

Sunday, May 23, 2021 Acts 2:1-8, 12-21, Romans 8:22-27, John 15:26-27, 16:4-15

Come Holy Spirit

While listening the news it was shared that over 30,000 people were affected by flooding in Columbia. IT has been three days since flooding in Louisiana USA was also experienced by the people and emergency relief is now present. There have been other flooding situations around the world within the last week—Burundi when Lake Tanganyukia spilled over its banks; in an area of Slovakia flash flooding is causing evacuations of people. Tropical Cyclone hit India leaving much destruction, a rising death toll and significant flooding as well. These floods have occurred within the last two weeks! But along with these floods the world continues to experience the pandemic of covid19 searching for healing, vaccines and hope.

In the time since the pandemic was declared, people have dealing with many other natural disasters too! In 2020 bushfires were widespread in Australia, and in the US west coast states of California and Washington. There was extensive flooding and destruction of crops occurred not only in North America but there were also hurricanes, volcano eruptions, earthquakes, monsoons, and cyclones around the world. These are called natural disasters as they are outside human control or activity but when we consider the number of these disasters occurring we should be reflecting on these problems and ask what is really happening in our world. Under contractual language with insurance companies these disasters are also known as Acts of God. Maybe just maybe God is trying to get our attention in some way?

Just how does God get our attention? Is this possible in light of everything being online, virtual or through telephone, television or computer zoom connections? How does one know when God is calling us to listen, learn and act?

This is Pentecost Sunday the day the Christian church recognizes its birth with the coming of the Holy Spirit. Jesus told his closest friends to wait together and they would receive further instructions of what they would be doing next. The disciples had gathered to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost, Shavuot which is also known as the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of Harvest, or the Feast of Firstfruits. It was celebrated on the fiftieth day after Passover and was a time of giving thanks and presenting offerings for the new grain of the summer wheat harvest. Devout Jews from all regions lived in Jerusalem and the streets were busy with people as special gatherings with families were being held as the harvest of first crops took place. People from different areas near the city came special worship and to be with people.

Early in the morning the disciples were together when suddenly there came a sound of a violent wind and it filled the room where they were. Tongues of fire appeared and rested upon each of them and all were filled with the Holy Spirit. Each of them was able to speak in different languages and their talking was heard in the street. People were both amazed and perplexed as to how this could happen. Some even thought that they were drunk. But as the crowd gathered

closer, the work of the Spirit had begun—because people heard the disciples speak their language Peter and the disciples now had the attention of the crowd.

Peter used this opportunity to quote from the prophet Joel about the coming of the Spirit. Those listening were Jews and would know these words- “In the last days it will be that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters will prophesy and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.” Upon my slaves also I will pour out my Spirit. In the heavens above I will show portents and there will be signs on the earth= blood, fire and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Peter then goes on to tell Jesus’ story as God’s Son who was filled with deeds of power wonder and signs which God did through him; yet he was crucified. But God raised him from death and through him we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit which you now see and hear.

The crowd was attentively listening to Peter. Someone then asked, “what should we do?” Peter responds, “Repent, be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus so that your sins may be forgiven and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” That day 3000 people were added as believers.

In this story people were ready to celebrate the tradition of Pentecost Feast of first harvest. But they celebrated much more- The Spirit moved amongst them and caught their attention because they heard words which were familiar- first of all words in their own language and secondly the prophesy of Joel. This caught their attention quite quickly. But what catches your attention today?

Often short melodies, advertisements with products you use, names in the news, hockey scores, and the latest ‘news of the neighbourhood’ all become a part of the soundtrack in our minds. Yet in these days of virtual everything and downloads and podcasts of everyone who writes a book, what we are carrying around in our minds often prevents us from being attentive to others, let alone God’s Spirit. Our minds also do not seem to shut off or stop especially if we are seeking some sort of answer to problems we might have.

So what do we need to do? We need to stop and clear our minds of any distractions. This is more difficult when everyone is in the house or around the house but there is a time when we must just rest our eyes, and our minds. Many people are stressed because of schooling at home, working from home, needing to get outside for fresh air and just languishing in the moments of this pandemic life. We are not really sure what tomorrow will bring but we have hope. The lockdown continues and there are more people being vaccinated but there is still uncertainty of what we can do safely.

The disciples were in a similar situation. Jesus the teacher whom they had followed had ascended into heaven. They were given instructions to sit and stay together and wait. And so they waited. What happened on that Pentecost day changed their lives and their future. The

Spirit touched their hearts and lives and they were transformed into sharing the good news of Jesus for the rest of their lives. Jesus told them to sit and wait and see what would happen. And when the Spirit came amongst them they were filled and they shared their message of hope in Jesus and people believed and followed- the church was born.

As we consider our own lives what is needed is a time to refocus our lives and thoughts and feelings about God. Maybe just maybe God is trying to get our attention. God may not be having fire and wind fall around us in these moments, but God is still calling us to look to his Spirit for help, for direction and hope. We need to focus on God. And if we look to God's Spirit the soundtrack of our life will shift and we will be able to breathe anew.

As we recall the excitement that the disciples experienced that Pentecost day, we need to get excited too! The Spirit of God came to those people then. The Spirit of God comes to us as well but we must be ready. To be ready means to clear our eyes, experience the silence to breathe freely and deeply and to say yes to God's Spirit in your life. Come Holy Spirit. Come Holy Spirit.

IN Paul's letter to the Romans we read that the Spirit will help us in our weakness and will intercede for us. God searches us and knows us through and through. How we respond to the Spirit in our lives leads us to actions we might never thought possible. But we do act because of the love we have and the joy we can always know within our hearts and minds.

We are Christ's followers because we believe that the church has a significant role to play in our daily lives. As members of Christ's family we are called together to remember Jesus and to do what he asked us to do. So in remembrance of Him as he sat with his friends and shared the bread and wine, we do so as the body of Christ, members of God's family and as brothers and sisters in this church. Let us remember why Jesus came, why we are called to eat and drink together and to know that as we eat and drink wherever we are, the Spirit of God is with us and blessing us. This we believe in faith and with hope. Thanks be to God. Amen.