

It wants us to swim
[Deeper Sheet 4.19.09]

Jesus' resurrection changed everything. You might call it the climax of human history. Resurrection helps us turn the corner from death to life, from lamentation to celebration, and from the agony of God's absence to the extravagance of God's presence. Lent focused our attention on God's anger and absence. The next seven weeks focus our attention on God's intimate presence through the Spirit.

God is spirit. But what does that mean? How do you describe the "spirit" that God is without getting lost in tired religious language? There is no doubt that God is spirit. The Scriptures affirm it again and again. Throughout the ages humans have observed that while the living breathe, the dead do not. Language has come to reflect this association. Both "*ruach*" in Hebrew and "*pneuma*" in Greek mean *spirit, breath, or wind*. To say that God is spirit is to say that the Spirit is the animating, pulsating presence responsible for life. Spirit is also a way of understanding those realities that transcend our five senses. Spirit is both individual and communal. We each have a spirit, but that spirit also extends beyond us to those around us. At times, there is a spirit that captures entire groups of people causing them to behave in peculiar ways. So spirit is both internal and external at the same time. What's more, a spirit can be life-giving or soul-destroying, creative or destructive. Our spirits can be lifted or deflated.

There are all kinds of ways to describe the idea of spirit, but the Christian story affirms spirit in a very deliberate way. The creative, life-giving Spirit that brought the world into being isn't a vague or impersonal presence. Rather, it is personal and relational. Jesus was so deeply connected with God, so fully human, in the way that God intended, that he was full of the Spirit. When Jesus was exhausted, he was able to ask for and receive a Spirit that was outside of himself. But Jesus didn't seek to be filled with the Spirit only when he was exhausted. He sought to be continually filled with the Spirit that somehow God's Spirit would begin to control life. Such a life, full of God's animating Spirit, is not only possible, it's the kind of life that God invites each of us to live as well because God is generous and gives without limit. Whatever our circumstances, we ask for God's Spirit to inhabit us with aliveness. We ask for imagination and hope beyond the things that we can see. We ask for energy when we've come to the end of ourselves. But, in the end, we ask. And the Spirit that hovered over the waters of chaos and breathed the world into order hovers over us now.

Describe a time in your life when you were keenly aware of an animating, life-giving spirit of aliveness.

Think about the idea that spirit is something that extends beyond us and impacts the people around us. How have you seen the Spirit of God so present in another person that it seemed to jump off of them and run around the room?

In what ways have you seen a destructive spirit so present in another person that it jumps off of them and runs around the room?

In what specific instances have you seen these two things in your own life?