

**Pentecost 2017: Holy Trinity Church: June 4, 2017**

***Acts 2: 1-21 Asking, Seeking and Knocking on Heaven's Door***

**Preached**

**By**

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**In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

**The word spirit in both Hebrew and Greek means “breath” or “wind.” Both a breath of air and wind are appropriate images for the Holy Spirit doing its work in the world. In Genesis, God created Adam. God breathed into Adam the breath of life. In other words, God breathed into him His own Spirit. The point is that the Holy Spirit breathes new life into the believer and gives us the lift we need to witness to the presence of God in the world.**

**The word “Pentecost” is literally translated, “fiftieth day.” It was originally a Jewish holy day celebrated on the fiftieth day after the Sabbath of the Passover week. Pentecost was a major festival that drew Jews from all over the Mediterranean region into Jerusalem for the celebration.**

**On the Day of Pentecost the apostles were also in Jerusalem, where they were gathered together in a house. We would need Cecil B. DeMille with Hollywood special effects to do justice to what happened next. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the house, and the Apostles saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. Suddenly they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit enabled them. This phenomenon spilled out into the streets and attracted a crowd. Remember, Jews from all over the known world were visiting Jerusalem on that day. Do you suppose that was a coincidence? Hardly! What a wondrous opportunity for disseminating the Gospel all over the known world! When these visitors heard the sound of the disciples speaking in these different languages, they were bewildered, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans . . . ?” They were essentially asking, how are these uneducated rednecks speaking in all these languages? There is only one explanation, it was a bona fide miracle. Of course, there is more than one way of viewing this miracle.**

**The poet W. H. Auden once suggested the miracle of Pentecost was not only the gift of tongues, says Auden, “but was it not equally,” he asks, “the gift of ears?” And, of course, he’s right. The miracle here is not only what was said**

but what was heard. Each heard and understood in his own language.

Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”

Some, however, made fun of the disciples and said, “They’ve had too much wine.”

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: *“Men 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: Then he began to quote the words of the prophet: “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.”* These are such great words of inspiration.

Then Peter began telling the story of Jesus. And when he was finished, the writer of Acts tells us, *“those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.”*

My brothers and sisters in Christ, church was born that day. The Jesus movement began that day and it would shake the world and continues to do so to this very day. The Holy Spirit took a handful of uneducated men and

women from a rural region of an obscure part of the Middle East and started a movement that is still at work more than 2,000 years later preparing the world for the kingdom of God. It's a wondrous story, but how does it connect with our lives, your life and mine?

First of all, Pentecost is a God thing. Most often in life God works through the very ordinary processes of daily living to bring God's will into being. If you are waiting for something spectacular to happen in your life as a sign that God is calling you, you will probably miss God's call. At Pentecost, however, God worked in such a way that no open-minded person could doubt that this was a God breathed event. First there was the wind and the tongues of fire. Then there was the gift of inspired speech. The Holy Spirit of God filled them so that they spoke diverse languages which were recognized by the cosmopolitan crowd which thronged the streets of Jerusalem that day. People in the crowd were bewildered to hear folks from nearby Galilee talking in languages from all around the Mediterranean basin.

My sisters and brothers, the mighty wind, the tongues of fire, the speaking in so many different languages all said this is not coming from a human being, but from God. However, the best indication this event was from God was the instantaneous change that took place in the disciples, especially Simon Peter.

**This is the same Peter who was so timid the night the soldiers took Jesus in the garden that he denied he even knew him because he was afraid of being killed. This is the same Peter who wanted to go back to his fishing boat despite being called to be a fisher of people and having been commissioned to go into all the world. And yet, here is Peter on the Day of Pentecost before this enormous crowd, boldly declaring that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead. And quite miraculously 3,000 souls are baptized and added to the church. As we say in Rhode Island, “not for nuthin,” Peter could never have done this on his own. Pentecost was definitely a God thing.**

**Of course, God-things are still happening anywhere people will wait on the gift of God’s spirit and allow God’s spirit to do great things through them. That’s the place of worship in our lives. I hope you don’t come to your Holy Trinity Church as you might come to a museum or a movie theater, to be fascinated or to be entertained. I hope you come here each week prepared to receive a life-changing encounter with God’s Spirit. I hope you come anticipating a God-thing occurring in your own life. I hope you come expecting a miracle in your life.**

**In many churches today, the veneration and the worship go on, but there is no fire in the belly. We don’t gather in this place each week to simply pay our**

respects to the crucified Christ. We gather here in the expectation that we will encounter God in this place and that God's Son might fill us with God's Holy Spirit, to fill us with his love that we might go forth from this place to do great things in his name.

My sisters and brothers in the Holy Spirit, Pentecost is a God-thing. Through the power of the Holy Spirit God worked in a wondrous way to lift the church to a new level of service to the world. On that first Pentecost, the Jesus movement began and it continues today. Today the Jesus movement is in our hands. It begs the question, is the fire still burning? Is the wind of the Holy Spirit still blowing in the Church today or have we lost our desire to dedicate ourselves to prayer expecting the Holy Spirit to move in our presence and change lives. I found a poem written by an unknown author who speaks addresses this question.

I got up early one morning and rushed right into the day;

I had so much to accomplish that I didn't take time to pray.

Problems just tumbled about me, and heavier became each task,

"Why doesn't God help me," I wondered. God answered: "You didn't ask."

I wanted to see joy and beauty, but the day toiled on, gray and bleak,

I wondered why God didn't show me, He said: "But you didn't seek."

I tried to come into God's presence; I used all my keys at the lock,

**God gently and lovingly chided: “My child, you didn’t knock.”**

**I woke up early this morning and paused before entering the day.**

**I had so much to accomplish, that I had not taken time to pray.**

**My sisters and brothers in Christ, why do so many of us try to go it alone?**

**Too many churches are trying to go it alone. They act as though the only thing that can occur with prayer is what psychologically takes place within a person. If we are to come into God’s presence, then we must ask to be in God’s presence. So we have a need to pray in order for God to order our daily living. But there is another reason, and I think it is the greater reason. I want to read to you what someone said about our nation:**

**“We have been the recipients of the greatest blessings of heaven. We have been preserved in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand, which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to God that made us. We should be moved then to humble ourselves before God, to confess our national sins, and**

**to pray for clemency and forgiveness.” My sisters and brothers, on April 30, 1863, Abraham Lincoln said these words proclaiming a National Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer.**

**On this Pentecost Sunday 2017, on this birthday of the church, our country and our church are challenged with a deep need for prayer. Nations as well as individual people stand in need of prayer. We need prayer for guidance. We need prayer for deliverance from our sinfulness. We need prayer to shape us into people of integrity. We need prayer to God to forgive us of our sins. In the very first sermon to the church Peter reminded them of their most egregious error: God was at work through Jesus, Peter proclaimed to them, but you handed him over, put him to death nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead and exalted to the right hand of God. He then repeated the accusation one more time in verse 36: “Let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” And that has never changed. AMEN.**