

First Baptist Church of Fitchburg

1400 John Fitch Highway Fitchburg, MA 01420 Phone# 978-345-5622

May 23rd, 2021, Pentecost Sunday

Special Guest Pastor: Marquis Lockhart

Song Leader: May Goff



Welcome and Announcements:

Good morning Congregation. This week, I am excited to announce that Pastor Marquis Lockhart and his lovely family are joining us once again to offer a message that the Lord has placed on his heart for our congregation. Rev. Phil D. Goff will be offering next week's message both on-line and in church. May God bless each of you. Should you have a concern, or need prayer, please contact me @ (774) 276-0505 meredithchristian@gmail.com.

Call to Worship:

Leader: Come, Holy Spirit! Ignite our hearts with joy and confidence!

People: For God has done wondrous things for us.

Leader: Come, Holy Spirit! Fill us with the power of the rushing wind that we may faithfully serve You in all that we do.

People: For Christ has called each of us and blessed us!

Leader: Come, Holy Spirit! Be with us today.

People: Help us to boldly proclaim Christ Risen. AMEN.

Invocation:

Come, Holy Spirit, the one who sang a new melody as God's Creation rose from Chaos, who wept at the dark shadow of a cross, and who danced early in the morning, at the opening of an empty tomb,

Come, Holy Spirit, the one who could not be contained by wind, or flame, or breath, the one who blesses the Church with courage, peace, and love.

Come, Holy Spirit, to us, who gather this day with trembling hands and uncertain hearts. Teach us to sing a new song and to dance with reckless abandon.

Here in this gathering of believers, as You did with those so long ago, breathe on us now.

Breathe on us, blowing away our fears and our hesitations.

Breathe on us, transforming our hard-heartedness into passion-filled lives.

Breathe on us, for we need peace, peace that only you can give.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Gloria Patri:

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be
world without end. Amen, Amen.*

Hymn: *“Breathe on Me Breath of God” #461* (Click link) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MmkzSjs9eAw>

First Reading: Acts 2:1-21

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

Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”

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

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 people 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 heavens 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.’”

Celebrations and Concerns, followed by a moment of Silence:

Pastoral Prayer:

We would like to settle into a nice, comfortable routine, Lord, in which we don’t have to do much of anything, just sit back and relax. We are tired and wonder if we have anything left to give of our talents, our spirits, our lives. So the story of the disciples hiding in the upper room is not uncomfortable for us. We want to hide, too. But You have come to us in Your resurrection love - we have seen the prints of the nails in Your hands and feet, we have felt the wound in Your side. We have been with You on the seashore, but we still quiver with fear and uncertainty.

Send Your Holy Spirit upon us today! Let the rushing wind of Your spirit, stir us up to action for good and healing. Let the flame of Your power ignite our hearts with passion for justice and peace. As we have brought names of people to prayer this day asking for healing mercies, may we also add our names, asking for empowerment and renewal of our spirits. Take us and use our gifts and our talents for healing in Your world. Help us to be bold in our proclamation of Your great Good News of love and hope, as we pray the prayer Your Son Jesus taught us to pray,

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Children's Message: (Offered by Debi Cross)

The Gospel in a Nutshell

Suppose that you wanted to tell your best friend about God's love. What would you say? Everything you need to know about God's love is in the Bible. You could take your Bible and go to your friend's house and read about God's love from the Bible. Let's see, what should you read? The Bible is divided into the Old Testament and the New Testament, sixty-six books, 1189 chapters, and 31,173 verses. That is a little bit scary isn't it? It would be easy to for you to get lost and confused. What if we could shrink the message of God's love down so small that it could fit inside this nutshell? That would be great, wouldn't it? Well, I think we can do that this morning.

I did a search on my computer for the top 10 verses in the Bible. I searched for the top ten verses that people know, love, and read the most often. Can you guess what the number one verse is? *John 3:16!* How many of you can say that verse with me? "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." That is good news, isn't it? That is everything you need to know about God's love. Now let's take a closer look at what this verse tells us.

Who is this verse about? - God

What does God do? - loves

Who does God love? - the world (that includes you and me)

What did God do to show His love? - gave His one and only Son

What must we do in return? - believe that Jesus is the Son of God

What is our reward? - eternal life

The Bible is full of the promises of God's love. You and I should be ready to share those promises with our friends. We should read our Bible daily and study to learn more about it, but when it comes time to share God's love, remember the "Gospel in a Nutshell" that we studied this morning. It is a message that the whole world needs to hear. "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son."

Prayer: Our Father, we thank You for Your love — a love so great that You gave Your one and only Son so that we could have eternal life. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Blessing of the Tithes, Offerings and Gifts:

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the gifts offered this morning. They are a portion of what You've entrusted to us to steward. We declare that every cent and every dollar will be effective in expanding the kingdom in this city and throughout the earth. May our giving today have an eternal impact that gives You glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.

(Tithes, offerings, and gifts are greatly appreciated in order to continue to care for our facilities, the needs of each other, and our local and worldwide community. We thank you for your pledges at this time and ask that you **Please Pray over your gifts** and mail them to the church at **1400 John Fitch Hwy, Fitchburg MA 01420**).

Doxology:

Praise God from whom all blessings flow

Praise Him all creatures here below

Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts

Praise Father Son and Holy Ghost.

Sermon Text: “John 2:1-11”

“On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus’ mother said to him, ‘They have no more wine.’

‘Woman, why do you involve me?’ Jesus replied. ‘My hour has not yet come.’

His mother said to the servants, ‘Do whatever he tells you.’

Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.

Jesus said to the servants, ‘Fill the jars with water’; so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, ‘Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.’

They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, ‘Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.’

What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.”

“Water Into New Wine”

In this passage, Mary, Jesus, & the disciples were invited to a wedding in Cana. I love the idea that Jesus just hung out with His friends and family. Mary, Jesus’ mother, was probably pretty close to the family celebrating the wedding. How do we know this? Because she knew about their lack of wine (they would’ve been too embarrassed to disclose this with people they weren’t close with). We also know this because Mary felt pretty comfortable with instructing the servants of this family. So Mary, being close with the family, had sort of a vested interest in the family’s problem.

Mary says to Jesus, “They have no more wine.” Picture this: Mary has been quietly carrying this hope of her Son as the Messiah for 30 years. Now, she sees Him with His disciples (His followers), she’s seen Him grow in faith and stature, it looks like things are taking shape, and her hope is bursting inside of her.

The family she’s close with are just trying to celebrate a wonderful occasion with their guests when a problem arises. Mary turns to her Son with a beautiful faith in His power to help. Jesus looks at her and says, “Woman, why do you involve me?” You might read think, “How dare Jesus call His mother ‘woman’?” Actually, the term was in no way disrespectful and was actually common.

So Jesus goes on to say to His mother, “My hour has not yet come.” It’s important to remember two things:

Jesus had not performed any miracles up to this point;

Jesus only did what He saw the Father doing (He was so in tune with the Father that He knew when the Father was releasing a grace for something).

So, let me summarize Jesus’ response in my own words: “It’s not time to start my ministry; I can sense when God’s releasing grace for a miracle, but I don’t sense that right now.”

What does Mary say to Jesus in Response? Absolutely nothing! She actually doesn’t respond to what He says. It’s sort of funny because she sort of disregards His response as though she just knows He’s going to listen to

whatever His mother says, whether He's God or not. And like the great mother that she is, she uses her mother-knows-best intuition and then turns around and tells the servants, "Do whatever He tells you."

Then, it's almost as though Jesus turns heavenward to the Father and says, "I guess we have a change of plans" and begins to instruct the servants of next steps. Sometime we have to be like Mary and live in faith and expectation. Jesus basically just said, "No" and yet she still believed. No one would've faulted Mary if she felt like Jesus wasn't listening to her. We have to have faith even when what we're believing for seems impossible. We have to have faith even if it seems like God's not listening to our prayers.

So, Jesus tells the servants to fill six nearby stone water jars with water. The servants go and fill up to the brim.

What's fascinating about this is that Jesus transforms something so seemingly plain and ordinary into something so incredible and extraordinary. What's special about the water is not that it is now wine (that is quite the transformation, don't get me wrong). What makes the water special is Jesus' involvement in it. The water isn't special on its own; it may temporarily quench someone's thirst, but it's not really wowing anyone until Jesus shows up.

He does the same thing with us. Now, I know everyone's special and just a little bundle of perfection that their parents wouldn't change for a minute. But let's be real for a minute: we're not perfect! As humans, we're pretty messed up – broken and sinful. Just like those old water jars, we're nothing to write home about. And what's in us isn't all that special either...unless Jesus becomes part of the equation.

When we surrender ourselves to God and say, "I may be an ordinary jar filled with nothing but water, but I'm *Your* jar and this water (or these gifts) inside me is to serve *You* however I can," He can begin an incredible transformation in us. That's when our seemingly ordinary water turns into indescribably delicious wine. Why? Because we invite Him in to start doing what needs to be done. And the best part is that He does it **THROUGH** us. He allows us to use our gifts to help advance the kingdom. That is incredible to me! He lets us "help out" even though, in all actuality, we're probably getting in the way sometimes.

When I was a student at Gordon College, a pastor from Queens, New York named Tom Richter spoke at chapel and told us this story of when he was a child. One day his dad was out mowing the lawn and Tom, just a little tike at the time, wanted to help and be just like his dad. So, his dad pulled out Tom's little toy lawnmower and let him "mow" the lawn alongside him. Tom's dad went up and down yard, back and forth, working hard to mow the grass. Meanwhile, little Tom was right by his side every step of the way with his toy lawnmower. When his dad finally finished mowing the lawn, little Tom looked up at his dad and said, "Dad, we did a good job." Even though his dad did all the work and Tom was more than likely bumping into him here and there, His dad just looked back at him and responded, "Yes we did, son... yes we did."

Go ahead and team up with your Father. He's looking to partner with you. You may not be perfect at what He calls you to do and you might even mess up sometimes, but He's looking for willing sons and daughters. Use whatever He's given you, even if it's a teeny tiny toy lawn mower, and serve Him by serving the world around you. Then, He'll turn your ordinary water into extraordinary, kingdom advancing gifts.

And the amazing thing is that when you use your gifts to serve wholeheartedly, that is one of the ways people will "taste and see that the Lord is good" (just like the master of the wedding in the passage). Why? Because there's something different and exceptional about your gift. Not because you're amazing, but because the Amazing One is involved. The folks outside this church need to taste and see that He is good.

Let's ask the Lord to transform what He's already put on the inside of us and make it something that blesses everyone around us. But as we celebrate Pentecost today, we also want to ask Holy Spirit to fill us afresh and anoint us with new gifts so the Gospel is preached more boldly and so that people encounter God when they meet us. Holy Spirit, would You come and breathe on us again?

Hymn: “*Spirit of the Living God*” # 492 (Click link) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=18I5G5jygoY>

Benediction:

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.

Closing Video: “*Holy Spirit*” by Francesca Battistelli <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3zARVp3420I>

May the Lord bless and keep you always.



Works cited: Call to Worship — Nancy C. Townley. Invocation: “Prayer of Invocation” — Rev. Nancy J.