

Fear Not and Trust God 2021
Acts 2:1-21

Acts 2:1-21 (New Revised Standard Version)

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine." But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

So, what difference does Pentecost really make?

It it's just a religious celebration when we wear red
that comes around each year on the church calendar,
then it probably doesn't make much of a difference.
Yes, maybe a little more music, a red tie and balloons this Sunday,
but otherwise, life at 1st Pres. will go on pretty much as always.
In the Greek that perspective on time is "Χρονος",
or linear time as measured by a calendar or a watch.

The Greek word "Καιρος" refers to a different perspective on time.
It's when the circumstances are right, a moment of opportunity,
and in that sense, Pentecost makes a huge difference.
In Scripture, the phrase "The hour has come" is Καιρος, it's when
the pieces have come together & now is the time, or the fulness of time.

All during his earthly ministry Jesus was preparing his disciples
for when they'd be called and equipped to proclaim the Gospel,
the Good News that God does love us, and does bless and call us

even after we stray from obedience to God's will, way & truth.

The message of Pentecost is the continuing power of gracious love,
“**come home to your God, and your life will never be the same again.**”

Ever consider what a wild ride it must have been for the disciples?,
with all that happened along their way to Jerusalem,
the events of the Passion, his death and resurrection,
40 days later the ascension, 10 after that, Pentecost...

... that was a lot of change to deal with in a fairly short time.
Pentecost is the ultimate before and after picture of change.

Before and after, for example, consider the Apostle Peter ---
who on the night when Jesus was betrayed and arrested,
so weak & fearful of even an insignificant slave girl,
that he cursed and denied even knowing who Jesus was ...

...then later he was suddenly courageous and bold on Pentecost,
vs.1-4, 14, 21

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Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd, "... let this be known to you, and listen to what I say ... everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

The Spirit on Pentecost, the rush of wind and tongues of fire
gave Peter and the others the courage to preach boldly...
which drew more than 3000 to Christ on that day of Pentecost.

Or another example, consider the early Christian Church.
To me, one of the most miraculous stories of the Bible,
is the remarkable emergence of the apostolic church.

When Jesus ascended that left the disciples were afraid & confused.
That terrified little band went back to Jerusalem and they
were just trying to survive **by avoiding any public notice...**
... as they stayed huddled together behind locked doors,
afraid of being arrested or whatever else might happen next.

And what an abrupt and complete change occurred on that 1st Pentecost,
as the very power and presence of God, the Holy Spirit
came through like a rushing wind and tongues of fire,
sweeping through in way that could not be restrained...

...transforming them into a people on mission, a community of believers
who wouldn't **let anything stop them from proclaiming the gospel.**

In Acts we read about the early Christian church that was on fire,

with a boldness and courage that overcame even the Roman Empire,
**as through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit they
communicated the gospel across all barriers of separation.**

What an amazing contrast --- what powerful **before and after** shots,
demonstrating the wonder & miracle of **Pentecost transformation.**

Pentecost is about
the wind blowing away the chaff and fire burning away the dross.
It's about living **a new vision of the Kingdom** as God sets the agenda,
as we're invited & open to the Spirit of God who leads us,
as God's flame burns, glows and blows through our lives.

The Pentecost event was truly God's kindness & gift, a sign of grace,
that the crowds of listeners were able to hear the Good News
of God's love for them **spoken to them in their own language.**

It is important for us **to grasp the grace in all of this** ---
the student doesn't have to learn the language of the teacher,
because the teacher accommodates the language of the student.

The true miracle of Pentecost is that once again, **God happened.**

God's gracious divine love reaching out to everyone,
with the message of the gospel, **that goes beyond any one language,**
and that transformed the followers of Jesus Christ
into the bold and enduring early Christian church.

The point is, the church of Jesus Christ was equipped on Pentecost,
blessed and enabled to speak to those all around them,
and **to communicate God's love in ways they never could before.**

Pentecost is about God creating and building up the Church,
God's Church, that has continued to serve on down through the ages...

... and the truth is, even the best of **our** ideas, projects and plans
are always **far less significant**
than what God would and could accomplish through us.

God working through us, and not we ourselves by our own efforts...

... and the lesson is, **that as humans, filled with God's Holy Spirit**
we can and will accomplish far more and greater
because it's God's power and accomplishment, not ours.

That is the Gospel message of God's mercy and invitation,
for all to receive it's transforming and healing power,
and then let it flow through us out into all the world...

... and that is the work and ministry done by the Holy Spirit,
who can accomplish **through us** way more than we thought possible.

Pentecost is God's call, not to build our more impressive projects,
but it's God's beckoning call to all his beloved people,
to believe & respond **for God is up to something great,**

and therefore our lives will never be the same again...
... for when God sends forth his Spirit amazing things can happen.

This is important, Pentecost is not just a one-time event of long ago,
but the Power and Spirit of Pentecost are present and still at work,
and still accomplishing God's grace, healing & transformation...
...God's Spirit, bringing hope, joy and renewal, redemption, rebirth and new life.

Pentecost calls and empowers us today **to step out in trusting faith
to share the joy, wonder and power of God's love, healing & grace,
by reaching out to deep human hunger, isolation, fear and need.**

When I think about Pentecost, the Spirit-wind of God at work,
I am reminded of sailing, or as folks in Annapolis called it,
"the skillful pleasure of dancing with the wind on water".

One of the necessary skills to learn in sailing is called "tacking".

It's when the wind isn't blowing the direction you're trying to go,
and so you have to sail back & forth into & across the wind
working sail and rudder hard to gain a little bit with each pass.

But rather than trying to work the wind by zig-zagging back and forth,
I'd try to figure out which way the wind was blowing that day,
and let that guide my choice of destination...
... which made for a much better day of sailing.

Sometimes we get so set with our own familiar preferences and ways,
strive so hard to force our own sense of what's best, ideas & agenda,
that we deny, reject and work against **even the possibility**
that God might be up to something else, something different,
like maybe the power, promise or plan of God's Pentecost blessing.

So perhaps our task **this Pentecost** is to wait, listen and trust,
to determine which way the wind of God's Spirit is blowing
by identifying what God is up to and doing in our world,
where human need & struggle intersects with opportunities to serve.

Today we celebrate God's gifts and blessings, and new possibilities.
**There's nothing to fear for God is still very much at work,
still seeking the lost and transforming human lives,
and even better, inviting us to join-in & participate.**

I've noticed that nowhere in all of Scripture does it ever say,
"stress, be anxious & afraid, & you need to figure it out for your selves."
Instead, repeatedly my Bible says, "Fear not and trust God."

Today we celebrate that God's Holy Spirit is here, willing & waiting
to guide and empower us to rebuild and to serve **beyond what we are,**
with the power & promise of Pentecost to guide & strengthen us.
as we seek God's will, recommit & serve together faithfully.

In Luke 4:18-19 Jesus described his ministry and mission, to which

the church was called and equipped to continue after Pentecost.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

**The Lord's favor, that is the promise, hope and power of Pentecost,
as we are invited to be open to the Spirit of God who leads us
as God's wind & flame burn and blow through our lives together...
... to see beyond our own comfort, familiarity and preferences
by recognizing the space between what we are and what we could be.**

**Today, let us be infected by the Spirit of the living God afresh,
and may all glory, praise, honor and thanks be to our God,
for the Holy Spirit is present and at work in & among us all.**