

“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.” Acts 2:4

Grace and peace to you, my beloved Neighbors in Christ,

After Jesus rose from the dead, but before he ascended to heaven, Jesus instructed the disciples to remain in Jerusalem to wait for the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1:4-5) Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to empower, preach, teach, and remember the promises given to the disciples. Their Advocate was with them as witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8) This month we celebrate the Holy Spirit and Feast of Pentecost on Sunday, May 20th. Throughout this time our parish congregations will witness the coming of the Holy Spirit through a baptism, two adolescents publicly affirming their faith, and two young men will take Christ’s body and blood for the first time.

In the cataloged events from the Acts of the Apostles, we read that the disciples were all together in Jerusalem, waiting as Jesus instructed. Suddenly, a loud sound interrupted their waiting as a violent rush of wind filled their house. Then tongues of fire passed through the locked room, touching each of them. Each was filled with God’s Spirit and began to speak in other languages. No doubt these men were speaking in languages they had never personally studied nor perhaps even heard. This was not a human event, but it was God’s mighty Spirit at work, transforming scared disciples into power-filled witnesses. They were then called and sent by God to bring the Good News as apostles and the new church began.

The noise was so loud that it attracted a crowd. Everyone was amazed, perplexed and confused. How could these Galileans have the capacity to speak in languages from far-away places - languages not studied by the Galileans? In addition, the disciples were not just babbling in other languages or talking about the weather. They were giving clear testimony to God’s mighty acts.

Peter was inspired to speak to the crowd. This was the same man who cowardly denied Jesus three times in the courtyard; but once filled with the Holy Spirit, he gave a courageous witness to God and God’s activity in Jesus Christ. God was fulfilling the prophecy of the Old Testament through these disciples. God’s Spirit had come and transformed them. Sons and daughters, slaves and free, women and men were to be involved in God’s mission, turning the world upside down. And that mission continues even to this day. The young would see visions and the old would dream dreams.

During the next months, I encourage you to focus on the choices related to discipleship and what it means to follow the path of Christ. Following Christ is not an automatic process to be programmed into our spirit. As humans, we often set up roadblocks to God and the Spirit. Our lives can be emptied of the Holy Spirit because of our own human refusal to allow God’s Spirit to be at work.

On Pentecost, the disciples made a choice to be together and wait for the Holy Spirit. Each Sunday morning, we are called to sit as witnesses in the pews and give praise and thanks to a loving God. They probably did not know what to expect or when the Spirit would appear, but they chose to be ready. Are you ready?

God’s Spirit is full of power and can transform lives. Take a few moments to ponder the ways God’s Spirit is at work in your life and please share your reflections with each other.

God’s continued blessings be with you and I’ll see you in worship!

Rev. Erik Karlson
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