**Sunday, May 23rd, 2021**

**Acts 2:1-21 & John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15**

In this area we are not so familiar with traveling by train.

However, in many metropolitan areas people commute to work,

          or shopping areas, daily by train.

If you find yourself at a train station,

          look around at the people waiting for their train.

Most will look very bored, standing and waiting, busy with their cell phones,

          barely speaking with those around them.

The arrival of their train is so routine, they show little interest as they wait.

We are not good at waiting; it is dull and boring.

But if there is a child at the train station, you will soon notice their reaction

          is quite different as they wait for the arrival of the train.

Madeline, for her sixth birthday, was going to the city with her parents,

          for a day of sight-seeing, and shopping.

As Madeline waited for the train to arrive there was no sign of boredom

          or lack of interest.

She was not like those bored adults.

She was waiting for the train with great enthusiasm.

She could barely stand still, and she chatted with Mom and Dad nonstop.

She constantly looked down the tracks, eager to see the train.

When she heard the whistle, she jumped up and down nonstop.

"Here it comes!" she cried, clapping her hands with joy.

“It's coming. It's almost here!”

Unable to stand still, she danced around the platform, her eyes wide open.

Then the roaring train pulled into the station and stopped right in front of her.

"Wow!" she cried, as she watched with awe, wonder, and great joy.

As we grow older, we seem to lose our enthusiasm and joy.

But once in a while something happens in our lives and we again experience

          the wonder, and awe, and joy.

God has a great talent for bringing the wonder back into our lives.

We rediscover the joy and peace of coming close to God.

Today we celebrate Pentecost,

          the day when the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit

          and they were never the same as they were before.

They weren't the same men.

They looked the same.

They had the same names, the same faces, the same mannerisms.

They looked the same.

But they weren't.

On the surface they appeared no different.

Peter was still brazen.

Nathanael was still reflective.

Philip was still calculating.

They looked the same. But they weren't.

They were not the same men we read about in the four gospels,

          the ones we are familiar with.

These were the ones, but they were different, very different.

We notice right away, as we read, we see it in their eyes.

We hear it in their voices.

We feel it in their passion.

These men had changed.

We know the Bible stories.

As we read, we wonder – are these the really same guys?

          The ones who doubted in Galilee?

          The ones who argued in Capernaum?

          The ones who ran for their lives in Gethsemane?

We wonder, can these be the same men?

The answer is no.

They are different.

They have stood face to face with God.

They have sat at the feet of the resurrected King.

They are different.

Within them dwells a fire not found on earth.

Jesus has taught them.

The Father has forgiven them.

And now the Spirit dwells within them.

They are not the same.

And because they are different, so is the world.

The book of Acts was written to give us an accurate report

          of what happened to the followers of Jesus,

          and how the early church began and spread.

Read their adventures and be encouraged.

What God did to them; he longs to do for each of us.

God planned that the Holy Spirit would come into our lives,

          and empower us, strengthen us, change us.

The disciples were amazed at the outpouring of God's Spirit

          on the day of Pentecost.

God's Spirit dwells in us and enables us to live out our faith.

He guides, teaches, inspires, empowers us, so God's plan could be fulfilled.

A transformed group stood beside a transformed Peter as he announced:

          "Therefore, let everyone be assured of this:

          God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

No timidity in his words, no hesitation, no reluctance.

The apostles sparked a movement.

The people became followers of the death conqueror.

They couldn't hear enough or say enough about him.

Christ was their model, their message.

The power of the Holy Spirit changed them, empowered them.

A lot of things would happen to them over the next few decades.

Many nights would be spent away from home.

Hunger would gnaw at their bellies.

Rain would soak their skin.

Stones would bruise their bodies.

Shipwrecks, lashings, martyrdom.

But there was a scene in their memories which caused them to never look back. They were commissioned to remember and share their joy and peace.

The Book of Acts tells how the Christian faith spread throughout the whole world.

Believers received the power to witness, to follow God's laws,

          to love one another, to live as the people of God.

Pentecost was not something done in secret.

It was announced with signs and wonders.

And about three thousand people heard, and believed, and were changed.

Today, Pentecost Sunday, we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit,

          our Comforter, our Counsellor, our Helper, our Encourager.

The truth of the Gospel still changes, and transforms lives today.

God uses ordinary people like us to share the truth of His love and forgiveness.

God said:

          I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

          Your sons and daughters will prophesy,

          the young will see visions,

          the old will dream dreams.

And so, we continue to seek the dreams, and look for the visions,

          as we continue to do God's work throughout the world.

At Christmas, Bethlehem means:

God With Us.

At Easter, Calvary meant:

God For Us.

At Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit means:

God dwells within us and empowers us.

AMEN