

Sunday, May 15, 2016

Acts 2:1-21

John 14:8-17

### The Spirit Comes- Now What?

It's Pentecost! Are you feeling the excitement of what this day brings to those who believe in Christ Jesus? It's Pentecost and we should be excited and ready to celebrate because Jesus' promised that the Counselor, the Spirit of Truth would come and the Spirit would be with all those who believe.

The idea of Pentecost- a celebration of 50<sup>th</sup> day is not new. The Greek phrase "pentekostos' hemera means 50<sup>th</sup> day which recognized the Jewish holiday that took place 50 days after Passover and called Shavuot. At first it was a day which celebrated a harvest festival but later it came to be a day to commemorate the giving of the law on Mount Sinai.

Yet for Christians Pentecost is especially significant because it is 7 weeks since we celebrated the Resurrection of Jesus and it is during this Jewish celebration of Shavuot/Pentecost that Jesus' first disciples receive the Holy Spirit poured out upon them and is received from within each one. Through this Spirit the disciples are empowered for their mission and the gathering of the fellowship of believers comes together and is recognized as Christ's church.

But what does this mean for us over 2000 years later? Erasmus, a Renaissance scholar shares the story about the importance of Pentecost and what it means to believers. Erasmus tells the story about how the angels gather around Him to learn what all happened during Jesus' days on earth. Those details that he could remember, not just after the angels sang in the sky on his birthday. But those days when he healed, performed miracles and when he taught to crowds of thousands. He also told them about the disciples who betrayed him, the time on the cross and what it was like when he spoke with Mary Magdalene and his mother Mary after his resurrection. Jesus then tells them angels about his return to heaven. Jesus then finishes his story. Michael the Archangel then asks the question, "What now?"

What will happen now to those disciples who followed you everywhere and then walked away from you? Jesus then fills them in on the other promises he

shared with the disciples. The promise of the Holy Spirit and that this Spirit or Counselor would never leave them and because of the Spirit which came to them, they would receive the gifts of truth, forgiveness and new life. It would be the task of the disciples to tell others and teach the message that Jesus had taught.

Michael the archangel then asks Jesus, "But what is your other plan to save the people from sin?" Jesus answered, "There is no other plan!" Jesus was counting on the disciples to tell his story and how their lives were changed because of him.

What is amazing is that disciples, people of faith in Christ, those who believe the Church of Jesus are still telling the story! All because of what happened at Pentecost.

But what happened that Pentecost Day, 50 days after Christ rose from death and ascended into heaven. What made a difference to those who would had been hiding in fear, afraid to leave the house where they had gathered? What was it that Jesus told them before he died, rose again and ascended?

Jesus had told the disciples, " ...believe me.. I will ask the Father and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever- the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. " This counselor, this spirit of truth this is the Holy Spirit which came at Pentecost and comes to us now if we are willing to open our hearts, our minds to receive.

That Pentecost day, a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. What seemed to be tongues of fire separated and came to rest on each of them. All were filled with the Holy Spirit and were given the ability to speak in languages they did not know. They were loud as they spoke; filled with hope and joy and wonder. They were heard in the streets and people thought they were drunk. But they weren't drunk but filled with excitement, almost to the point of butterflies, upset stomach and giddiness all in one. The Spirit came to them by wind and fire but met from within each one a yearning and desire a void—a place to fill up these faithful followers with the desire and need to tell others of Christ Jesus- the Saviour.

These disciples knew what Jesus had taught them but until the moment that the Spirit came- they were not confident in themselves or in what God could do. The disciples soon realized the importance of what occurred to them- the Spirit was in their midst—within the group; outside the house where they were and inside each individual. They were no longer afraid. They were ready to tell others of Jesus and their first opportunity came that morning.

Peter stood up and told the crowd what had happened, who they were and what the crowd was now witnessing—the glory and wonder of God’s Spirit was poured out before them, and these disciples—were filled with wonder and awe. They told the crowd about Jesus- God’s Son who died and rose again and how their lives were changed through Him. They also spoke about the Spirit in their midst. Many believed in what they shared and the ‘fellowship of believers’ the church was born.

The fellowship of believers devoted themselves to the teachings and to the fellowship to the breaking of bread and prayer. They experienced wonders and signs and they shared all things in common. They had glad and sincere hearts and they praised God and enjoyed the favour of all the people. These believers heard the story of Jesus, opened their hearts and the Spirit entered because of their faith. They focused on fulfilling the purposes of the church through worship, ministry with others, telling the message to those who had not heard, baptizing them and continuing to teach all what Jesus had said. And they did so with a glad and joyful heart! Because this is where they met the Spirit—from within.

These disciples did not know what was to come- they had been afraid for their lives after Jesus left them. They did not know what to do and whether people would want to kill them for having been around another prophet who others ‘said died and rose again’ but were they certain?

God did not forget his promise either- he looked after those followers because Jesus asked him to. Jesus wanted his disciples to fulfill his ministry after he ascended. They did not know how they were going to do this- but God through the Spirit led the way. Sometimes we forget that in faith we are to let God lead us- from within in order that we might live out our faith and our promises to God.

A little girl was visiting her grandmother one beautiful spring morning. They walked out into grandmother's flower garden. As grandmother was inspecting the

progress of her flowers the little girl decided to try to open a rosebud with her own two hands. But no luck! As she would pull the petals open, they would tear or bruise or wilt or break off completely. Finally, in frustration, she said, "Gramma, I just don't understand it at all. When God opens a flower, it looks so beautiful but when I try, it just comes apart." "Well, honey," Grandmother answered, "There's a good reason for that. God is able to do it because He works from the inside out!"

On this day of Pentecost. The Spirit is moving in our midst. Is your heart open to receive the Spirit- in order that God will open you up and see your life unfold in His way. Let us rejoice and pray Silence Amen.