

Pentecost A 11

June 12, 2011

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer.
Amen.

I left you last week with a couple of thoughts. I proposed Jesus ascended back into heaven, to his place at the right hand of God, leaving us behind for a purpose; so we might be his witnesses. That like the disciples, we have been commissioned to carry on the ministry of Jesus in his name. That now was the time to stop our excuses, to stop looking upward for inspiration and begin looking around to see what needs are to be accomplished in the name of Jesus. Then I asked you to take a moment and think about how in your ordinary daily life can you care for God's world or his people?

So what did you come up with? How have you seen people and God's creation around you differently this week? Were you able to witness God at work? Where did you see Jesus this past week? **Show the video.**

It's Pentecost. Here this day we celebrate the arrival of the promised Holy Spirit to the disciples and all who were with them. It seems as if all is thrown up into the air and chaos begins to reign once again. In Acts we read about this chaotic scene filled with wind and fire. But to whom does it come? Who is within the room as the wind breaks down the door filling all the space with movement, sounds and chaos?

When the disciples returned to Jerusalem following Jesus' ascension they gathered in the house where they were staying. In the days to follow the disciples gathered with Mary the mother of Jesus, his brothers and many other followers. There they prayed and gathered in community, about 120 of them in total. They spent time discussing the things that had happened during the last few days and of their time following Jesus. They spent time discerning who was to join them as one of the apostles in place of Judas. Into this scene, into this gathering of believers comes this great whirlwind surrounding them and filling up every available space within the house.

In the description we heard was the sound and the feel of a wind so encompassing that there was no empty space within the household, it came and touched and surrounded everyone in the room. It alighted and set on fire the disciples, the men and women, the slaves and free persons, it touched and empowered everyone. They began speaking as the wind and fire pushed the sound of their words and each of them outside into the street as crowd gathered amazed and astonished at what they were witnessing.

Can you picture the chaos? The fearful looks or the confusion of this mob of people as they came to hear and see what was going on. Especially when this small group of people came pouring out of this house telling the same story while speaking in different languages. Here a crowd gathered from all

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over the known world, each hearing someone different from them, speaking in a way they could understand. Here through the power of the Spirit the story was being told and heard.

This is a powerful start to the beginning of the evangelical church we are a part of. But most of us see this as history, as a onetime event of the past. We say this spirit thing does not happen in our day. We are more sophisticated than they were back then. Yet this is the same Spirit which came to us in the waters of baptism. This same Spirit which came as a whirlwind blowing and energizing these followers of Jesus is the same Spirit which comes to us.

Paul writing to the people of Corinth tells us there are many gifts, that there are a varieties of services and activities but the same Spirit which activates all of them. There is the gift of the utterance of wisdom, and knowledge, the gift of faith and of healing, the gift of working miracles and prophecy, the gift of the discernment of spirits and of tongues and the interpretation of tongues. All of these are activated by the same Spirit according to our abilities and that to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

Now some of you might say I do not know which gift I have, or I do not like the gift I have received. Or I feel uncomfortable about using my gift. The good news about this is all of you , each one of you have at least one gift within you activated by the Spirit. The bad news is now how do you use that gift for the common good.

More importantly how do you use the gifts you have received further the mission of Christ? For this is not about us and them, it is not about who is inside and who is outside. At the arrival of the Spirit in the house where the apostles and other followers of Jesus were meeting, they were pushed out to tell the story of the salvation of Jesus. Each telling their story through the gifts they had received. Each speaking or acting or serving according to the power of the Spirit within them.

We too have a story to tell! The Spirit is here in this place, pushing us back out into the world, back out of our comfortable place here inside these walls. The Spirit has come blowing us out, to speak the words, to serve the poor and the needy, to act with compassion and generosity, so that as scary as it sounds we are sent out to draw a crowd so we might invite them in. So they might come to know the story, they might have the gifts of the Spirit activated within them, so they are sent we have been sent to share the story we have to tell.

AMEN

T.G.B.T.G.

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Pastor Michael