

**Homily for Thursday in the Nineteenth Week after Pentecost
October 8, 2020**

By the Reverend Stephen Gerth

Year 2, Proper 22: Galatians 3:1–9; Psalm 89:19–24*; Luke 11:5–13*

Sometimes what is omitted by the church’s lectionaries is interesting. Among the passages not appointed to be read from Paul’s second earliest letter, Galatians, are the verses that follow Paul’s words, “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.”¹

Paul’s summary of God’s work in Christ follows. You will recognize these words, “But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption.² And because you are [sons and daughters], God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba!

¹ Galatians 3:27–29.

² The Greek only has the word for adoption here. Note that Paul has just written that in Christ, there is neither male nor female.

Father!’ So through God you are no longer a slave but a [child], and if a [child] then an heir.”³

In its own way, today’s gospel lesson poses the question Jesus asks in Mark, Matthew, and Luke, “Who do you say that I am?”⁴ In John, Jesus asks, “Do you believe?”⁵ Acts tells the story of Paul, blinded by light, who cannot see who is saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”⁶ Paul asks, “Who are you, Lord? And he said, ‘I am Jesus.’”⁷

In addition to Mark’s gospel, Luke shares with Matthew another written source that is known by the first letter of the German word for *source*, “Q”—from *quelle*.” Matthew uses the words about asking, seeking, and knocking in the Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew, Jesus says, “If you then . . . know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!”⁸ But in Luke, Jesus says, “If you then . . . know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the

³ Galatians 4:4–7.

⁴ Mark 8:29; Matthew 16:15; Luke 9:20.

⁵ John 1:50, 9:35, 11:26.

⁶ Acts 9:4.

⁷ Acts 9:5.

⁸ Matthew 7:11.

Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” Luke’s second book, the Acts of the Apostles, begins with Jesus present and saying to his disciples, “you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”⁹

I really do miss people being able to here for worship. And to be honest, I miss singing in worship even more. Growing up Southern Baptist, we didn’t have entrance chants or opening hymns. But we did have a number of short hymns, which were grouped in our hymnal under the title, “Calls to Worship.” One I remember is this, “Spirit of the living God, fall fresh on me; Spirit of the living God fall fresh on me. Break me, melt me, mold me, fill me. Spirit of the living God, fall fresh on me.”¹⁰ Sometimes it would be sung many times, each time beginning at a lower volume until the congregation was quiet. This call was written by an American evangelical Presbyterian pastor, Daniel Iverson, in 1926.

I never knew until this morning that an evangelical bishop of the Church of England, now 90, Michael Baughen, who was bishop of Chester, wrote a second verse. It’s a nice balance for Iverson’s verse: “Spirit of

⁹ Acts 1:5.

¹⁰ *Baptist Hymnal*, ed. Walter Hines Sims (Nashville: Convention Press, 1956), hymn 523.

the living God, move among us all, make us one in heart and mind, make us one in love, humble, caring, selfless, sharing. Spirit of the living God, fill our lives with love.”¹¹

✠ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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¹¹ <https://hymnary.org/hymn/CH4/620>, (accessed 8 October 2020).