

Sunday, May 31, 2020, Pentecost

From Pastor Stephen, Zion Lutheran Church, Pembroke, ON

Welcome: A warm welcome to all gathered together as one body by the Spirit of God. We celebrate Pentecost, the 50th day of the Easter season, rejoicing in the promised gift of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church.

We sing our Gathering Song ELW 800 **Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart** (all verses)

The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

Let us pray: O God, on this day you open the hearts of your faithful people by sending into us your Holy Spirit. Direct us by the light of that Spirit, that we may have a right judgment in all things and rejoice at all times in your peace, through Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Acts 2: 1 – 4, 12 -17

A reading from Acts.

When the day of Pentecost had come, the apostles 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.

All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “What does this 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.’”

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 104: Lord, Send Out Your Spirit

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12: 12 – 13

A reading from First Corinthians.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

Song to Welcome the Gospel: ELW 397 **Loving Spirit (v.1, 2, 4 & 5)**

Gospel: John 20: 19 - 22

The holy gospel according to John. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Homily: We first meet the Holy Spirit in the opening lines of Genesis, when the Holy Spirit moves over the face of the earth as the wind, the holy breath of God...breathing life into all creation.

For the Hebrews, wind, spirit, breath, were all one word and were really inseparable. Whenever you used that word one way, the other meanings still remained. It was not a poverty of language, but instead a richness, as the Hebrew way of speaking about the Holy Spirit moved well beyond the limits of language to include more than we could ever possibly imagine...never limiting God in any way.

In so many of our stories in the Hebrew scriptures, God is present in one way or the other...as wind, living breath of God and spirit. The breath of life in us is very breath of God, the wind that moves the leaves of trees is the breath of God still blowing over the face of the earth. The Spirit of God is everywhere, in everything that lives and has its being on this earth. But not only in the powerful and mighty acts of God; but in the silence as well, and in the still small voice. That is all a part of the mystery of the Spirit of God, and the undeniable presence of God in our midst in all times and in all places.

But the Spirit was even more for the Hebrew people. It was nothing less than the wisdom of God at work in our world and our lives. In Proverbs and Psalms, the Spirit is portrayed as Lady Wisdom, proclaiming to all that we must listen to the voice of God, calling us all to faithful integrity...calling us not to be simple,

foolish and stubborn, but faithful and wise. Part of holy wisdom was to see God present everywhere, in everything, in all of creation...and to remember that all of life, and even our faith, is a precious gift of God.

In Ezekiel, the Spirit would also bring dead bones back to life. Even in death the Spirit would continuously breathe into us the gift of life... every moment of our lives and even in our death. For the Spirit of God is all about life and hope, promise and fulfillment and the unending grace of God.

In our Christians scriptures, in the story of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit comes to those in hiding and fear and gives them courage and the ability to live the faith the Spirit first lit in their hearts. The Holy Spirit fans the flames of its own fire. If our faith blazes, it is because the breath of God has kindled the spark that God has planted in our hearts as a holy and precious gift.

For us, it all begins at Baptism, when we joyfully know and proclaim that the faith in us is all a gift from God, an indwelling of the Holy Spirit that breaths and moves through our lives. No gift will ever be more important than our Baptism, nor that significant...nothing else will ever match it, even come close to it.

And the Spirit comes bearing many gifts, as we are told in St. Paul's Letters to the Corinthians, all of them needed by the church. And the greatest gift will be for us to love as Christ has loved us...and that will make all the other gifts that the Spirit of God gives us even more valuable, because those gifts will be used to reflect the love of God for us and for all. If we do something that does not reflect the unconditional love of God, then it is not a gift and work of the Holy Spirit within us. Be careful, St. Paul tells us, what you call a gift of the Spirit...for God's Spirit will always be seen in this world as life-giving and life

affirming. When we realize this, every breath we take will be the breath of God in our lives and all that we do that is faithful will be a work of the Holy Spirit of God within us.

May God bless us this day as we celebrate the gift of the Spirit to the Church and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the lives of all God's children. May we ever rejoice in that gift and praise the God whose breath is our breath of life, who moves us, surprises us with grace upon grace, and fills our hearts with the joy of sharing God's life, now and forever. Amen.

Hymn ELW 398 **Holy Spirit, Truth Divine (v. 1, 4, & 5)**

Prayers of the Faithful:

As we celebrate Pentecost, we thank you gracious God, for the gift of the Holy Spirit, who leads, guides, and inspires us to do the holy work of the Church. We rejoice in your presence, filled with wonder and delight at the mystery of your Spirit's life among us.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We thank you for the gift of peace in our lives, even in the midst of anxiety and fear. We place our hope and trust in you. Give us visions and dreams for the future, and faith and courage to live in the present as your beloved ones.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the Church during this time when we must be apart from each other. Bless all we do as we strive to be faithful, even when what we do seems clumsy and inadequate. Help us remember that we shall see each other again in your presence and that our hearts will once again be filled with joy. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our world, troubled by illness, plagued with fear and despair. Grant wisdom and skill to all who work on vaccinations and treatments, and watch over those who are ill and those who care for the sick. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for our loved ones who we cannot be with us today. We pray for all in our parish who are mourning – for the Rutz family as they mourn for Willis and all who are ill, and for Murray Schutt, recovering from surgery. Grant them healing and peace. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

All these things, and whatever else you see that we need, grant us, gracious God.

Gathering all our prayers into one, we pray the prayer that you have taught us:

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. **Amen.**

Blessing:

May our Gracious God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless us and keep us in the Risen Life of Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Sending Song: ELW 400 God of Tempest (all verses)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**