

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Below are the readings and sermon for Sunday September 06, 2020. I hope they have reached you in good health and the Spirit of our Lord.

In Christ's Peace,

Pastor Steve

Acts 2:1-18

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

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, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.'

Peter Addresses the Crowd

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: 'Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

"In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.

Even upon my slaves, both men and women,

in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.

Gospel

Matthew 28:17-20

When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

Sermon

The third article or movement of the Apostles Creed confesses the Holy Spirit as a foundational element of our faith.

*I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.*

The wind that moved over the water in the beginning, the pillar of fire leading the Israelites on the Exodus from Egypt, the impregnation of Mary, the descending dove upon Jesus at his baptism, and in today's text as a violent wind sweeping into presence of Jesus cloistered followers...resting above their heads as a tongue/a whip of a flame.

God's presence has manifested itself in numerous ways over the ages. The Holy Spirit is the action of God. It is the conduit by which God intercedes into creation so as to act upon you and I. The Holy Spirit is your ability to be in awe and wonder, your ability to be self-less, your ability to be giving and to forgive. The Holy Spirit is your ability to hear and absorb God's word, and the react to God's creation in ways that promote life and light. The Holy Spirit is anything

you do good. But most importantly, the good you do, the thoughts, words and deeds, **you** knowingly attribute them to the Holy Spirit's actions upon and through you. Why? Because **you** have come to recognize Jesus Christ as God's renewal of life, healing and forgiveness for all.

Martin Luther says it best about the Holy Spirit in his explanation of the Third Article of the Apostle's Creed, *I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.*

In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.

That is the theology. The Holy Spirit guides us in life-learning of God's grace-filled love for us in Jesus Christ, and leads us in hope-filled outward focused living on behalf of God's in-need-of-repair creation. The Holy Spirit's job is to move us from disbelief to belief; turning doubt into trust. The Holy Spirit's job is to shed light on/lead us toward our God-given abilities; enabling us to be all the better in tune with God's plan for each of us. The Holy Spirit calls us into being an instrument of God's goodness in Jesus Christ.

When this morning's texts are taken in chronological order, Matthew, and then Acts, we get a good sense for the arc of the life Jesus is calling the Disciples to, by saying to them, *Go and make disciples of all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.* 50 days out from the resurrection, and 40 days since ascending into heaven the once disciples, now Apostles receive the follow through on Jesus' commission. The Holy Spirit has arrived. It hasn't been hibernating, or lying dormant for that matter. The Holy Spirit has undoubtedly been working on the apostles these last 40 days. Some worshipped, and some doubted. Surely there were questions of what's next?

How will we know the time is right for us to come out of this room and speak of God's new promise in Jesus. What will we say when we emerge from this relatively quiet time? The world is a mess out there. Are they prepared to hear of radical hope and love for all? Is the world ready to trade in their military might and aggression for the cultivation of peace? Swords into plowshares, as the Prophet Isaiah says. When is the right time to say what needs to be said?

They say timing is everything. We have sayings that support it, *When the stars align...When pigs fly...Once in a blue moon...Even once upon a time* suggests that we listen up because something noteworthy occurred at a specific moment in time. The time had come for the Apostles. God's blue moon rose. God knew this to be the moment that the world would hear more about Jesus. God knew that this was the moment that Jerusalem would be ready to have the name Jesus echo through the streets again! God knew the apostles were ready to get on with the mission of Jesus commission. The time was right for the Holy Spirit it to awake their minds, convict their hearts and free their tongues and say Jesus lives! Or, maybe the timing wasn't right for either the Apostles or the awaiting world? Perhaps the day the violent wind rushed into their midst and rested upon their heads was a day like any other day. Their faith was no stronger or weaker the day prior. As for the world and Jerusalem, they were no less more in need of a word of hope than the day prior either. That day and moment would be the day.

That day Jesus followers would be seized by the power of the Holy Spirit in dramatic fashion and begin the next act of God's mission in restoring all of creation.

It would continue with the Apostles having the ability to speak and understand as they never had ability before. Language would not be an obstacle. It's as if God is saying, *Speak up. You know the truth. You know my Son Jesus. He taught you how to treat one another with dignity. How to restore dignity. How to serve one another's needs. Because of Jesus, you now know how glorify my name. You know. My Spirit is within you. You know the story. You have the words. He gave you His life. There is no excuse. Speak. You are filled with the Holy Spirit.* It doesn't matter what they think they know or not. It doesn't matter how ill prepared they feel. Any fear of theirs is to be laid to rest. The Holy Spirit has given them what they need to move forward in bold faith. The Holy Spirit has endowed them with the heart, mind and soul to trust in God.

The Spirit's influence and perceived presence is quite varied. Professor and pastor Karl Jacobson sums up our understanding of the Holy Spirit best, "For humankind to identify the work of the Spirit is either in the 20/20 vision of hindsight, or an act of purest optimism; or do we call that trust?" We point to a blessed situation of the past or present and say, *that is the work of the Spirit*. Likewise, we attribute a blessing yet to unfold as the work of the Spirit. It is a good practice; it keeps our ego's in check.

It keeps us from possessing the Genesis of our actions, and attributing them to God.

Remember Martin Luther's words...*I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe.*

So where does all this Holy Spirit talk lead us Pastor Steve? Well, I hope it comforts you as well as challenges your comfort. We may not be all huddled together under one roof, 40 days since last seeing Jesus awaiting the promised Holy Spirit, while the world outside continues to unravel...but we aren't far from it. Our world, our country, God's people are still unraveling, breaking up, breaking within, breaking each other. You do not need me to remind you of what is wrong outside our windows, or the atrocities that occur behind closed doors. You are not oblivious to the tension, for the Spirit disturbs us with spiritual heartburn. What are we to do?

Peter tells us that God promises to pour the Spirit out upon all flesh. Prophecy of who God is, the good God does will for all peoples. Visions and dreams will come to be. Today, in this day and age, we need those visions and dreams. The Holy Spirit does not hibernate. The Holy Spirit has not taken a vacation these last 6 months. The Holy Spirit has been waiting for the moment of opportunity. The Holy Spirit awaits your outstretched heart and mind. We need those visions. We need those dreams. In the 6 months since we last gathered under this roof, the Holy Spirit has been doing what it does best; giving us the ability to believe that Jesus is our calm in the midst of so much uncertainty.

Many of you have gone through much pain and heartache, frustration, health setbacks, new health concerns, old health concerns, and age of life transitions. Thanks be to God, for the Spirit gives you the spirit to live life and have hope beyond your sorrows. And in the last 6

months since we last gathered there has been developer interest in our property. Visions and dreams brothers and sisters, visions and dreams.

What has the Spirit been up to in you? What will God have us to do and be when we return to sanctuary worship? Is your heart open to the Spirit's next action upon Nativity. Will it be church as usual for you? Is your faith primed for whatever is next for Nativity? Doing church, being the church body will indeed look different going forward. Visions and dreams of caring for those in need, advocating, sheltering, empowering, educating...loving! There is so much good from God to speak of. The Spirit will guide us. We know the story. We have the words of eternal life. The time is right. God's timing is always right. Peter was right, the Spirit has been poured on us. Now what are **you** going to do about it? Amen.