

May 23, 2021

**“Come, Holy Spirit, Come!”**  
Sermon by Rev. Susan Drake

Psalm 104 30-34

*When you send forth your spirit, they are created; and you renew the face of the ground. May the glory of the Lord endure forever; may the Lord rejoice in God’s works—who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke.*

*Singing - I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being. May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the Lord.*

Acts 2:1-8, 12-18

*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? ... 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, “People 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.*

## Sermon “Come, Holy Spirit, Come!”

Happy Birthday Church! Today we celebrate Pentecost marking when the Holy spirit descended on the apostles in a fiery tornado type of situation.

Pentecost means 50 in Greek. Now this was already a holiday in Jewish Tradition because it is 50 days after Passover. For Christians it is now 50 days after Easter. In Judaism it is now primarily known as Shavuot. It celebrates the first fruits of the crops and also marks the giving of the ten commandments to God’s people by Moses.

I tend to love Pentecost because it celebrates the Holy Spirit. For many women theologians we are particularly drawn to this manifestation of God because the gender of the pronoun used for spirit in Hebrew and Aramaic, Jesus language, was feminine. That’s right, to the Hebrew people and to Jesus the Holy Spirit was womanly. Now I don’t believe that the Holy Spirit is a woman, I don’t think The Holy Spirit, or God for that matter is either male or female but it is interesting to me that it wasn’t until the last century before that fact was ever discussed.

But I don’t want us to just hear the story of Pentecost in the usual way, “Happy birthday Church, the flames came down and touched the apostles so all those men speaking every language could go and evangelize the world and that’s how the church became the church.” There is a lot more to it than that.

I want to remind you of a passage we have talked about before in Galatians about the Holy Spirit;

“For you are all children of God in the Spirit.  
There is no Jew or Greek, There is no slave or free,  
There is no male and female; For you are all one in the Spirit.”

A professor of mine Rev. Dr. Stephen Patterson argues that these words were the first Christian creed. That Paul was actually quoting a creed from the earliest years of the Jesus movement, said by those who were the first to be baptized.

So before the gospel writers shaped the story through their lens, before Paul put his spin on Christianity, before the Roman Empire adopted it as it’s official religion (thereby creating an entire culture where you claimed to be Christian because it was safe and politically expedient), before the Roman Church became about power, politics and control, before they wrote the women out of the story of our faith and made the Holy Spirit male, before the crusades, before Luther, before people were executed, or shamed, or humiliated for not being Christian or for divorce, or for being different, before Jesus was taken hostage by the religious right, before Jimmy Swaggert, Tammy Faye Baker, and Pat Robertson there was this...first...right after Jesus.

“For you are all children of God in the Spirit.  
There is no Jew or Greek, there is no slave or free,  
there is no male and female; for you are all one in the Spirit.”

This statement is radical now and was extremely radical then.

But that is how early Christians experienced Jesus, that was the message of equality and identity that was the most important message to Jesus's followers. The first creed of our faith was "We are one in the spirit". That doesn't mean that everyone agreed or lost themselves in that experience but it meant that they were bound together by the Spirit of God.

Those early bands of Jesus' followers weren't perfect but they were loving communities, where everyone was seen as equal, where they shared their resources, fed the widows and the orphans, sang hymns of joy and praise.

The message being that in this community we are all one in the Spirit, we take care of one another, we accept one another and we shed our worldly identities whether it be wealthy Roman citizen, landowner, priest, leper or prostitute. They shed all those worldly identities and became one in the Spirit knowing they were equals in the sight of God.

Now you all remember the story of the tower of babel in Genesis. It was a vain attempt of this ancient town to rise above all their neighbors but God squashed their plan and they all ran away speaking different languages so they couldn't understand one another. The Pentecost is a narrative that reverses that original story. When the Spirit descends, one of the gifts in her wake is that the apostles could now speak in a way that the message of Jesus' love and equality could now be understood by ALL people, in every language.

At the time it wasn't about converting people to a certain religion, it was about sharing that simple message to everyone so that they could understand. *We are one in the Spirit*. You can shed the struggles, the prejudice, the pressures and the worries of this world and join us in the Spirit of God.

I want us to be a Pentecost People that reclaim in everything we do that message of Jesus. I want us to figure out what it is that is happening around us now that we need to speak to, who do we need to hear and try to understand in their language.

The council approved me forming a task force that looks at every aspect of how we present ourselves to the community, whether it's our online presence, or to people driving by and seeing our building and our sign to every single person that walks through our doors. It is called our Re-imagining Task Force. I want us to always represent ourselves as a Pentecost people who live in the spirit of God, who care about each other and people we don't know yet, to keep asking this question, who do we need to hear and understand.

I want the Holy Spirit to blow in this place and put a fire in each of us. I want it to help us play a little part in restoring and reforming Christianity to its original essence while at the same time equipping us for an unknown future full of possibilities.

I heard a friend the other day talking about how her church wouldn't declare itself O&A because it was too polite and didn't want to offend their neighbors but I believe you can be and already have been both polite and prophetic.

You can treat others with respect even when their opinions and beliefs have no merit. You can change people's hearts in a loving way by showing them a new Christianity where men and women are leaders, where everyone is welcome whether they are gay, straight, or everything in between. Where people of all skin tones feel equal and loved and cherished in our midst, where no one is shamed for who they are or whether they are differently abled, or in need of dietary accommodations, or struggle with mental health issues, ad infinitum.

I want us to be known as the church where our sons and daughters prophesize and see visions of a better world and our old men shall dream dreams of a better world. Where it is obvious that the Holy spirit has been poured out all over each of us and and we are so full of the wonder of it all that we seem like we are drunk with joy even though it is early in the morning. May we all be one in the spirit. AMEN

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