

Sunday, May 20, 2018

Acts 2:1-21

Romans 8:22-27

John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

Moving with the Spirit

It is Pentecost Sunday, the day when we rejoice and give thanks to God for blessing Jesus' disciples who had gathered in that house to celebrate the 50th day since the Passover as has been done for many generations. These followers of Jesus were told to wait for something to happen and not be afraid. Jesus had told them to be patient and wait because something amazing was going to happen. After Jesus ascended into heaven they had wondered what they would do but when the festival of Pentecost was going to occur, they went together to eat and celebrate and they waited. They were probably afraid as it had not been that long since Jesus rose to new life but they were going to be together anyway.

Jesus had ascended into the sky and before he left them, he told them that the Counselor would come. This Counselor would be the Spirit of God which would never leave those who believe and have faith in God. This Spirit would not just rest upon them, but move them to do the extraordinary with others. They would be moved by the Spirit to bring about change to people's lives- to enable sons and daughters to prophesy, to enable visions and dreams to be made and to enable the wonders of heaven to be seen even for a short moment of time. And they would experience something amazing—they just did not know how or what or what would it mean for the Spirit to come.

So on that Pentecost Festival day, the Spirit of God was heard as strong winds blew and this sound filled the house where they had gathered. This wind was the Spirit of God descending upon those present and they were able to speak in other tongues. Languages of the many groups of people from around the world who had gathered to celebrate Pentecost- the 50th day after Passover. The people who heard the disciples speak different languages saw what were like balls of fire upon them were in awe and wondered what was really happening. Should they be afraid? Should they run away to safety? The wind was strong and many people were amazed at this. And they wondered what it all meant.

Sometimes the winds blow very strongly in certain areas of the world- hurricanes and tornados have become prevalent on the East Coast and the mid- western states as well as in our region in these last couple of years, too. The winds that descended upon the disciples were strong and they spiritually not physically moved the people. But we know that wind can cause

much physical destruction- we remember the tornadoes of recent years and the damage that resulted. But there are also some extraordinary events that occurred in tornadoes, especially with regard to animals. The book, Blame it on the Weather tells about what happened after a tornado churned through a dog boarding kennel. All of the dogs were safe but one of the dogs in that kennel was found high in a tree half a mile away--unhappy, no doubt, but unharmed.

In that same area was a cow who was found lying on her back, four legs in the air and was anchored to the ground by her horns. The cow was otherwise unhurt and when she was turned over properly, the farmer chose not to milk her. He thought the milk might be sour after such a traumatic event. Obviously he was a pessimist; why not go ahead and milk the cow—maybe it would have been a good milkshake!

But anyone who has ever been through a tornado or a hurricane will tell you how powerful wind can be. In this story of Pentecost, the wind blew strongly but at as result—people's lives were spiritually changed forever. The Spirit came upon the disciples and the reactions to what had occurred were of shock, wonder, and of needing to know what really happened to disbelief, and even accusing these close friends of Jesus as being drunk early in the morning. The Spirit moved the disciples and in turn the disciples were able to express to those who heard them and welcomed them, loved them for who they were. With the coming of the Spirit upon each of the disciples, they began to tell what the Spirit had done for them and now they awaited the time to find out what they were called to do next. They had been afraid of what was to happen next in their lives because Jesus had ascended into heaven and was with God the creator

But what did this Spirit coming at Pentecost call Christ's disciples to do then and more so what are we to do today?

We are 1) to be in one accord. We are to agree on matters regarding God and to act and serve Him the best way we know how.

We are called 2) to join together constantly in prayer.

We are 3) to gather together to worship and pray and know that what we do is always an example to another. Pentecost also marks the birth of the Christian church because Jesus' disciples were now blessed by God's Spirit to carry on Jesus' ministry. The disciples were fully changed because of what happened to them, they had a new direction and they were moved to begin again. Maybe what we need to happen is that the strong winds of Pentecost will move

and turn the church upside down so that there will be renewed hope. We need to pray for the Spirit to bring about change into the church of our times. So that the Spirit will move us again and again!

We also need 4) to repent when we have done wrong by confessing our sins and seeking God's forgiveness. The Spirit knows our sins but we must try to live spiritually, to live according to the teachings of Jesus. We are also needing to , in how we relate in love and we are to tell Jesus' story of his life, death and resurrection for the sake of the forgiveness of sins for all people for all have fallen short of God's glory. .

Can you feel the Spirit amongst us this morning? It is moving amongst us? How do you experience it? If you be calm for just a few minutes breathe in and out; repeat. You might feel a little nudging at your heart- that gets you to pay attention even for a short time. And when you focus like this for a moment the Spirit will come to you and calm your heart but you must pay attention to this peace. This peace may overwhelm you and cause you to become quiet or move you to shout, or sing or dance and take delight in God and praise Him! This is what the Spirit will lead us to do if we fully trust God's Spirit to lead us. This is what is meant when we 'move in the Spirit' We are doing what the Spirit calls, leads and guides us to do. We need the Spirit to help us in our weakness as it will intercede for us but are we willing to let the Spirit guide us fully? Are we willing to let the Spirit to move us to realize something new about our lives, our faith, even our hopes and dreams as individuals and as a church family?

Where does the Spirit move you? How does the Spirit call you to be faithful even when the winds of the world grow stronger against you and what you believe? Sometimes we might think that the world is turning us upside down yet it is really we who are called to do something that no other place of membership does—love one another.

The balls of fire were an image above the heads of the disciples which others could not understand. Yet because we are people who believe that all things are possible with God the fire kindles in us a new hope and a new direction. Are we ready to move with the Spirit? Let us pray:

God every time we feel the Spirit we get excited yet when you call us to try something new we say not now. Every time we experience your Spirit moving in us we wonder why now when it is not so easy. Every time we should look to your word for guidance and strength we think we know what you have said. But your spirit still moves amongst us and we look to grow in grace and faith. You call us nearer and nearer so that we may be forgiven to go and tell others the good news. Lead us O God and show us your Spirit working through and in us. We ask in name of the Holy Spirit. Amen.