

SUNDAY, May 19, 2024 "Come Holy Spirit"

Acts 2:1-18, 12-21 John 15:26-27; 16: 4-44

Today is Pentecost—as it is the 50th day since we celebrate Easter!. The peonies are in bloom- for peonies always bloom on Pentecost! It is a day to celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit. But what was really going on as we heard the story in Acts 2?

Before Jesus ascended into heaven he had gathered his disciples and told them that he was returning to his Father in Heaven. This meant that Jesus would ascend into the presence of God the creator. Jesus told them that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on them and they would be his witnesses in the whole world (Acts 1:8). Even more, he told them the counselor or advocate or Holy Spirit would be sent by the Father, that the Spirit would teach them all things and remind them of everything Jesus had said to them. But Jesus said that he would send an Advocate to help them discern their place and role in the world

The disciples did not want Jesus to go because they loved him and had depended upon him as they learned together for over 3 years.. He told them to stay together and like many Jewish people of the time they shared special feasts and celebrations. The disciples did what Jesus had asked.

After Jesus ascended into heaven the disciples waited to see what would happen. 50 days had passed since Jesus rose from death. The traditional Pentecost/ Festival of weeks was soon to occur. They and many Christ followers also prepared for the Pentecost celebration which marked the end of the grain harvest. It was like Thanksgiving is for us in Canada when the farmers have collected their crops and all the hard work is done. During this Feast celebration, the people would offer two loaves of bread they had made from their crops and two lambs were waved before the Lord as a thank offering. This was their special way of thanking God for the weather and for helping them get a crop for that year.

People from many countries gathered in Jerusalem from many regions and spoke different languages as they celebrated this special harvest time. The disciples and other Christians had come together to thank God for Jesus' life, death and resurrection. They were faithful followers of Jesus known as Christians, but the Holy Spirit was not a part of them yet! This would be the first time everyone who was a Christian would receive the Spirit.

And suddenly a sound like the blowing of a strong wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. God's plan to the spirit to descend was set in motion—wind and balls of fires were upon them. There was commotion and out on the street people

were admonishing the disciples and as being drunk- why? Because the Spirit caused them to move and to speak in languages which were not their own! This noise of voices intermingling caused the disruption on the streets.

When the balls of fire appeared—it was almost chaotic! The people were amazed and astonished or even shocked to see these people from Galilee speaking so many different languages. But when the initial shock wore down, Peter managed to calm them a little.

He reminded the crowd about the prophecy of Joel whose words were written hundreds of years before. The words which expressed the pouring out of God's Spirit on sons, daughters, young and old men and women. These prophetic words were about what was needed to be saved in order to live eternally with God. Peter then told them about Jesus the Risen Christ and why the disciples were His followers.

So why is this Pentecost celebration important to us? Because the Holy Spirit has come and is present in our midst. But we still must act!

There's a story about Mrs. Goose who decides to have a party. She cleans her house, bakes some cake and cookies. Gets the decorations out and decides to get ready for her guests. She wonders why no one has arrived at her house. Then she looks outside and sees her friends waddling down the street and asks, are you coming in? All is ready? One of her goose friends asks? Ready for what? My party. All is ready? The friend then says, when did you send out the invitations? And then it hits Mrs Goose that in all the work of preparations she forgot one thing. To invite her friends! But they are present anyway and so all is well.

Pentecost in some Christian circles is like this—the party has been prepared but we have forgotten to invite people to attend the party. We just assume that the Spirit will be present. And yet there are churches where this is not so. When one comes to know Jesus and believes the church family prays for the individual so that the Spirit of God will descend upon them, and enter into their hearts. The Spirit becomes a part of who we are when we become a Christian and understand that Jesus died and rose for us. When we're ready to try to live a life pleasing to God, the Holy Spirit becomes part of us so we have God with us all the time.

So as a church we need to invite people to come to know God, Jesus and to experience the Spirit in new ways. But we must be willing to welcome him in; to actually help us as he comforts, teaches, and grow in our relationship with God. The Spirit guides us and gives us strength to live the way of Christ. But we must be willing to let go of the old way of life to live anew.

Prior to his ascension, Jesus explained the role of the Spirit to the disciples by stating that the Spirit will come to prove to the world that it was wrong about sin, righteousness and judgment. People did not believe in Jesus and that he would be returning to the Father and recognizing that the ruler of the world would be condemned. Jesus tells the disciples about the Spirit so that they may be comforted in the days which would follow. Jesus told them he came from God the Father and would return to him. But they are to take courage because Jesus has conquered the world and all we need to do now is receive the Spirit and to tell others. Our hope in all of this day of celebrating the Spirit is that we feel it, experience it and call on the Spirit to help us and guide us to be who God first intended us to be. This means being able to speak freely in prayer, to confess those things which we should not have done and to know that we will be forgiven by God.

Pentecost is a day to celebrate—the Spirit of God is amongst us.. Let us invite the Spirit in our midst and in our hearts. LET US PRAY>

God of love and hope we pray you and thank you for this day of Pentecost when your spirit moved amongst your followers. Move amongst us now O God; enter the hearts of those who seek your guidance, strength and hope for tomorrow. Help us to know Pentecost and the coming of your Spirit has lead us to know you and have faith today.

Hear us O God as we pray to you..... Amen.