

Will you pray with me please? May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts and minds be acceptable in your sight O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Pentecost may be one of the most important and least understood of the holy days we celebrate in the life of the church. It is easy for us to understand and get our minds around Christmas, we know what shepherds are, we can visualize three wise men, and we understand that angels would be singing in the sky to proclaim the birth of God's son. We might not get all of the intricacies of a virgin birth, but in the long run that is easy to gloss over because we totally understand the light of the world, the love of God coming to earth in the birth of Jesus.

And we get Easter, we can imagine the despair of denial by ones friends, the brutality of death on the cross, and even through it may mystify us, we can celebrate the meaning of an empty tomb, thankful for the forgiveness

that it promises us. Even the ascension makes sense to us, Jesus' time on earth is done, and he needs to get back to heaven.

But this Holy Spirit thing; what's up with that? Instead of something that makes sense, something we can understand we get a mighty wind, fire falling from the heavens and people speaking in tongues. AND we are all supposed to be excited about it when mostly we don't understand it and wish we could just move on without it.

Pentecost is a radically important day. It is the conclusion to the resurrection story. After rejoicing over the risen Christ the disciples get the news that Jesus is going to leave them again. He promises to return and he promises to send an advocate, the Holy Spirit. It is not until the Spirit comes at Pentecost that the work of Holy Week is finished.

All these many years later we have to pull all of this stuff, the dramatic entrance into Jerusalem, the last supper, the arrest, the trial, the crucifixion, the death, the resurrection, the ascension, and Pentecost, we have to pull all of these mysterious, miraculous things together to get the fullest picture of this new creation, this new dawn, this new day otherwise we are going to Miss Out!

From the moment Jesus entered into Jerusalem riding on a donkey, the disciples expectations have been upended, recalibrated, frustrated and fulfilled far beyond anything that they could have ever imagined. The same holds true now for Pentecost. Whatever the disciples were expecting when Jesus told them the Spirit was coming, you can bet that not one of them imagined, not one of them expected what they got: divided tongues of fire, rapid onset foreign language fluency, and chaos in the streets of Jerusalem that apparently looked like some sort of drunken college

party gone wild all taking place at nine-o-clock in the morning.

We have to remember that the 40 days between the resurrection and this day of Pentecost, the disciples were mostly holed up in a room feeling defeated and discouraged. They had a couple of interesting encounters with the risen Christ, but they were a little put out that he wasn't stepping in and making everything better. He was preparing them for the future, a future that would include him but not include him, a future where they would remain connected to God through the Holy Spirit...remember Jesus's job was to bring them back to God, the Holy Spirit was coming to keep them with God. But mostly, and this was the most frightening, they were going to have to figure things out themselves with the Holy Spirit to guide them. Jesus had done all of the teaching he was going to be able to do and now they

needed to be large and in charge and they were really not sure how they felt about that.

I have no idea what plans these disciples had been making for their future, for the future of the faith up there in that room, I don't even know if they had any plans at all, nothing had been drawn out or written down, probably because nobody in their right minds would consider anointing a whole house full of prophets in the span of one day. Nobody, that is, except the Spirit of God.

Please consider how world-changing this is for a moment. Up to this point in God's story, only a small select few have ever been given the Spirit of God, Saul got some, David got a turn with the spirit for a while, the prophets had a turn, but it was all very contained, almost like a party trick that is pulled out when needed.

But today, all of a sudden, the Spirit comes whooshing in and starts anointing people right and left and within a

day there were 3,000 new followers of Jesus in Jerusalem. The Spirit left the building and ran freely through the streets opening people's eyes and minds and hearts to the incredible transformative power of God, and the all-consuming, unconditional love of Jesus.

It's Pentecost! And we celebrate that the Spirit of God has been released into the world, not holed up and contained in a room, or a person, but set free to run amok in our lives. The Spirit does not limit us, but expands us and why should we expect anything different? It is the breath of the Spirit that lingered over the waters and called the world into being, it is the breath of the Spirit that carried the words of the prophets, and it is the breath of the Spirit that raised Jesus. This is the same Spirit that falls down freely on each of us to create new life.

In our opening song today we sang about the Spirit of Gentleness, but there is no gentle breath of God, light airy Spirit in Pentecost. The wind, the breath of God roars in,

thunders in, whooshes in, to breathe new life into the gathered believers. When we allow ourselves to be open to it, to really and truly be open to it we will gladly jump into that God stream and allow ourselves to be turned and tumbled and whooshed into a new life in Christ, a new life in the Spirit!

I think we all have to admit that we get caught up in trying to keep our lives the same... trying to keep the church the same. We get bogged down and mired in rules that we have imposed on ourselves, on our worship.

People made rules to keep us all boxed into a certain way of doing things. We get so caught up in emphasizing “order” that we forget “ardor”, emphasizing freedom and joy and freshness of life in the Spirit of God. We need to be in the grasp of the Holy Spirit; the same Spirit that encourages innovation and creativity that leads us to be the church of the created and always creating.

I love that phrase “in the grasp of the Holy Spirit”. We talk about being in the palm of God’s hands, we rest safely in the arms of Jesus, but very rarely do we talk about being in the grasp of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has the power to take and seize us eagerly, and not just take us, but hold us and embrace us and it’s not just physical, because the Holy Spirit lays a hold of our mind with power and energy. And when that happens great things happen.

The idea of being grasped by the Holy Spirit excites me, it invokes a feeling of great power, and it provokes me to seek more, I am tempted to throw out my arms and shout “Come Holy Spirit come, breath on me the breath of God, fill me with the power of love and move me where you need me to go.”

And THAT is why Pentecost is important. Because we are not equipped to be who God wants us to be in this new world moving toward new creation until the Spirit comes

whooshing in through the room to grasp us. Pentecost is the day that makes the future of the church possible.

Without Pentecost we are just people who tell Jesus's story. With Pentecost we are the people who live into Jesus story

We have no idea what the Spirit is going to do next and we are not even going to pretend that we do. And we are also not going to limit our assumptions about what the Spirit might or might not do in our lives or in the life of the church. The one thing that we do know for sure is that the Spirit is bringing us towards a new dawn, a new day, a new creation and whatever it is, it's going to be good!

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