what Jesus was doing. Their doubt, their intellectual pride, got in the way of God working in their midst.

You know, Jesus could hardly stir up the religious leaders of his day because their traditional religious frameworks were so protected by them. They didn't want their status quo adjusted by Jesus. They were threatened by him, the one who could have brought specific inspiration into their lives, each one of them individually, self-designed for them. They couldn't receive it from him because their system, their religious system, their moneymaking schemes in the temple and their study of religious behavior and stuff kept them from really opening their hearts to the true inspiration from God. You know, some people are just afraid of it. It just takes them beyond themselves. It's outside the box. We like to be in control and we're afraid. And so, we might squelch some inspiration from God. Or if our hearts are filled with jealousy or rage or sloth awfulness or any kind of sin, when you have covetousness there. And all of these things, they block up the flow and work of the Spirit of God in our lives – unconfessed sins before God will stop His inspiration. He is willing to inspire us. The Scripture makes that very clear. It's hard for his inspiration to flow in dirty and unbelieving vessels.

And so, the disciples were believing and trusting in God. They went and they waited in Jerusalem for the promise. And then His spirit came upon him. And the inspirational wind of God's spirit, I mean, when it gets to flowing in a person's life, the Scripture reveals, it knows no bounds. I mean, what happened with the disciples when they became truly inspired by God himself was nothing short of miraculous. I mean, we read earlier, they began to speak in other tongues, but from there, they went forward through all the world, changing the known

world at that time, even in the face of great persecution and opposition. And even in the doorway of death, they stayed completely inspired by God, by the work of His spirit. You know, the statement remains today that British revivalist Henry Varley uttered to Dwight L. Moody one afternoon when Dwight L. Moody was a young man in 1873 in Dublin, when he said, “Moody, the world has yet to see what God will do with a man or a woman who is fully consecrated, fully set apart, fully surrendered, to him.”

The eyes of the Lord look to and fro across the earth looking for those whose hearts are fully devoted to him, that he may strongly support them. Who has inspired you in the past? Who are you seeking for inspiration in your life today? Where are you going to have your heart motivated? Are you even wanting to be stirred to make the most of your life? Let me remind you today, friends: the Bible says our lives are but a vapor and a mist – here today and gone tomorrow. We’re to make the most of the opportunities that God gives us. It seems like there’s many in the church that are asleep today. But there’s also many waking up. Many are waking and said, “God, what do you have for me? What part should I play in the work of your kingdom? Do you have a specific purpose for me? Is there something I should be doing?” And as we knock on Heaven’s door and we wait for him, and you keep crying out to him and seeking him, don’t be surprised if you’re living in faith, if he comes in and starts to stir your spirit, to inspire you and maybe small ways in serving those around you, maybe then some vision that’s broader than what you thought for your life. Maybe something almost seemingly irrational: to be inspired to give in one way or sacrifice in another, be a part of something that you sense God is doing. The Spirit is still working in the world today. He’s still stirring in the hearts of men and women. And the truth is, he wants to stir in your heart today, friend. He wants to stir you up towards love and good deeds that have been prepared in advance for you to do. Are you seeking God Almighty? Are you living an inspired life? Can you sense the Holy Spirit stirring in you and working in you? God is coming to us. We’re living in the days when He would pour out His spirit on all people, and we could dream dreams and see visions and be inspired. And the church can’t be asleep. Friends, the church needs to be awake. The church needs to be empowered, seeking Christ, seeking His Spirit, as has been done in the past. For we need a sort of revival in the hearts of men and women being as called back to God so that we could submit and surrender to Him, and he would heal our land. He would help us.

Friend, please keep seeking the Lord. As we head towards Pentecost Sunday, keep your heart open to the Spirit. Surrender your heart to him. And say, “God, would you stir in me and work in me a new way?” This is a time to be calling out to God for the inspiration we need. Let’s pray together. Heavenly Father, thank you for being with us. Thank you for teaching us

in your Word and knowing that we're spiritual beings and that true righteous inspiration comes only from you. Help us seek your face. Help us be stirred by you and your heart with your spirit. We confess things that get in the way. Help us be honest about them. Help us clear our vessel, the vessel of our heart and soul, so we can hear what you have for us and operate in the faith that you give us. Lord, help us with this. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.