

Pentecost Sunday
Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church
Lakeland, FL
May 23, 2021

Acts 2:1-21
Psalm 104
Rom 8:22-27
Jn 15:26-27, 16: 4b-15

Grace to you and peace from God and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Please pray with me. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Oh the Holy Comforter – come to us. Wrap us in your warmth. Be a soft cocoon in which we can rest from the weariness of our days. Whisper into our ears sweet swoonings as we fall asleep at the end of the day.

Sing -- Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness, blow through the wilderness calling and free...
Sing – Come Holy Spirit

How calming. How quieting. How relaxing. Thank you Jesus. Sigh...

But let's really see what happened on that day -- that day when thousands were gathered in Jerusalem for the Festival of the Pentecost. You see, that Festival was an annual Jewish Harvest festival – folks came from miles around, from distant places in the Roman Empire, traveled to Jerusalem for this pilgrimage festival – a holy day of obligation, if you will. It was fifty days after the Passover and we know that at the time described in today's account in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, it was fifty days after the resurrection, ten days after the ascension and the followers of Jesus were still figuring out what the events of those 50 days meant and how drastically and dramatically their lives were changing. In the Acts account, we learn that they were spending a lot of time together – sharing what they had, praying, singing and worshipping God, waiting as Jesus told them to.

And, then on that Day of Pentecost we hear of the coming of the Holy Spirit – not a gentle blowing, not a quiet whispering. No, the Holy Spirit came in with the sound like a mighty violent rushing wind that filled the house where they all were.

The Holy Spirit came in tongues of fire. The Holy Spirit came and the followers were changed – each began speaking in a language they didn't know but was known by the many who had come from distant places – from Mesopotamia, Egypt, Libya, Rome, Asia Minor – each hearing the Gospel in their own native language. Can you imagine the amazement and the bewilderment and the confusion at what the Holy Spirit was doing??

No, no gentle blowing and no quiet whispers. The Spirit moved in that place and mighty things were done. Thank you Jesus! And in the days that followed, Peter preached powerful sermons, thousands were baptized, the followers created a new way of living together in community, the lame were healed, the possessed restored to health, and signs and wonders were in no short supply. The Holy Spirit moved and changed things. Forever.

Holy Spirit – wind and fire and action. Holy Spirit love outpoured – love into which we are drawn as followers of Christ.

What if that wind is a blowing in each of us? And in us as a community of faith? Can you sense it? Is the prophet Isaiah not speaking to us as he did to the people of God millennia ago: Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?

What if the great fire lit a burning flame in each of us? What does the Spirit's presence here mean for us and for those whom we touch, those for whom we pray, those we read about in the newspaper? Is not the Spirit at work as we increasingly share God's love with each other, our community and the world?

We make a mistake when we think about Pentecost Sunday as a remembrance of a festival day long ago. Pentecost -- the coming of the Holy Spirit – is an ongoing activity of the whole Christian Church. With that crowd gathered in Jerusalem that day, we too ask, "What does this mean?" What does this mean to a pandemic ravaged world? What does this mean to a country where divisions and factions cleave us one from another?

What if the Holy Spirit comes in great and mighty ways even now? Would we recognize it? Would we welcome it? And what if she comes in challenging and stretching ways? Moving us from our "comfort zones" as it were?

And, what does it mean when we see things we don't understand, that don't fit into our scheme of things, that perplex us and worry us? That may make us a little nervous or anxious. What does this mean? It means that the Holy Spirit of God is present and working and moving – now as then.

Holy Spirit fire -- Fire changed everything in our human life – fire gave warmth, fire cooked food, fire offers light. Fire changed everything.

"The day will come when, after harnessing space, the winds, the tides, and gravitation, humankind shall harness for God the energies of love. And on that day, for the second time in the history of the world, we shall have discovered fire."

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin
20th century Jesuit priest

Holy Spirit fire! Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful. Ignite in us the fire of your love.

May it be so.
Amen