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A few months ago I watched Bondi Rescue, a factual television programme. One day the watchtower of the Bondi lifeguards found an old woman drowning and sent a lifeguard to rescue her. But due to strong waves, it was so hard to get to her and take her back to beach.

When she got back to shore, her condition was very critical. She couldn't breathe on her own. The lifeguard gave her artificial respiration until paramedics arrived. However, it didn't work; the woman couldn't breathe. But, the lifeguard didn't stop doing mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, and the paramedics arrived and gave her first-aid measures.

Her family cried and the crowd thought that she died. But, then, she began to breathe; she was alive. A paramedic interviewed said that it was a miracle and the lifeguard's artificial respiration saved her.

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When I read and reflected carefully on the Gospel reading, John 20:19-23, to prepare for today's message, I was reminded of that episode. Especially, verses 21-22 recalled the scene of the lifeguard's mouth-to-mouth ventilation.

Verses 21-22 say, “Again Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.’ And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’” For me, Jesus' breathing on his disciples looks like giving them artificial respiration.

Look, now Jesus' disciples panicked after their master was unexpectedly arrested by the Jewish authorities, was handed over to the Roman governor and died on the cross like a felon. Verse 19 shows their conditions at that time clearly: “On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders.”

Yes, they were half-dead with panic. Although they experienced Jesus' great miracles like feeding the five thousand with five loaves and two fishes and raising Lazarus from the dead, although they confessed their faith in Jesus as the Messiah and claimed to follow no matter what happened to their master, when

they saw Jesus being arrested and dying on the cross, they denied him and ran for their lives.

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It's like that they couldn't swim against big tides and almost drowned. At that moment, Jesus came and breathed on them, saying “Receive the Holy Spirit.” It was exactly like giving them mouth-to-mouth resuscitation to rescue them.

The Greek word translated into the Spirit is “πνεῦμα” (pneuma), and interestingly it means “Breath.” Yes, Jesus gave his disciples the Holy Spirit as breath to assist their spiritual respiration. What's remarkable is sending the Spirit isn't just for life extension; the Spirit tries to transform us from inside out.

The prophet Joel clearly explains how the Spirit changes our life. According to Joel 2:28-32 quoted in Acts 2, today's first Bible reading, critical changes would happen in our life when we get the Holy Spirit.

Joel 2:28 says, “Afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.” We can find three things mentioned in relation to receiving the Holy Spirit; that is prophesying, dreaming dreams, and seeing visions.

[4]

Let us briefly analyse them one by one. Literally to prophesy means forecasting that a particular thing will happen in the future, but in the Bible its meaning is a bit different. To prophesy in the scripture signifies telling what God says to his people as a messenger rather than telling one's future or fortune.

So, the part, “your sons and daughters will prophesy,” indicates that when they are filled with the Spirit, they would be interested in what God says, listen to him earnestly, and talk about God, his wonders, his grace, his will towards them. Likewise, the Holy Spirit changes the topics of our daily conversations and transforms our life interests and directions.

The Holy Spirit also opens our eyes. God proclaims through the prophet Joel that your young men will see visions when he sends his Spirit. At this, to see

visions doesn't signify having illusions, but realising what God has done for us and what God is doing here and now.

[#picture 1]



I captured this picture from another episode of Bondi Rescue. The scene was taken from a rescue helicopter. As you see, the blue circle is a surfer and the red circle is a shark. The surfer couldn't see that a shark was approaching to him. Not only the surfer, but also everyone on the beach including lifeguards couldn't see that there was a shark swimming nearby.

Then, suddenly the shark turned around and was gone. We don't know the reason why, but he's so lucky. If the surfer was a Christian and watched this TV programme afterwards, he would realise how God saved his life behind the scene. Watching the episode, I thought that this was like our life; we cannot see lots of what's going on in our lives, and how God is working for us.

But, the Holy Spirit opens our eyes and helps us see his amazing works happening in our life journey. So, people being filled with the Spirit are always grateful and praise God.

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Finally, in Joel 2:28, God promises that your old men will dream dreams when they receive the Spirit. Of course at this part dreaming dreams doesn't mean having dreams during sleep. The dream God mentioned here indicates their ultimate mission that they have to achieve as a Christian, that is, the kingdom of God. At this point we need to focus on who will dream dreams; yes, old men.

For God, the old men should dream the kingdom of God beyond their personal well-being for the rest of their days. God wants them to spend their time, energy and talents to create a space where God influences for the future generations.

Being a stepping stone for their descendants or neighbours to connect to God is what God expects them to do through the Holy Spirit.

This is what they have to dream; yes, the old men aren't those who stop dreaming, but those who start dreaming new dreams.

The Spirit is the holy breath to assist us to breathe healthily even in our spiritual trouble. When we get the divine Spirit, we can prophesy, we can see visions, and we can dream dreams. Thankfully, God promised to pour out his Spirit on everyone who seeks for him, regardless of our gender, age, position, race or culture.

God looks only at the heart trusting and waiting for him. Two weeks ago at the May 4R Thrive Together worship, we planted a number of seeds under the dirt in a cup as an act of trust and patience to the Spirit. I encouraged the participants to take their own cup home to keep watering and watching it, and heard from some people that their seeds already sprouted like this:

[#picture 2]



I think it is a good symbol showing how the Spirit works among us. Like the seeds scattered under the ground, we cannot see the Spirit with our eyes, but as the seeds sprout in their time, if we keep trusting, expecting, and waiting for the Spirit, we can experience his diverse actions in our midst in his time.

[6]

Sisters and brothers,

I would like to finalise today's message by sharing some cinquain poems that we made together reflecting on the Holy Spirit at the last 4R service. I was impressed by our diverse thinking of the Spirit.

Someone expressed the Spirit as follows:

Spirit  
Comforter, helper  
Welcoming, healing, challenging  
Always giving us peace  
Comforter

Other person described the divine Spirit like this:

Spirit  
Never ends  
Caring, helping, loving  
With us every day  
Friend

I want to share one more:

Spirit  
Invisible, universal  
Uniting, befriending, guiding  
Let us be receptive  
Counsellor

How beautiful they are. As we confessed together, the Spirit is welcoming, healing, challenging, caring, helping, loving, uniting, befriending, and guiding. He is also inspiring, loving, watching, smiling, leading, giving, comforting, teaching, fulfilling, encompassing, forgiving, motivating, supporting, satisfying, and protecting. Thankfully, the Spirit is our friend; he is our God.

I hope that every one of us may enjoy these amazing works of the Holy Spirit in our life journey all the time. Amen.