



# The Spirit Sculpts Us for Mission

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# Theology in post-Christendom

- ▶ Doing theology for Christendom?
- ▶ Focus on distinguishing Lutheran theology from other Christian theologies
- ▶ But what would doing theology post-Christendom look like?
- ▶ It would need to be curious about the hopes and needs of neighbors
- ▶ Then, such theology would need to address such neighbors from the perspective of the church's story in an inviting way
- ▶ **My presentation today is an attempt to do a theology of the Holy Spirit in a post-Christendom, secular age**



# SECULAR AGE

- ▶ Western Christians live in a secular age
- ▶ All values have been devalued
- ▶ People shop for therapeutic answers in the world
- ▶ **The church's response...**
- ▶ Assuming too much, making too little of it
- ▶ Arguing absolute values falls on deaf ears
- ▶ Helping people feel good is too narrow

# A Shocking Thesis

- ▶ We tried to be relevant
- ▶ That hasn't worked
- ▶ We're still irrelevant!
- ▶ It's time to step back!
- ▶ **Rethink mission...**



# An Embodied Witness

- ▶ Rodney Clapp, *A Peculiar People* (IVP, 1996)
- ▶ “For the earliest church, then, evangelism was not a matter of inviting individuals to recall what they somehow already knew. It was rather a matter of **inviting them to become part of nothing less than a new humanity, reborn** of the last Adam who was Jesus the Nazarene” (p. 165).
- ▶ “Accordingly, evangelism in the earliest church involved **attracting and inviting people into a new culture**, what was widely regarded as nothing less than a third race. . . . They constituted a third race in the eyes of the surrounding world **by virtue of their distinctive way of life**” (p. 166).

# Spiritual Hunger in North America

- ▶ Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven* (Univ. California, 1998)
- ▶ Beyond **Dweller-oriented** (Institutional) and **Seeker-oriented** (Consumerist) Approaches
- ▶ **Practice-oriented** approach to spirituality
- ▶ Moving beyond institutional affiliation and immediate felt needs.
- ▶ *“In this view, clergy must serve as **models** of spirituality, rather than as guardians or shopkeepers”* (p. 17).
- ▶ Embodiment and cultivation of the **spiritual life** in the context of some **center** or **framework** that gives **coherence** to life.

# Models of spirituality

## **Ever thought of yourselves as models of spirituality?**

Can we think of mission as an embodied witness, as modeling a certain way of life that is inviting and attractive in a healthy, biblically grounded way?

So what? Two reasons for knowing this data:

- 1) So that we as the church can learn anew what it means to be spiritual according to our own Christian story, which has to do with how the Holy Spirit forms Christ in us, and discern our need for the Spirit in our lives.
- 2) So that we can discern what faithful living in the Spirit looks like in the world and embody such living in a way that is inviting to neighbors who are spiritually hungry and seeking.

SPIRITUALITY FOR THE CHRISTIAN LEADS TO REFLECTION ON THE SPIRIT'S WORK

# Sanctification as Formation, for Mission

- ▶ Big on justification...
- ▶ But what about **sanctification**?
- ▶ **What does it look like?**
- ▶ From concept to form of life
- ▶ **How does the Holy Spirit make us holy, sanctify us?**
- ▶ Like a **sculptor**, the Holy Spirit gives us the form of Christ
- ▶ **Christlike** Ways of the Spirit in the world



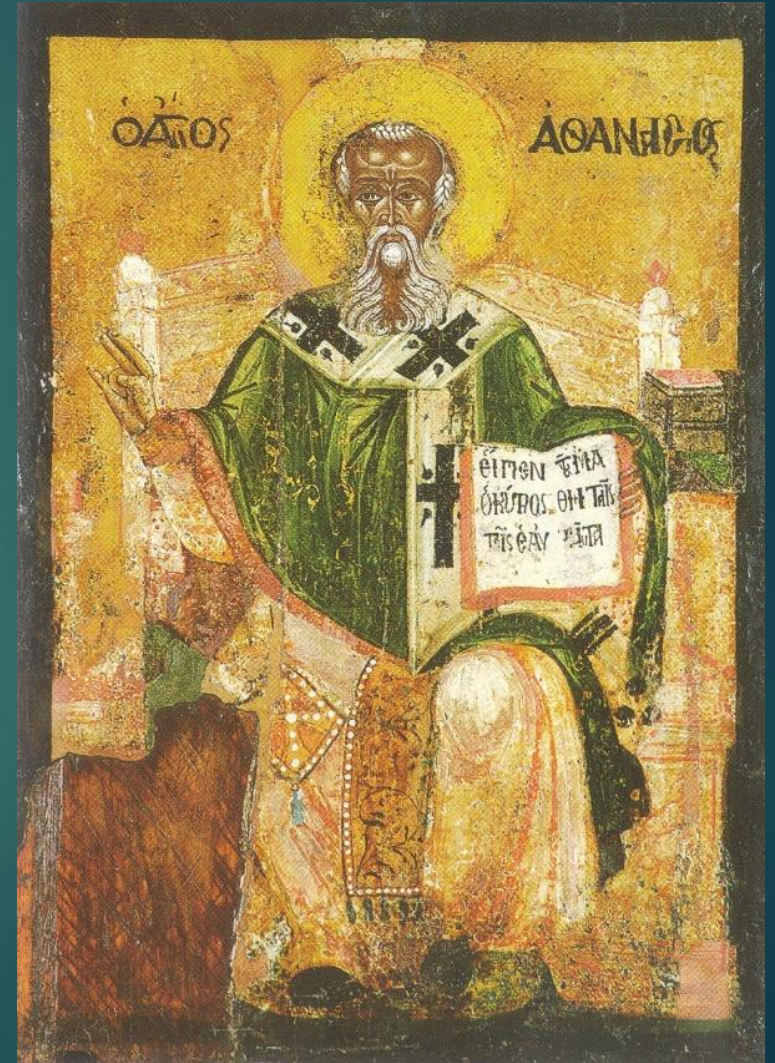
“Like a sculptor who molds a mass into its desired shape, the Spirit’s sanctifying work lies in shaping Christ’s image in persons. A theology of the Spirit strives at fostering the sanctified life in others by making them participants by grace in the Spirit’s manifold ways of forming persons after the ‘image’ or ‘likeness’ of Christ (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18)”  
*(Sculptor Spirit, xv-xvi)*



St. Paul Lutheran Church, Melrose Park, Illinois

# St. Athanasius on Jesus' baptism

- ▶ Athanasius (c. 296–373 AD):
- ▶ “But the Saviour . . . being God, and ever ruling in the Father’s kingdom, and being Himself He that supplies the Holy Ghost, nevertheless is here said to be anointed, that, as before, being said as man to be anointed with the Spirit, He might provide for us men, not only exaltation and resurrection, but the indwelling and intimacy of the Spirit.”



# Martin Chemnitz

- ▶ ...through the Fall...the flesh, because of its depravity, was not able to contain the Holy Spirit. But in the person of Christ human nature was again anointed with the Spirit.... In this way the Spirit with His gifts is poured out upon all flesh. Christ...has received gifts from his Father according to His assumed nature for the benefit of men. He is worthy to receive them.... But having received these gifts, He does not keep them to Himself alone, but because we are His brothers according to the assumed nature..., He gives, communicates, and distributes them to His brothers according to His assumed nature, as the Head to its members.”



# Spiritual Hunger in North America

- ▶ Brings people on a journey where they ask questions in search for **purpose** in life.
- ▶ Creates **community** or interdependence and a sense of **belonging**.
- ▶ Promotes a **socially active** faith and reaches out **across borders** to neighbors who are **vulnerable** and different.

# A Christ-centered account

- ▶ A pneumatic Christ-centered account of spirituality
- ▶ Begins from below: **How Christ lives in the Spirit**
- ▶ Moving from concept to narrative (How does it look?)
- ▶ Deals with the cultivation of the inner life
- ▶ It invites people to participate in the story: **The Spirit shapes the likeness of Christ in human persons**
- ▶ Configurations of life in the Spirit of Christ address needs and hopes of North American neighbors

# Sculptor Spirit: A Story We Live By

- ▶ **The Spirit forms Christ in us**
- ▶ The Spirit **conforms** us to Christ in...
- ▶ 1. Servanthood and sharing
- ▶ 2. Marginality and Welcome



# Focus on two models

## SACRIFICIAL

- ✓ Serving and sharing life with neighbors
- ✓ Jesus is anointed with the Spirit to be our servant and to teach us servanthood
- ✓ The Spirit shapes us to be servant disciples, to share each other's joys and burdens in community
- ✓ PURPOSE, COMMUNITY

## HOSPITALITY

- ▶ Welcoming strangers and marginalized neighbors
- ▶ Jesus works from Galilee and through Galileans; walks along the border between Samaria and Galilee
- ▶ The Spirit pushes people to marginal spaces to welcome "others" into the kingdom
- ▶ REACHING OUT TO THE OTHER, BELONGING

# HAPPY EXCHANGES



▶ “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers . . . And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need” (Acts 2:42, 44-45).

# Economy of the Spirit

- ▶ The Spirit sculpts us to embody “happy exchanges”
- ▶ Beyond multicultural and even crosscultural into **intercultural** exchanges.
- ▶ No insider club mentality, paternalism or dependency, but partnership.
- ▶ **What happy exchanges should we embody in our current mission contexts?**

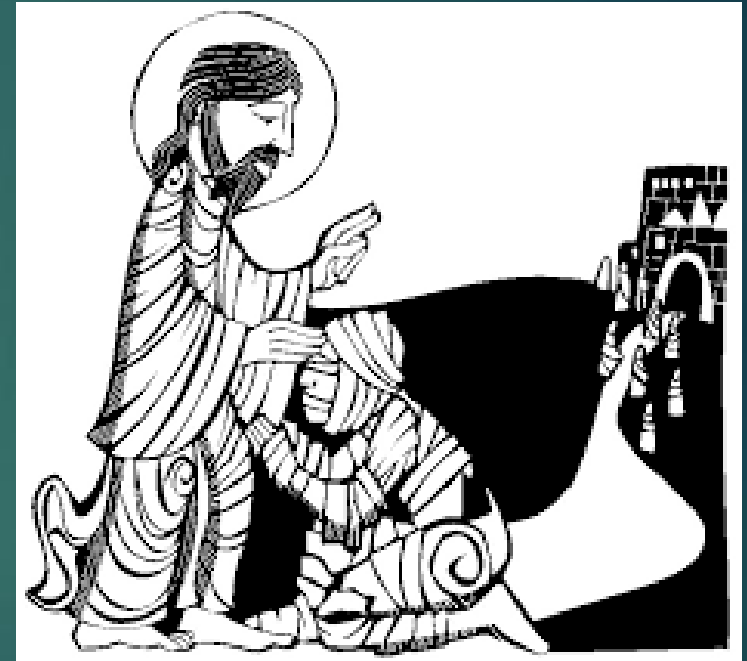
## ▶ HOSPITALITY

### ▶ SHAPED BY A **STORY** OF JESUS

▶ *JESUS WALKS ALONG THE BORDER BETWEEN SAMARIA AND GALILEE*

▶ *EMBODIED A JESUS NARRATIVE, A STORY OF **HOSPITALITY***

*Kinnaman and Hawkins on Millennials: Because their “**participatory** mindset” is based on the idea that “everyone has **the right to belong,**” they look with suspicion at “spiritual communities that feel like insider-only clubs.”*



# Gen Xers AND MILLENNIALS

- ▶ Shaw: **From Self-Fulfillment to Community (Gen Xers)**
- ▶ In contrast to their predecessors' therapeutic "search for fulfillment," Gen Xers reclaimed the importance of **community** and Christ's **concern for the disadvantaged** (*Generational IQ*, 87-88).
- ▶ They assume no one is perfect, but still demand **authenticity** and **loyalty in relationships** (*Ibid.* 88-89).
- ▶ James Emery White: **From community to cause (Millennials)**
- ▶ "Community does not seem to have the great attraction it once did. Instead, there has been a great seismic shift. Today it is **cause** that arrests the attention of the world" (*The Rise of the Nones*, 101).

# Advantages of Spirit Christology

- ✓ SPIRIT CHRISTOLOGY = JESUS BEARS THE SPIRIT AND GIVES US THE SPIRIT
- ✓ A GOOD FRAMEWORK FOR DOING SANCTIFICATION FOR MISSION, FOR A PRACTICE-ORIENTED SPIRITUALITY NORTH AMERICAN NEIGHBORS MAY FIND COMPELLING
  - ✓ Grounded in Biblical narrative
  - ✓ Christological center
  - ✓ Allows for participation in the story
  - ✓ Allows for formation in practices
  - ✓ Sources in Christian and Lutheran tradition
  - ✓ Contextually appropriate for the situation in North America

# Living in the Spirit of Christ, in our times

- ▶ **1. Back to basics, stay in the Story**
- ▶ Don't assume too much, don't make too little of it
- ▶ **2. Embody the Gift, not just talk about it**
- ▶ Pray "Come, Holy Spirit"!
- ▶ **3. Embody the Gift for the sake of the world**
- ▶ Rejoice in how the Spirit shapes Christ in us in inviting ways



Q & A