

5/20/2018

“All of Them Were Filled”

Scripture: Acts 2:1-8, 12-21

Pentecost Sunday

Theme: The Holy Spirit is given without partiality to every one of us, every day, bringing a message of faith, hope, love, justice and peace for the whole world.

Well, it’s been quite a week in the world, hasn’t it?! . . . a volcano erupting in Hawaii, another mass school shooting and a royal wedding in England to name a few.

And, today we start a new week by once again celebrating one of the most significant days of the Christian year – the Day of Pentecost. The Day of Pentecost in Judaism and Christianity is about a fullness of harvest.

In Judaism, Pentecost marked the fiftieth day after Passover, an annual celebration of the spring harvest and an offering to God in the holy Temple of Jerusalem. It’s also a celebration of the giving of Torah, God’s Holy Instruction which makes up the first five books of our bible.

For Christians, it is the fiftieth day after Christ’s resurrection (Easter). It’s also a time for baptism, confirmation and celebrating the fullness of the Spirit’s work in and through us.

Before ascending to heaven, Jesus told his disciples to remain in the city until the Holy Spirit had come upon them. He said, **“you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses”** to the whole world (Acts 1:8).

So, can you imagine the significance and amazement of those who believed in and followed Jesus, as well as other Jews who came to Jerusalem from many countries, some even hundreds of miles away, to celebrate that Feast of Pentecost – when on that day of Pentecost God poured out the Holy Spirit to all the believers gathered there compelling them to share the good news of Jesus Christ with all in their hearing!

The Book of Acts reading for today tells us that **“they were all together in one place”**. “They” refer to the twelve as just mentioned. Or, it may have even refer to the entire community of believers, about 120, which are also mentioned just previously (Acts 1:15).

It goes on to tell us that **there was a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and what appeared to be divided tongues of fire rested on each of them, and all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit.**

Let me ask: Do you remember another time when God appeared with fire that didn’t harm someone? . . . God had appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai . . . in the burning bush . . . which was not consumed by the fire. And, what did God do there? . . . He talked with Moses. And, he gave Moses a commission to proclaim God’s word to Pharaoh and the Hebrew people.

I don’t think it’s a coincidence that the Holy Spirit came as a fire on the day of Pentecost, resting

on each of the believers, giving them ability and inspiration to proclaim God's word of salvation and deliverance. This time, the message of deliverance was not just for their bodies, but for the souls.

And this time, the spirit was poured out upon all of them.

One important thing to remember is that as confusing as it may have appeared to an onlooker from a distance, with many languages being spoken at the same time, the word of God was uttered in those languages or tongues so that everyone who could hear would also understand in their native language – they didn't need an interpreter. That was because all of the believers were filled with the Holy Spirit and sharing God's good news.

† **That is the good news for us as well this day. . . The Holy Spirit is given without partiality to every one of us, along with a message of faith, hope, love, justice and peace for the whole world.**

Remember what Jesus told them before his ascension into heaven. They would be his witnesses. To be a witness is to tell the truth of what you have seen, heard, and experienced. To be a witness for Jesus is to share the good news about who he is and what he has done as our Savior.

Life would perhaps be easier if the Holy Spirit only troubled other people, but God tells us that it is poured out on all of us who have accepted Jesus as savior and Lord.

The Holy Spirit has come upon you at your baptism, if not sooner. Perhaps, you haven't heard or listened yet. What is the Spirit saying or singing to you now? What is He inviting you to say or sing into the world beginning even at home?

Perhaps, the hardest thing for many of us to accept about the gift of the Holy Spirit is accepting that we have been entrusted with a message for the world. That message is the gift of God's love in Jesus Christ.

It may be expressed in different languages, styles, or media. It can be written, dramatized, painted. It can be expressed through music or film. It can be shared by You Tube or Facebook or others, as well as more conventional means, like word of mouth.

I remember growing up in a family where my "big grandmom", that is my father's mother, would often speak to him in Yiddish, an Eastern European Jewish dialect, which was her native language. And, my "little grandmom" would often speak Italian to my mom and her other children, which was her native language. Both had immigrated to the USA as older teens or young adults, and worked in different ways in the clothing business.

Both of my parents were born and raised in Philadelphia, and neither spoke the other parent's native language. And regrettably, none of them really taught us kids much of either foreign language. So, in a way, sometimes it was kind of like Pentecost! ☺

I don't remember any of them specifically talk about repentance and salvation that is the gospel per se. I heard the gospel from movies and from attending church with my best friends and their

family when I was in third grade. That's when I accepted Jesus as my savior.

But, what I do remember was the common language that all of my family spoke – not just English – but love! I knew that they all believed in God, and they all desired and prayed that their lives would reflect God's unconditional and self-giving love. That doesn't mean they were perfect, or didn't disagree or even argue sometimes, but they tried to do so in a spirit of love, mutual consideration, and reconciliation, if needed.

Their examples of faith, hope, love, strength, and a peace that surpasses understanding have always been an important part of my faith journey and who I am still today. And, I'm glad that I can also say the same of Karen and her family as well.

† **You may have a special way or gift of sharing God's love and good news that is made especially unique by your personal experience or testimony. You can make a difference in someone's life simply by sharing your faith. You can make a difference in someone's life by extending God's love and peace. You can make a difference in someone's life by showing the power and strength of God's Spirit in challenging times and circumstances.**

There are a host of people today who need to hear a story of hope and vision and joy and peace in a language they can understand. And, sometimes that language isn't of spoken words at all. Sometimes it is in a language of action or even simply one of caring presence:

It could be through . . .

- Conversations at school or work
- Visitation to homebound, hospitalized, waiting rooms
- Camp retreat, Emmaus or Chrysalis Walk Retreat; (one of our members gives her whole summer to working with children in camp)
- Through one or more of our affiliated missions
- Speaking/interacting with others in the community
- Inviting others to church events

I know that some, if not many, of you already use these opportunities

† **Have you felt the Holy Spirit come upon you? When? How?**

Whoever you are, the Holy Spirit is falling on you. It is filling you with a prophecy for the nations. You are being commissioned to share that prophecy with a bewildered, anxious world. Some who hear will be amazed, some perplexed, and some may even sneer.

Perhaps, it's even today in this place. There may be someone here who needs to hear your personal witness or testimony of God's love, presence, power and peace. I invite you to share it right now.

† **Have you received the good news of God's love and forgiveness, hope, healing and peace?**

If you have not received the good news yet, I offer it to you now. Come and see me to talk about it further following this service.

And, may each of you know and feel the presence and power of the Holy Spirit! In Jesus' name. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer

Gracious God, you gave the first believers in Jesus courage and the power of the Holy Spirit to tell others about Jesus' resurrection. Thank you for empowering us to be your witnesses today. Sometimes, we are afraid and feel alone. But, just like that Pentecost long ago, we are surrounded by your loving presence. Help us to live in such a way that others see in us a reflection of your love. Help us to tell others about the difference it makes in our lives to trust in your care. Help us to see those around us who want to be in the fellowship of Christians. May we witness to one another so that we grow in faith. We pray through the power of your risen Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

(**Rosanna Anderson**; Associate Director of Intergenerational Ministries at Discipleship Ministries.)

Acts 2:1-8, 12-28

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. ⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? ¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³ Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ " '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. ¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. ¹⁹ I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. ²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. ²¹ And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'