

Pentecost, June 5, 2022 (Jn 14:8-17, 25-27; Ps 104:24-35; Acts 2:1-21; Rom 8:14-17)

With a sound like a mighty, rushing wind, tongues like fire descended on the heads of the disciples, and they began to speak in foreign languages. And thousands of visitors to Jerusalem (for the Jewish festival of Pentecost) began to *hear*, in their own languages, the good news of God in Jesus Christ!

Can you imagine? Picture yourself in a foreign country, surrounded by people who've never even heard English, and all of a sudden you can understand everything they're saying. It gives me goosebumps just to think about it. *Especially* if what they're saying is that God loves the world so much, he sent his only Son to save it! To save *us*. To save *everyone*!

The last time they'd seen their resurrected Lord, he told them to stay in Jerusalem until they were baptized by the Holy Spirit. They wanted to know if he would now restore the kingdom of God to Israel—if he, the one they'd called *Messiah*, would finally do what they expected Messiah to do: throw down the oppressive Romans and drive them out of the Holy Land, raise up the downtrodden poor, and restore *their* kingdom to glory in the eyes of all the surrounding nations.

Instead, Jesus gave them their *marching orders*: **You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth** (1:8). Their faith—their precious relationship with Jesus—was to be shared with everyone, everywhere.

Within a few days of that encounter, the church was born! The disciples were gathered together. They were probably still in that Upper Room where they'd shared their Last Supper with Jesus. And suddenly there was a **sound like a violent wind from heaven, and tongues of fire resting on each one of them—and all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, empowered by the Holy spirit.**

These were the same disciples who'd walked with Jesus on the long roads of his ministry. Simple working men, not highly educated, waiting for Jesus to save them all by transforming their world. Their credentials weren't very impressive:

- Peter, always rash to speak, stumbling and bumbling and trying to get it right—Peter, the one Jesus called *Satan*!
- James and John, who begged Jesus to let them sit beside him when he came into his kingdom, who wanted to call down fire from heaven to destroy an unwelcoming Samaritan town.
- Thomas, doubts and all.
- Philip, who never seemed to get it that Jesus and the Father were one.
- Matthew, who'd been a tax collector, an enemy of the people!

These disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit—*not* with wine! These were the disciples who preached the good news of God in Jesus Christ to thousands of people that first Christian day of Pentecost.

Here's the context: *Pentecost* was a Jewish holy day, one of the three major festivals of the Jews. Everyone who could make the journey to Jerusalem brought the first fruits of their harvest to God at the temple there.

So the disciples didn't yet need to go out to the ends of the earth, or even to Judea and Samaria. The whole Jewish world was right there in Jerusalem. They had come from all over the Middle East to offer their gifts to God. But God had a different idea, and instead they became the foundation of the church—the *ekklesia*. (That's Greek for "those *called out* to become followers and worshipers of Jesus, the Christ, the *true* Messiah." While Greek was the common language of major cities in the Middle East, those who lived in smaller villages and towns most likely spoke only their local languages.)

The message of the disciples that day must have been one heck of a sermon! Luke writes that about **3000 people were baptized that day, and they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayer** (2:41-42).

Three thousand new Christians, filled with enthusiasm for their salvation through Jesus the Christ, wanting to learn more about their faith, enjoying being together with other Christians, eating and praying together, sharing everything in common. *Wow!*

What would happen if the Holy Spirit blew through St. John/St. Stephen and set us on fire for *living our faith*? What would happen if you allowed yourself to be *inspired, breathed into*, by the Holy Spirit? What would happen if your status-quo, every-day life became so filled with *God* you couldn't contain it?

That's a scary question to ask Lutherans because we are, after all, the *frozen chosen*. We don't talk about our faith. Especially not to people who aren't members of our congregation. But remember Jesus' words to his disciples on the day of his resurrection: **Peace be with you. . . . As the Father has sent me, so I send you.**

Peace be with you. What is that peace Jesus gave his disciples, the peace they were to bestow on the whole world?

- Peace is living in relationship with God, the God we see and know in Jesus, the God who created all people.
- Peace is knowing that in the cross God shows his undying and insurmountable love for us and for *all*.
- Peace is faith that our sins are forgiven as often as we ask for forgiveness, no matter how terrible our sinning has been.

- Peace is Jesus washing our feet and saying, **now love each other as I've loved you**
- Peace is celebrating our baptism, when we were washed clean, *sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever.*
- Peace is remembering—by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit—all that *God has done, is doing, and promises still to do* to save the world, not to condemn it.

Without speaking a word of evangelism, you can share that peace of God by letting it become your own.

Now the day of Pentecost has come. Imagine: Suddenly from heaven there comes a sound like the blowing of a violent wind, filling the entire sanctuary where you're sitting. Can you let that Spirit fill your heart? Will you let that Spirit lead you out of your comfort zone, into a way of life on fire for God?

You don't have to do it alone! That same Holy Spirit who fills your heart will always be with you. Remember *Emmanu-el*, God-with-us. *Always.*

Thanks be to God!