

Sunday, May 28, 2023 ***“Feel the Spirit!”***

Acts 2:1-8, 12-21 | Corinthians 12: 3b-13 | John 7:37-39

How are you feeling today? Many people ask this question to others without even waiting for the other person’s response. But how are you feeling today? You might want to ask further questions like- feeling –physically, emotionally, spiritually, mentally- how are you feeling and especially on this Pentecost Sunday—how are you feeling spiritually?

This is Pentecost and how we should be feeling is alive, excited and filled with joy! Why? Because this is the Birthday of the Church of Jesus Christ. It is the day when God’s Spirit came to the disciples as wind and fire and enabled each one to speak in different languages as they expressed their joy in knowing Jesus.

Jesus told the disciples that he was going to return to the Father- God in heaven. And he told them that he had to go to heaven in order for the Spirit to come amongst the believers. Jesus then ascended into heaven as the disciples witnessed him rise into the clouds. It was then that angels told the disciples to go and wait for the Spirit. So they did. They were waiting in Jerusalem. And then it happened!

A violent wind filled the house where the disciples were. How strong were the winds—tornado or hurricane level? Maybe it was hurricane- like winds which came upon the disciples- This would have for sure gotten the attention of the disciples and all those passing by. But what also appeared were tongues of fire appeared among them. Tongues of fire—like fire balls- flying around. And then the text says ‘and all were filled with the Holy Spirit’. Just what does this mean? Filled with the Holy Spirit?

Have you ever been so excited about something that was or about to occur that you were jumping up and down all around? Maybe you’ve seen children this excited on Christmas morning or when something amazing occurs when a baby is born or a special celebration takes place. Maybe it is when a new pet is welcomed into the home or even when the anticipation of something big is tucked way down inside and begins to emerge because something big is about to occur and one just cannot contain. This is something like being filled with the Spirit but not fully.

Pentecost celebrations were happening in Jerusalem. Jewish people from all over were in the city for the feast of Pentecost. This celebration is a thanksgiving celebration for the firstfruits of the wheat harvest. People with various backgrounds—Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappodocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and Cyrenes- all were in the city and preparing for this feast day.

It was in the morning of this celebration day when people were out on the streets when the disciples experienced the strong violent winds- but it was really the Spirit amongst them. The Spirit enabled these Galileans to speak many different languages and these words were what was heard by those on the street. All those present outside the place where the disciples were heard their language being spoken. They then paid attention to what was occurring. Some were amazed, others perplexed and still others not understanding what was really happening even thought that they had drunk too much new wine! Some wanted an explanation and others thought it was mind blowing that these Galileans-could speak their words!

What an amazing way the Spirit was able to bring the people together—people sharing words together of the same language from all different parts of the known world. And how the people responded differed too- amazed, perplexed not understanding—simple explanation of too much wine and drunkenness. It was in these moments of wonder that Peter stands with the rest of the disciples and addresses the crowd who has come around where they were. Peter tells them that they aren't drunk at 9 in the morning but tells his Jewish listeners about Joel's prophesy. Peter quotes Joel that "God will pour out His Spirit upon all people—enabling sons and daughters to prophesy; young men to see visions, and old men to dream. Even slaves will prophesy. And everyone who calls on the name of God will be saved."

Those listening would know of the prophecy from the Hebrew scripture. But then Peter tells the story of Jesus life, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven. The crowd is attentively listening to his words about Jesus. And when asked what to do- Peter says, "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus so that your sins may be forgiven. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

People listened carefully as to what to do and 3000 people responded! This was truly the beginning of the work of the Spirit touching the hearts of those who needed to hear about Jesus and how they came to the disciples for instruction and to be forgiven. Pentecost marks the beginning of the Christian church. Jesus message of reconciliation is shared and people moved from within their hearts to believe the story. This story of Pentecost is what we as a church are called to do again and again—hear the story/ tell the story and encourage others to respond to the story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection for themselves. This is so that we receive the gift of life eternal through Jesus.

But receiving the Holy Spirit begins with understanding how the spirit works. When we see fireworks explode in the air- they are spectacular and cause us to ooh and aah as we find ourselves responding to the energy and light being released. That Pentecost day, the Spirit was like an explosion on the people in Jerusalem. The tongues of fire enabled the disciples to speak and thousands were affected by one burst of God's power.

However, the Spirit also works in controlled burns, which also have a lasting effect and staying power. The Church is the source of these controlled burns of the Spirit because God began to tap the Spirit's power for the long haul. Through worship, fellowship and service, Christians are provided with staying power-because the Spirit moves us to do so!

Pentecost calls us to experience the Spirit in new ways or in a renewed way. Maybe we need that fireworks explosion to excite us again! Maybe we need to experience energy and the Light of Christ in a new and refreshing way. Maybe just maybe we need to look to the Spirit to tap us into experiencing the power of the Spirit calling us to do new things as God requires. There are many people who are seeking God- Father, Son and Spirit. The question for you in this time is are you feeling the need to share God's Spirit with others? Are you feeling the Spirit of Pentecost in this moment? What is moving you as we share and celebrate this day when the Spirit lead many to receive Christ Jesus as Saviour. What is calling you to be renewed, and encouraged anew? As we pray may God's Spirit touch your life- your heart, your mind and all of you as you search for God here and now. May the Spirit of God move you to new opportunities and hope in Christ Jesus our Saviour.

Let us pray as we seek to experience God's Spirit.

Holy God move your Spirit amongst us. Guide us as we seek to be yours through faith and in the capacity to love you even more than we thought possible. Call us to feel the explosive love you have for us as we seek to steadily grow and be in your care throughout our lives. Renew us we pray as your Spirit moves us all. Amen.

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