

Sunday, June 5, 2022 Pentecost *“Spiritual Confusion”*

Genesis 11:1-9 Acts 2:1-8, 12-21 John 14:8-17

Pentecost is a day to celebrate because God’s Spirit is here! Jesus promised to His faithful followers that they would not be alone; the Spirit would come. He made this promise before he ascended into heaven. He told them to wait patiently for the Spirit to come and they did. They did and when everyone had gathered to celebrate the first harvest of spring known as Pentecost something amazing happened! There was Spiritual confusion!

How often have you been confused in your daily living? Maybe you grew tired from doing something during the day, so you decide to have a nap in the afternoon. Then suddenly you wake up and what is happening? Your day/night is confused and you might even wonder where you are and whether anyone is there with you. This happens to most people because of tiredness of body, and yet the mind has not really stopped—because of dreams, visions and the recollection of great moments in the past! There is an awareness of things around and within a few minutes or so, normalcy returns- whatever normal might be!

That Pentecost day however was not a normal festival day. Yes there were people from all over gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the spring harvest. People who had come from and wide; who were strangers and spoke in different languages of the time. Jesus’ followers had gathered together and were waiting for something to happen. And something did happen! The Spirit came and moved amongst them like a rushing wind, and then it was like fireballs clashing at each other, which then rested upon them and each of the disciples were given the gift of the Spirit. They knew for sure—the Spirit had come upon them- for those outside heard noises and even thought these Galileans were drunk! The Spirit had come to Jesus faithful followers. And so we celebrate this day as the beginning of what became the Church. For the Spirit enabled the disciples to tell Jesus’ story in different languages. And this is what the strangers on the street heard- Jesus’ life, death and resurrection story was shared in their own language. Sure, they asked questions and Peter answered them, but it was the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus being shared; it was the start of the Church of Jesus made possible through God’s Spirit leading and guiding the disciples to tell His story and their story of faith.

We celebrate this day as the Spirit moves in our midst at Pentecost and we give thanks to God for the birth of the church. But what is essential to our understanding of Pentecost on a personal level is in how we might answer this question: Can you feel the Spirit? Do you know what it is like to experience God's Spirit? Some people wait a lifetime to experience God's Spirit; for others it is known through every breath one takes! Just what does having the Spirit in us call us to do or say?

Of God's Trinity, the Holy Spirit is often the least understood by many people. In Genesis 1 we read that the Spirit was present hovering over the waters at the time of creation. The Spirit was present when Jesus was baptized and a dove descended. The Spirit was with Jesus as he ministered and preached and taught the people. It was the Spirit which guided, energized and strengthened Jesus when he needed this the most. This is the why we understand the Spirit to be comforting, caring and helpful.

We must also reflect on the Spirit's presence at the time when the new world was emerging after the flood. At that time, the people spoke one language and together they decided to build a tower to the heavens. God did not see this as a good thing, but a problem for his intended plan for the new beginning. God's Spirit descended upon the people, confused their language so that they could not understand each other. This led to the people being scattered abroad so they could not build Babel one city. There was much confusion because of the Spirit. Just like the Spirit caused confusion in Jerusalem that Pentecost day. But out of that confusion there was new beginning, the emergence of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus, God's Son through the work of the Spirit.

The question we need to ask on this day of Pentecost is this: how do you know if you have the Spirit in you? There are 5 signs: 1) Throughout the season of Easter we talked about being transformed through Jesus' resurrection because we become a new creation. The Holy Spirit works in us and helps us mature as believers and brings about this transformation so much so, that others see a change in you. (Titus 3:4-6)

2) A second sign of whether the Spirit is in you is whether you are growing in the fruit of the Spirit as Paul describes in Galatians 5- love, joy, peace patience, kindness, generosity

faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Those who live by the Spirit experience joy and happiness because it comes from within.

3) If we have the Spirit within us we are led by the Spirit and we experience God's speaking to us to give us guidance and direction. To obey God's word, and to live in the direction that God leads is how we know that the Spirit leads (Romans 8:14)

4) A gift of the Spirit is to speak in tongues as shared in this Pentecost story- being able to tell others Jesus' Good News through different languages. This is referred to in Mark 16:17 when the disciples are commissioned to go and boldly tell Jesus' story for they and we will be given the tools to share the message of new life in Christ because of the Spirit working in us.

5) When we have the Spirit in us we will also be aware of false teachings and prophecies that go against God. I John 4:1 The only way to know the truth is to read and meditate on the Bible and understand God's commands. If we read and take to heart Christ's teachings, when presented other matters we will know that what comes out of us is from God.

Throughout these first weeks of Pentecost we will continue to learn more about God's Spirit in us and how we might profess our faith and understanding of who we are in relationship with him. As we seek to know God, we will be changed. We must ask therefore are we willing to be changed in to the people God calls us to be?

Happy Birthday Church—the universal Christian church was born when the Spirit enabled the disciples to proclaim the Good News of Jesus' life death and resurrection. Are we willing partners of the church of today to strive to tell others the good news of life eternal? This is the challenge we each face. In order to answer this we need to be nurtured for the journey ahead of us; to become one with Jesus and to know that God is with us as the Creator, as Jesus our Risen Saviour and as the Spirit which moves amongst us in this moment. We just need to ask for the Spirit to move and then see what God has in store!

As we share in celebrating at the table today, let us rejoice and be glad of the coming of the Spirit. Let us celebrate with one another the fact that we are the church together. May the Spirit move us to serve in new ways as we strive to reach out and tell Christ's story of love. We

are not spiritually confused, but merely people discerning our role as we seek to tell the Good News of eternal life. Let us pray:

God revive your church we pray- breathe new life in it so that others will come to know who you are and who they may become through your presence. Show us your way O God and enable us to feel your Spirit within us. Bless us in the name of our God, His Son Jesus knowing that the Spirit calls us together as one! Enable us to reaffirm our faith as we seek to grow in grace and hope. Thanks be to God! Amen.