

Sunday 31 May 2020
Pentecost

Acts 2:1-4

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.
And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind,
and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.
Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them.
All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and they began to speak in other languages,
as the Spirit gave them ability.

Let us pray:

Holy Spirit, presence of the Living Eternal God fill us afresh today.
Open our ears to hear a sound like the rush of a violent wind and fill the homes we dwell in.
Open our eyes to see a sight of divided tongues, as of fire dancing among us.
Move our tongues to proclaim your praises, of the great deeds you have done in our lives through
the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for us and the whole world.
Help each of us know that you have filled us this day and have given to us the abilities we need
to serve you faithfully all the days of our lives. Amen.

“All Are Filled”

I am a Pentecostal. I know the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit. I know that the Holy Spirit continues to hover over the chaos of our lives, always ready to do something unexpected and new. I believe that the day of Pentecost changed the world forever, as God poured out the Holy Spirit upon all flesh; gifting everyone.

The gifts of God come to us according to our need, not our greed. During the Samaritan revival there was a magician who saw people receiving the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands by the Apostles and saw the profit potential in such a power and desired it for himself and was willing to pay any price. He was condemned for his evil intent. Because the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not primarily for our own edification but to meet the needs we find the lives of others. There are private gifts and there are public gifts. The private gifts are experienced in the intimacy of our own prayer closets. God uses them to draw us closer to God so we might draw closer to the world around us. The public gifts are those that are focused on meeting the very real needs of others allowing us to show the world the power of the living God.

There are gifts of to enhance communication. I have known Bishops who have the gift of language, speaking as many as ten languages. Every language you can speak is a gift of the Holy Spirit, and when you need to learn a new one the Holy Spirit will open your heart and mind to learn so that God can share the words of grace that someone else needs desperately to hear. Some of these gifts are not so much to speak as to listen deeply, so that we can understand what others are trying to say, and what God needs us to understand through them.

During this time when our nations is so divided socially, I find it hard to understand what others are trying to do. My heart speaks a language of compassion. To not care for refugees does not make sense to me. I do not understand how well meaning people can turn them away. When Jews were trying to escape Hitler’s Germany and save their lives and the lives of their families, Nation after nation turned them away, until they had to return to their torture and death

in Germany. The Holy Spirit has to help me understand how even the United States could be so cold hearted in the face of such evil. I do not understand why people would not want to wear a mask during a time of international pandemic, when tens of thousands of people are dying. I don't understand why people would want to not only place my life in needless danger, but the life of my mother, and that of my unborn grandchild, God has to help me to understand their fear and panic to do things that make no sense to me at all. This understanding of others is a gift of the Holy Spirit, as God helps us better communicate with others.

Speaking in tongues, is often associated with Pentecost. I see it as one of the musical gifts, a gift of praise. On that first day they were proclaiming the mighty works of God and people heard it in their own languages. When it came time to share information, Peter preached his sermon in Aramaic. Tongues are a musical form that can express what is on your heart when you are over whelmed that you do not have the words to express it. Paul says that those who sing or pray in the spirit, do so to God and not to the rest of the world. When it is more public it is to be given in a language people can understand. I have heard times when a congregation would get caught up in the Spirit and would all start singing together. There is no need for interpretation because it sounds like a choir of angels. It is a message of love to God, no one else really needs to understand more than that.

Prophesy is God's word to us and God always uses a language that we can understand. This is because God wants us to know what God is so concerned about. When God's Spirit speaks prophetically we do not want to hear it. As Israel's kings were known to complain, "God never had anything good to say." When God speaks prophetically it is to speak for the out cast, the poor, the needy, the oppressed, those whom we are harming. It is like when Saul was knocked off his donkey, and he heard the voice of God say, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Paul listened to God and took it to heart. When we do, just like with Paul it usually turns our lives upside down. It causes us to become freedom riders to over turn the injustices of Jim Crow. It causes us to cry out for women's suffrage, or speak out against child labor, or global warming, or for gun control. God speaks for change. God places our live at risk. And slowly the God who hears the cries of the needy brings them deliverance through the compassionate obedience of God's people.

God gives gifts of healing. I believe in the power of prayer, but not so much in magic. God does and can intervene in wondrous ways, but does not always choose to do so. But God can empower us to say a healing word to someone, and can change their whole life. There is healing power in human touch. A baby cannot be held too much, and to deprive a child of touch places their life in jeopardy, the same is true with the elderly. This loving touch is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

I am a believer of vaccines and I am praying that one is developed for this Corona virus soon. I will be one of the first to stand in line to receive it. I am counting the days until my next birthday so I can get my second pneumonia vaccine. These vaccines are a gift from the Holy Spirit as are the medical skills of medical practitioners. There was a time when all human beings could do was pray, now God in the fullness of time has gifted us with so many healing gifts.

The Holy Spirit continues to inspire inquisitive spirits that ask questions that have no answers. Gifts of knowledge and wisdom flow from this quest to understand. The speed of these revelations at times makes our heads spin. What we thought was true, now seems so simplistic compared to the greater specificity taught to our grandchildren. We have had a knowledge explosion, and so much of it is at our finger tips. All of this is a gift of the Holy Spirit, our wisdom seems to lag as we struggle with how to use our knowledge in Godly ways,

and not in selfish and exploitive ways. We find it difficult to step out in faith and change the ways we have always lived and believed. We do not always welcome change as a gift of the Holy Spirit.

The private gifts of the Spirit are also important. Personal healing gifts found in our genetic constitution. We are all fearfully and wondrously made. Some of us will be gifted with a long life, while others of us, will be gifted with much shorter and more intense lives. We are gifted with a special mix of temperaments, with a unique senses of humor, and even in the ways we think and dream. Some can see pictures in their minds, some instead of pictures feel a internal universe of emotions, then there are people like me who are just filled to over flowing with words. Each of us view the world through their unique pallet of colors. Some of see only in grey scale and others with a vast array of hues. Some of us come from small families, some from large families, or even no family you call your own. These are gifts of the Holy Spirit that shape us into the uniquely important people and beloved children of God that we are.

One of the private gifts of the Holy Spirit is one of relationship with God. This is how receptive we are to the presence of God in our lives and our world. Some are more sensitive to this presence than others. I have known the presence of God in my life for as long as I remember. I have always talked to God. I have always listened for God. I realize that this has not been the experience of everyone. But to my life this has been a gift. This gift has always been dynamic, it is always changing, it has always been more than I could fully comprehend or appreciate.

The greatest gift of the Holy Spirit is the gift of love. Theologians have labeled this the gift of assurance. This gift of assurance is the peace of knowing that God cares for us, that God provides for us, that God watches over us, that no matter what we go through we are never going through it alone. God is with us. God will give us opportunity to learn and grow in our understanding. God will forgive us when we do harm, and help us to grown in love in grace for the sake of others. God will be there to humble us and seek to make us teachable and to expand our concepts of reality. God seeks to show us that God not only loves us as an individual but as part of the greater ecosystem. God not only loves us, but loves everything else in creation with the same love. We are chosen because God has chosen everyone and everything to love. God's Holy Spirit gifts us with the power to love, because this is the real purpose behind Pentecost. God wanted to empower humanity to love. God want us to love the world so much that we would give our own lives to help others to believe and not perish but for all to experience eternal life.

Today is Pentecost and God has poured out the Holy Spirit upon all flesh, upon you and upon me so that we might all have the power to love each other, just like God has loved us. As Paul said love is the greater gift, with out love nothing else really matters. How are you using your private and public gifts to express love for others, especially those who do not feel very loveable? The gifts of God have a loving purpose for a needy world. Find ways to express your gifts so people can know about the greatness of our God is ways that they can comprhend, in a spiritual language they can clearly understand. It might be through a smile. It might be through a timely word. It may just be through your steady presence in their time of need. You are empowered to be a god-send to somebodies life today, so that they might know in their life the eternal love of God. Be filled with the Holy Spirit! Be filled to over flowing with the love of God.

Let us pray:

Thank you for filling our lives with the presence and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Empower

us to share your love with those who need it most. Guide our words. Guide our actions. Guide our dreams, our thoughts and our plans, so that they might always be clear expression of your love. Be glorified. Amen.

Thank you for sharing this time with.

Be sure to remember each other in prayer.

Be sure to share tithes and offerings with the church as you are able.

Be sure to look out for one another and care for each other.

Now may the God who has filled us to overflowing

so that we might be a blessing to all we meet,

May our God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,

bless you with every good and perfect gift

for the building up of the saints, today and always. Amen.