

Acts 2:1-21 (New International Version)

¹When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ²Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

⁵Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. ⁷Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? ⁸Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? ⁹Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹(both Jews and converts to Judaism Cretans and Arabs—we hear them

declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" ¹²Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

¹³Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

¹⁴Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ¹⁵These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷" 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. ¹⁸Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. ¹⁹I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke.

²⁰The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. ²¹And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

This is the Word of God and it can be trusted.

Thanks be to God.

Let Us Pray

Glorious God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

We go into this day knowing your Spirit dwells within us. May your Counselor make us wise and help us understand what it means to know you. May the Spirit's fire ignite our hearts so that we understand the hope of being chosen by God. May we discover the glorious blessings we share together with all God's people. Open our hearts, our mind and our ears to Your Word today that we may learn more about Your will and plans for us.

In Christ Name We Pray. Amen

Have you ever had one of those days when you just wished you hadn't gotten out of bed, or had at least taken a different route to work? The kind of day has you rushing in to work early for a meeting. Once you've awoken an hour early to ensure that everything goes smoothly, you find that you had forgotten to go by the store and get milk for your coffee the night before. Despite the coffee fiasco, you get a good start and soon find that new highway construction began today and this will lengthen your

usual travel time into work. You finally arrive, just minutes before your meeting begins and you find that the meeting you were rushing in to attend has been rescheduled at the last minute and you'd have to rush in again tomorrow just as you had to today.

The bible tells of many who have experienced the same sort of mornings. Imagine Abram. Just sitting around, spending his golden years enjoying the company of his wife and his nieces and nephews and then God comes along and presents an entirely different retirement plan – a plan which included children of his own and moving to a new and distant land. Many who read this story may think to themselves if he had been smart he wouldn't have gone. He'd have gone back into his tent and closed the flap. He would have left the bearing and nurturing of children to young people. But he didn't.

Then there is Moses. While taking his morning stroll through the he encountered a burning bush. Curiosity got the best of him, and as a result of his morning walk, he spent the next few months trying to convince Pharaoh to 'let his people go' and the

rest of his life wandering around in the wilderness. I can hear Moses now saying, 'why oh why didn't I sleep in that morning instead of going out for a walk.' It reminds me of Cypher's words to Neo in the Matrix when he said, 'I know what you're thinking, 'cause right now I'm thinking the same thing. Actually, I've been thinking it ever since I got here: Why oh why didn't I take the BLUE pill?'

Imagine Mary; young, unmarried, hoping she would get married, settle down, have 1.75 children and live happily ever after. Answering the angel's call would mean ridicule, uncertainty and perhaps heartache. I'm sure many told her that she should have listened to her fear and said, 'no.' Alas, she did not and offered herself for God's greater purpose and we all know what happened next.

Lastly, take a look at any one of the disciples who decided to leave their jobs and follow after some man named Jesus. Yeah, they had a great time; learning about God, seeing firsthand the miracles of Jesus and even seeing Jesus throw the merchants out of the temple as he over turned their tables. Then Jesus got

himself killed. They denied knowing him and were afraid, and then he wasn't dead anymore. They were reunited with the Jesus and just as they had accepted him back into their lives, he left them again this time, but this time he ascended into Heaven. What must have been going through their minds? Surely they should have backed out long ago and minded their own business.

Just a few days later, the disciples found themselves gathered together in Jerusalem; amongst those celebrating the Feast of Weeks. The Feast was a Jewish festival at which first fruits were offered to God. It had been 50 days since the celebration of the Passover, a time known as Pentecost from the Greek word *pentekoste*, meaning the 50th day. During this time, they found the Spirit of God upon them, forcing them to make fools of themselves in the marketplace. Again, they must have thought they had made some mistake along the way. With this new Spirit, however, they experienced a new strength and boldness they had not experienced before. They had said, 'yes' and they had followed Jesus and they were now faithful to carry on just as they had been instructed to do so while Jesus spoke to

them about the vines and the branches and as he had prayed for them in the Garden of Gethsemane. He reminded them that they were being sent into the world just as he had been sent into the world. For their sake, he had made himself ready to serve that they could be ready for their service of the truth. (John 17:18-19). The disciples couldn't just simply walk away. They couldn't because they had encountered not only the physical manifestation of God in Jesus Christ, but they now had encountered the Spirit of the living God. They had been transformed and they went, they followed and they acted in faithfulness. As a result of their faithfulness to carry on, we today celebrate an organization that is now nearly 2000 years old.

During the Christmas season, we celebrate the birth of our risen Savior Jesus Christ. Likewise, today, at Pentecost we celebrate the birth of the Christian church. Though the two events are seemingly different, they are in fact inseparable. In order for the church to be formed, it needed the life and teaching of Jesus. As I have stated before, it was not Jesus death on the

cross that provides us with the foundation of our faith, but rather it was His resurrection and willingness to come back to us. Death provided Jesus with the means to return to His Father, however, it was necessary that the church experience the resurrected Jesus alive as a sign of God's power over sin and death. In order for the people to be inspired and empowered for the 'long haul' they needed a renewed experience of the Spirit. The disciples had known the Spirit's work before but it had always been in the presence and coaching of Jesus. They needed to know that it was for them, that the Spirit could work in them and through them apart from the physical presence of Jesus just as it had while he was with them.

I am not suggesting that for all of them there were not times of doubt and fear, because there were. Just as Peter had denied Christ on the eve of His Crucifixion and as Thomas had doubted His Resurrection, biblical record makes it quite clear that those who followed the teachings of Jesus continued to do so, just as we find ourselves doing so today. The difference is that they no longer found themselves with their heads in the sand or

in the clouds, but rather they acted in faith, just as we all are to act in faith today.

Back in the midst of time, people forgot their call to worship God, they had forgotten the examples given by Abraham, Noah and Moses. Even after God had provided manna for the Israelites in the desert, they fell away from Him and began to find themselves doubting God and worship Pagan idols. Time and time again people denied their God and instead made monuments that gave praise and glory to their own doing. The book of Genesis tells us that the people attempted to build a tower to heaven and that this Tower of Babel became a reminder that people were no longer able to communicate with one another as their languages became confused. Just as Jesus brought about a reversal of Adams fall in the Garden; we read in Acts that Pentecost following Jesus ascension served as a reversal of this confusion. That is, many people in Jerusalem during Pentecost were able, for whatever reason, to hear and understand the preaching on that day. Mankind's inability to stay focused on God has resulted in language barriers of chaos and confusion. Now on

the day of Pentecost, just as Jesus provided reconciliation with the Father through the reversal of Adam's sin in the Garden, the Spirit provided reconciliation with the Father and one another through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The point here is not that those present spoke in other tongues, rather the point is that the 'preaching' resulted in a symbolic unity of understanding, in a unity of the world's people that had not happened for thousands of years. Words are never as important as the message. Indeed, the message we proclaim relies far more on a sense of presence and action than it does on words, per se. St. Francis once said, "Witness often and use words rarely." Here in the Pentecost story of Acts, we see that it isn't the words, but the familiarity of the message. The Jews knew the teachings of the Prophets and Peter spoke boldly to them concerning what it was they were seeing. Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is

what was spoken by the prophet Joel, 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

When I was much younger, I had the privilege of traveling one summer with a college youth ministry. During this time we saw many come to know Christ and we were enthused, filled with awe and spiritual strength. I felt as if I could have done anything. This sort of experience is sometimes referred to as 'mountain - top experiences.'

As I soon learned at the end of that summer, we cannot stay on the mountain top forever. We do, however, need to be able to go down that mountain and like Elijah, have the strength of the

Spirit to get us through the times of the wilderness. Often what happens to young people, or to anyone who has a powerful spiritual experience, is that there is no one to listen and it becomes dulled by the occurrences of day to day living.

As a Community of Faith, we need to nurture one another and encourage the telling the story, not just from the pulpit or from Bible Study but from each one of us at every opportunity; every chance we get. What was amazing about Pentecost was the message that came from unexpected sources – in many languages. The Jews were being ministered to by Galileans and there was familiarity about their teaching.

We need to open our eyes, our ears and our hearts to the call and presence of the Spirit. We need to share our own stories and do so in different ways. In ways that are familiar to those being ministered to. New Day Worship Center believes in the Priesthood of All Believers, that is, we are not all called to preach, but we are all called to minister. Some are called to visit the lonely or maybe feed the hungry. Some of us will share our experiences with the young and sometimes we will share our

journey with those that are on a similar path as our own. Send a card to a friend, or an email of encouragement. Buy breakfast for the person behind you in the drive through at McDonald's once a week or place your loose change in the water bottle in the foyer for our AIDS Athens project.

We are all called, of this there is no doubt. When we go forward answering the call – there may be a nudge, push, or shove from the Spirit of God. We may find ourselves going forward with a lump in our throat or butterflies in our stomachs. Don't think that Abraham, Moses, Mary and all the disciples weren't themselves scared, because they were. If we rely on God's promises and are faithful to abide in Him, that is to abide in His word and to seek His direction and call in our lives, then He is faithful to abide in us through the power of the Spirit. In fact, we may find those pesky butterflies being to fly in formation!

I once heard a hymn that sang, "we will speak God's words in foreign lands and all will understand . . ." Many like to think that in order to fulfill the Great Commission, you must seek out *literal* foreign lands. Though bringing the Gospel to the far

reaches of the World is important, I'd like to remind you today that anyone who is unfamiliar with the teachings of Christ and does not have a personally relationship with Christ will find His teaching and commands foreign. Foreign lands may be one street over from where you live. It may a community on the outskirts of your hometown or a table of individuals that eat in the same cafeteria or break room with you each day.

The GBLT Community is a foreign land. The GBLT Community is comprised of hundreds of thousands of individuals who have been ostracized and outcast by their local communities; politically, emotionally and spiritually many have been made to feel like foreigners in their own hometowns, places of business, in their own homes and even within their own faith communities. It is time that the church remember that Christ died for *all* and by all I mean *ALL*!

I am not referring to Social Justice Issues such as the right to marry or hate crime legislation, though these are important issues. I am referring to the words of Peter who said, 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' I am referring

to the hope and promise of a reconciled relationship with our God and Creator through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. I am referring not to equality through Social Justice, but rather equality through the love extended to us in the Gospel of John as he wrote, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life." Each and every one of you here today is a 'whosoever'. I'm a 'whosoever'. She's a 'whosoever'. He's a 'whosoever'. [*To Tune of Old Dr. Pepper Commercial "Be a Pepper . . .]* Wouldn't you like to be a 'whosoever,' too? 'Whosoever', be a 'whosoever'.

In closing today, please don't let yourself miss out on the reconciling power of the Spirit of God and the joy of being in relationship with Him. There was a sound like a mighty rushing wind, there was fire and flame and then there was discipleship. It is my prayer that we re-experience Pentecost and enthusiasm today. Amen.