

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

East Moline, Illinois

Pastor Becky Sherwood

May 19, 2024, Pentecost Sunday

Psalm 104: 24-34, 35b, Acts 2:1-21

Sermon Series: Come Holy Spirit: Pentecost Sunday—The Spirit Comes to the World

Today is our third Sunday of spending time with God's Holy Spirit. In the last two weeks we have been exploring how in God's great plan of love the Holy Spirit has been with us from before the beginning of time, moving and breathing over the waters of creation. The breath of God who lives and breathes in you and me, living in our hearts, has been breathing in creation forever.

The Holy Spirit shows up throughout the Old Testament, in the words of the Psalms and in the stories of God's people experiencing God's love and care.

We've remembered the Holy Spirit descending in the form of a dove over Jesus at his baptism as God proclaimed "this is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Then as Jesus' life on earth was coming to an end, he told his disciples in John 16: *"I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate, the Holy Spirit will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you."* (John 16:7)

We spent time last week learning that this word "advocate" can be translated many ways and it tells us that Good News that the Holy Spirit of God comes and lives in our lives as our Helper, Advocate and Defender, Comforter, and Friend. The story of the Holy Spirit in our lives is the story of God's love encircling us and living inside us.

Then the day of Pentecost came. And in the story of Pentecost, we see God's loving planning and care. This is such an amazing story. Because God didn't just quietly come to the disciples on a Tuesday when no one else was around.

God decided to send the promised Holy Spirit during one of the three Jewish festivals when all Jewish men who could make it were expected to travel to the temple in Jerusalem to worship.

The festival of Pentecost was the festival that celebrated the beginning of the wheat harvest, and the first wheat harvested was given to God. (Leviticus 23:15-21).

So, Jerusalem was filled with people, plus Luke writes that there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem (Acts 2: 5).

Now what you also need to remember is that the life of Jesus was just known in the small region of Galilee and around Jerusalem and Judea, and into Samaria and a little farther afield, and nowhere else in the world. Jesus was the Messiah who had been promised to the Jewish people, but he came to save the whole world. But the world didn't know it yet.

Look at a map when you get home and you'll realized how small this region is where the story of Jesus started.

So, this morning, we need to go to a time when the stories of Jesus were only known be a small number of people. There were only thousands who knew of Jesus coming from Heaven to earth to live on earth as God with us, not many knew of his teachings, his healing, his promises, or that he died on the cross for the sins of the world and then three days later rose to new life to bring eternal life to the world. But in God's timing and love that was all about to change.

Jesus had told his disciples he had to ascend to Heaven so the Holy Spirit could come and live in them and God didn't choose to just show up in a little quiet way, God showed up on a festival day

in a way that could be seen and heard and remembered. God didn't want them to miss it and doesn't want us to miss it. It was so showy that we still talk about it today, nearly 2,000 years later. They were gathered together in a house and a violent wind from heaven filled the house,

And divided tongues as of fire appeared among them, no one is ever going to forget that are they?

And as if that wasn't enough of a story to tell, the fire rested on each of them like a tongue of flame and they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

As I thought about this story this week, I was so moved by the fact that God gave them and gave us visuals in this story. Not just sounds, not just feelings, but visuals of flame that they never forgot!

And clearly, they told everyone about it, because Luke wrote it down, and we are still telling the story this morning.

I like it that God put on a show with the Pentecost experience! God has given us a Holy Spirit Pentecost story to tell. God wanted them to see the story and tell the story.

Now, as you imagine this story, you can't think of our houses and neighborhoods when you think of Jerusalem that day. Instead, imagine small narrow winding lanes, and small one and two story houses, with one or two or three rooms in each, really close together. There were no double and triple glazed windows blocking sound in those home, windows were open, sound carried.

Imagine the sound of rushing winds from heaven, but just inside one of those houses.

Then the sound of people reacting to flames being all around them and lighting on each of their heads.

And if that wasn't enough suddenly, they are speaking in the languages of the known world.

And all of this is coming from one house!

The people out in the street are hearing the languages from their home countries: Egyptian and Asian languages, (Median, Elamite, Cappadocian, Pontic, Phrygian, Pamphylian, Libyan), Latin, and Arabic.

And they are hearing the story of Jesus, the Savior of the world.

They are hearing the story of God's love coming to earth in Jesus Christ, and they are hearing it because God's Holy Spirit has made a home in the hearts and the voices of the disciples.

Then in God's love and power and planning, Peter spoke to the crowd who had gathered and told the story of Jesus and many were baptized that day, and received the Holy Spirit, and became followers of Jesus.

Think about what God did that day. Jerusalem was filled with people from the known world and the story of Jesus was told to them in their own languages by the power of the Holy Spirit. And they went home to their regions and nations and cities and they carried the story of God's loving salvation through Jesus with them.

Then the story spread, and the Holy Spirit moved and breathed in God's people. I invite you to marvel this morning that you are a part of the story that started with a rush of wind from heaven and tongues of fire.

You are sitting here because God had a plan that when Jesus returned to Heaven God would send the Holy Spirit to live inside God's people.

And God wouldn't do it on a quiet Tuesday but during the Pentecost festival in

Jerusalem so that the Good News story of Jesus the Messiah of the world would spread out into the known world,

so that people would come to believe and be baptized and become followers of Jesus,

and tell others so the story would spread.

It spread to the people you put on cards and added to our banner of faith mentors and teachers. It spread to the churches that shaped you in Togo and in America.

It spread to your parents and grandparents and family and friends and neighbors who brought you to church, so that one day someone will put your name on the banner as a faith mentor and teacher in their life.

The Good news continues to spread: The Holy Spirit lives in our hearts, and we have been told the story. Today is Pentecost, we have a story to go out and tell, the known world is waiting.