

Opening Sentence: Jesus calls us to go and make disciples, baptizing them in the triune name of God.

Prayer of Adoration: God our creator, earth has many languages, but your gospel proclaims your love to all the nations in one heavenly tongue. Make us messengers of the good news that, through the power of your Spirit, all the world may unite in one song of praise; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. AMEN.

Sermon: Send Me

Scripture: Acts 2:1-21

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 it mean?" But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

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. And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire, and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." THIS IS THE WORD OF THE LORD!

Pentecost is the birthday of the Church. How long has God been planning this party? The poetry of Genesis 1 describes God's creative spirit blowing over the formless void, and Genesis 2 narrates the life-giving breath of God. Later, the Spirit appears in times of darkness and distress. While the one group of people of God sits in exile in Babylon and others gather the pieces of the shattered world of Israel, the prophet Isaiah (11:2) promises the coming of one upon whom this Spirit shall rest, the spirit of "Wisdom and understanding," of "counsel and might," of "knowledge and fear of the Lord." During the time of domination and abuse by the Roman Empire, oppression and judgement of the religious authorities, and elitism and slavery of the ruling classes, Luke records John the Baptist's promise of one who will baptize by the Spirit (3:16), and Jesus later agrees (Acts 1:2).

In the extensive planning of this Pentecostal party, the Spirit of God weaves together the generations through a Spirit that brings life out of death, hope out of despair. Folks sitting in their pews recognize the darkness and distress of the world. As we witness the growing gap between the rich and the poor, growing manifestations of poverty and unchecked disease, growing divisions between nations and within economies, and growing intolerance of any opinion or ideal other than our own, we celebrate our glimpses of the work of that Spirit, and we await again blowings of that fresh and life-giving Spirit.

After this long period of preparation, God's guest list to this Pentecostal party deserves attention. Who are **THEY** (2:1) who wait aimlessly in the upper room? Is the party limited to the eleven male disciples listed in Acts 1:13? Does the party also include "certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus," mentioned in Acts 1:14? Might other men and women who joined Jesus throughout his ministry be present?

In essence, the question of God's guest list raises the question of whether these Pentecostal disciples who become apostles are a fairly homogenous group of narrow representation or whether they are a larger group who embodies much more diversity in gender and culture. These questions become important as churches and denominations continue sometimes heated and divisive conversations about who may and who may not faithfully worship and serve in leadership positions. The interpreter's understanding of this guest list might shed light on the conversation about the inclusiveness of what is called the "Priesthood of believers."

At the beginning of the story, one can imagine the disciples moping in their state of abandonment, not for the first time. They walk with Jesus for up to three years before the evil powers steal him on the cross. Then through the miracle of resurrection he appears and walks again with them, only to abandon them at the ascension. Now, they wait disappointed again.

As the story progresses, we can sense a feeling of jealousy and inadequacy creeping into the questions of the "devout Jews" (v5), who wonder why they are not invited guest at this party. We also understand the tension of the "crowd gathered" (v6), as they experience with awe and cynicism the sudden communicational versatility of these brothers and sisters. By the end, the disciples face the uncertain future of ministry in an unwelcoming world separated from one another and from the corporeal presence of Jesus.

Some of these disciples have been training for this for up to three years as they learn by their mistakes and Jesus' examples, through the challenge of parables told and crosses to be borne. Now this birthday party has the feeling of a graduation party. The promise of the Spirit is finally fulfilled, and they receive their authentic voices, with which they will enter an unwelcoming world preaching and living the love of Jesus.

Let me change my vibe and show another part of Pentecost.

Fifty days after Passover, Festival of weeks, (Pentecost). The group of 120 people were gathered together; as is told to us in Acts 1:15; it is a group just like we have here, BELIEVERS. Then a mighty wind, a violent wind filled the house they were in, tongues of fire surrounded them, and a tongue touched each of them, and they were filled with the Holy Spirit. They each spoke in other languages so that everyone could understand them, all could hear what the believers said.

What do you think the believers were supposed to do with this newfound Holy Spirit?

Have you ever been sent on a mission, task, errand, or a chore? Given a task by an authority and sent out? Your boss wants you to close a deal, Wife wants you to take out the trash, Uncle Sam wants you to defend our country, your parents want you to plant weed between you and the neighbors, I Mean WEED between you and the neighbors. Raise your hand if you have ever been sent on a mission.

I am going to go back before Jesus started his final tour; Luke 10:1-11; 16-20, (read).

This is way before Jesus was crucified; Luke 23. Jesus sent 70 disciples (believers), not the 12 apostles (Super Stars). The Bible is full of overgrown stories of great weeds, as well as stories of harvest of wheat, seeding, planting, Harvesting. Imagine planting your hands; (Bare Hands) into the soil; feel the texture, the warmth, rub it between your palms, smell it. The Harvest is Plenty, but the laborers are few.

As in real life it is spiritual, an analogy of life of faith, an analogy for god's great plan. (Kingdom of God). Jesus sends the 70 out everywhere he plans to go. To prepare the people for his coming. Will the trip be easy? NO! Jesus tells them they will be lambs among wolves. There will be places they will not be Welcomed. Planting the seeds for the Kingdom of God is not always easy. Planting seeds for the Kingdom of God has HEARTACHE; That person close to you that you just can't get to believe; Planting seeds for the kingdom of God has its HEADACHE; the proof of God's miracles is right there, and they don't see it; it's like a person laboring in the hot sun for many hours, laboring in the garden trying to get something to grow. (Can you relate to that?). The 70 are not superstars like the apostles; they were normal people, with families, jobs, and concerns.

Isaiah 6:8 says, "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" and I said, "Here am I; send me!" Marines have a saying: If not me, Then who? (Travis Manion). Leaders promise not to limit their discipleship to the space within the four walls of the church, but to see their ordination as a spiritual blessing overflowing into their everyday lives.

As this occurs, the fruits of their relationship with Christ become apparent to others. They promise to live publicly as people of conscience, so their lives become a positive example to others and ultimately sow peace, unity, and purity in the church as well.

God sends us to people at school, work, friends and family, neighbors, the waitress at your table in the restaurant, in line at the grocery store, the stranger on the side of the road. We are to talk to these people, sure we may make mistakes sometimes, but we ask for forgiveness, and carry on.

At Communion each time we ask for forgiveness, and each time we take communion, we are saying "Send Me".

As a preacher will I be there when someone needs to show kindness at your school or work? NO. Will I be there to settle an argument between your friends? NO. Will I be there when someone needs to talk about faith to their child or family member? NO. There are dozens of chances each day for you to say; "Here am I; send me."

There are dozens of chances every day. "Here am I; send me"; allow me to help with the Harvest of the Kingdom of God. Allow me to get my hands dirty and labor for you. The harvest is plenty, the laborers are few. Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER:

Lord God of the nations, you have revealed your will to all people and promised us your saving help. May we hear and do as you command, that the power of evil may be overcome by the gift of your healing grace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever. AMEN.

BENEDICTION:

This narrative challenges our congregation to find the Spirit within them and to locate, claim, and utilize their authentic voices, gifts, and skills with which to love and serve. This Spirit that swept through the house gifted more than those disciples at Pentecost and the disciples with whom we minister today. That Spirit has been loosed into the world, and it's creative and life-giving power is now the gift of families and communities, of churches, and of nations. GO IN PEACE!