

Its Pentecost! The day we celebrate the birthday of the church, when all of the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit. It must have seemed like quite a party since some folks that were there thought that the disciples were drunk! “They are filled with new wine.” It must have been a chaotic and risky moment in the lives of the disciples. The Spirit sent them into the streets of Jerusalem to engage other Jews with the message of God’s love manifested through Jesus Christ. Some were amazed, but others sneered. Those who couldn’t comprehend that God was doing something new in their midst, sneered. But others were amazed! They were curious as to what was happening.

Now Pentecost in the Jewish tradition was a festival, it was the celebration of the giving of the Law to Moses and bringing the first fruits to the Temple. The disciples receive the Holy Spirit and embody the first fruits of the Spirit through their very being. They are proclaiming the gospel with their lives! Pentecost is the day that we are reminded of the connection, the relationship between God, Jesus and humanity. Pentecost is all about connection, the connection between God and us. All of our readings today are about that mystical and mysterious connection between God and God’s people. It is a connection that many do not understand and some people even fear.

The Pentecost experience is not about being special or more holy than others. The disciples certainly were not special. They were average and in some cases, less than average. They were common people, fishermen, tax collectors and people with some dubious histories prior to following Jesus. Yet Jesus chose them to be the primary connectors to the world of the 1st century. Notice nowhere does it say that it was only the twelve who experienced the Spirit. Earlier in Acts, Luke wrote that, “all these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.” (Acts 1:14) On the day of Pentecost (the Jewish festival being celebrated in Jerusalem), the disciples were all together in one place. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit. All of them were filled with the Spirit to continue Christ’s **work** in the world.

In Luke’s Gospel, John the Baptist tells the people, “*I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*” (Luke 3:16) Jesus will baptize those who follow him with the Spirit and fire. Now at Pentecost that has happened! At our baptism we are sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked as Christ’s own forever. We are enlivened by the Holy Spirit to continue Christ’s work in our world. We are sent out into the world empowered by the Spirit to build connections, new relationships for people to know Christ. We are empowered to do and teach what Jesus commanded his disciples to do. That is the message of the *Book of Acts*.

The church needs people who are willing to be led by the Spirit. Actually, the world needs people who are willing to be led by the Spirit regardless of how the Spirit manifests itself. As I read this week, “we need the wind and fire of the Spirit to challenge our complacencies reset our priorities and move us out!”¹ As Christ’s church we are to

¹ Debie Thomas, <https://www.journeywithjesus.net/lectionary-essays/current-essay>

engage with others to allow God's Spirit to work through us as Christ's hands and feet in this world.

There is nowhere where the Holy Spirit is not present and everyone will be anointed. We may not be aware of it, but God's Spirit is everywhere all the time. Our challenge is to open our minds and our hearts to the indwelling energy of the Spirit that is there within each of us. The Spirit that is ready to transform us and our lives. The Spirit formed the church out of those first disciples. We as Christ the King will be changed and transformed as we follow the proddings of the Holy Spirit. As part of the Vitalization Project we are forming an Innovation Team to notice and identifying what is most important to the church right now. What are people curious about after this last year and going forward? Notice what strengths, opportunities and areas of weakness have presented themselves as we have lived through the pandemic.

In the midst of the hardships that have occurred, we can open ourselves to God's transforming Spirit and live from the knowledge that we are not alone. We can turn to that indwelling Spirit and let it guide us through all dimensions of the day and night. We can trust in God's direction for our church and our lives. When we do this, our lives and our community involvement are truly Spirit-led.² The Holy Spirit will challenge our existing norms and people's expectations, as it did on that first Pentecost. Are we willing as Christ's church to step out in new directions?

God's extravagant outpouring of the Spirit is amazing to me. So many today rarely understand or even believe in the power of the Holy Spirit, yet the Spirit more than anything else is the part of the Trinity that truly created the early church. It was only later that we started to build structures, hierarchies, and rules that the role of the Spirit began to be diminished. Certainly the enlightenment period was almost a death blow to the role of the Spirit in the modern church. Why? Probably because the Spirit is not something that can be proved by modern science, it can only be experienced. That is why we need to take the time to be with God in the midst of our busy lives. To pay attention to what the Spirit is calling us to do in the world. We are the first fruits of Christ's presence in our world.

The fire of the Holy Spirit that was poured out upon the first disciples is within us as well. When we take the time to notice and listen to the Spirit alive in our lives, we will burn with the same bright flame of energy and passion as those first disciples. People will notice what is happening. Will we as Christ the King let the Spirit set us on fire, energize us for the work that God is giving us to do? That is our challenge in these coming months, to discern how the Spirit is calling us to change and grow from our experiences of this past year. What blessings will we encounter as we listen and work together as Christ's Body in this place? As the Spirit transformed the lives of those first disciples may it also transform us!

² Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary - Feasting on the Word – Year A, Volume 3: Pentecost and Season After Pentecost 1 (Propers 3-16).

So today go forth today rejoicing in the power of the Spirit at work within and through us! Alleluia, Alleluia!