

Pentecost Sunday – May 31, 2020

This morning, as we mark Pentecost, I want to invite you to read again the account in Acts 2, and notice the details carefully. The time, the place, the phenomena, the reaction of the people, and Peter's bold speaking, his explanation of what was happening.

It is vital that we attend to the details of the event, and its meaning, as explained by Peter. We're not left to wonder what it meant. We are told, carefully and clearly. A new era has begun, the age of the Spirit, the time in which the good news of Jesus is shared, and heard, and spreads out from Jerusalem to fill the earth with the message of the love of God in Jesus Christ.

Here's a snippet from my notes on this passage, giving a bit of background.



Luke roots the event in time and place. The **place** is Jerusalem, the central place of worship for the Jewish people. The disciples were in Jerusalem, waiting, as Jesus had told them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise

Acts 1:4 "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵ For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

So that's the first reason they're there. The second is the **time**. It is the season of Pentecost. Pentecost does not originate as a Christian festival. It one of three very important Jewish annual festivals. You can read about it in Deuteronomy 16.

Pentecost gets its name from the Greek word for 50th day (*pentekostos*) days because it is celebrated 50 days after Passover. The festival

marked the end of the grain harvest and it was one of the three times a year Jewish families were required to send a male representative to Jerusalem.

By the time of Jesus, the Pentecost celebration had also become a time of covenant renewal, remembering the giving of the Law at Sinai, – a new beginning, a new era in Israel's history.

Jerusalem: the location is also important, for the reconstituted messianic community was expected to begin here. When the OT foretells the new age which would begin with the pouring out of God's Spirit, it is Jerusalem that's the centre from which God's good news would flow out to the whole world.

This is precisely what we read about at this particular Pentecost.

Having planted us, his readers, firmly in a place and time, Luke gives us the details of what happened. The disciples were all gathered in one place, possibly all 120 believers, and suddenly there was – not a wind – but the sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

In addition to this sound like a violent wind was something that appeared as tongues of fire, dividing and resting on each of the people that were in the room. At this point all of those present were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them ability.

What does this mean for us?

There is so much more to say, and how I wish we could gather together in one place, and discuss it further. But such is life right now. For the moment, a question hangs in the air: What does this mean for us? Again, so much to say, but for this morning, what I'm grateful for is that this same Spirit that enable Peter to speak – *Peter who had been afraid to identify with Jesus on the night of his crucifixion, and Peter who was cut to the heart when faced, by Jesus, with the truth of his frightened self* – **this same Spirit is with us today.**



We don't wait for a strange and miraculous event like what happened that day in Jerusalem. The Pentecost we read of in Acts 2 was a one time event, in a specific time and place in history, in the unfolding story of Jesus.

We don't wait for this to happen. It has already occurred.

We are already given God's Spirit by grace.

He is with us now.

Here. Now. Always.

It is His Spirit that enables us to pray, to call out to God. It is God's Spirit that shows us his glory in the face of Christ Jesus. It is his Spirit that shapes and calls us to love one another, and care for the earth.

Let us, then, as the Apostle Paul writes, live by the Spirit (Galatians 5:16, 25), sharing the freedom and love of the children of God.

May the love of God hold you close, by the power of his Spirit today, and always.

— in the strong bond of grace,
Sarah

