

## **WELCOME 9<sup>th</sup> June 2019 – Pentecost '19 C**

Acts 2:1-21 & 37-41

Good morning! Welcome to worship today! Special welcome to our visitors & guests...especially those here for Harrison Colwill's baptism! It is wonderful you're all here! It's our privilege & joy to serve you in worship.

Political parties call them "platforms." Coaches/team mgrs call them "game plans." Businesses might call them their "purpose/objects/mission." The meeting you attended the other day called it an "agenda." And no matter what you call it, everybody has one. Everyone lives by some agenda.

It may be well-constructed & clearly articulated or unspoken & not consciously understood. But it is there. Everyone has an agenda & it contains things you deem important that need to be done to give direction/focus/purpose/fulfillment to your life.

So...What's your agenda? What's at the top of your life-list? And what happens when your agenda gets side-tracked or bowled over by something bigger more powerful...more urgent...more pressing?

Well...that's today...That's Pentecost...When the Holy Spirit bursts into the lives of the followers of Jesus, drives them into the streets & then into the world on God's agenda that all people would encounter, know & trust the good news that God comes personally to rescue & recreate all things through the life, death & resurrection of Jesus Christ. We'll explore & experience that today...

**Let's pray...**

### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

*"You never go away from us, yet we have difficulty in returning to You. Come, Lord Jesus, stir us up and call us back. Kindle and seize us. Be our fire and our sweetness. Let us love. Let us run."* Augustine of Hippo

Whirlwind Spirit of God, Roar through our failings & fears, Shake the foundations of our ill-placed securities; Sweep away the cobwebs of our apathy, Blow down the walls that separate us, one from another. Then into all our empty spaces, breathe courage to challenge injustice, call us to the urgency of your mission, bring passion to our living, make us bold to speak your word to grow & mobilize your church.

Let your gentle breeze and still small voice become in us today a mighty wind and loud proclamation. Make Easter & Pentecost pour from us today so the world may see you risen and reigning Lord of all! Through Jesus Christ we pray...Amen!

## PENTECOST '19 C – MAKING ALL THINGS NEW: LIVING BY THE SPIRIT

### FAITH CHAT:

1. What's been the biggest adventure in your life so far?
2. Where have you seen the Holy Spirit act/move in surprising ways in you?

You know & I have no shame in admitting...I am not the most skilled person when it comes to my hands...Leonie & I looked at a house last week & as we walked in the realtor said, "John are you anything of a handyman?" "No" "Well you might want to make friends with one...this house needs a bit of love." We're not buying that house. But I have done enough to know that sometimes you get to say step 15 & need to stop & unmake what you've made back to say step 11 & do something you missed or fix something you've messed up. Knitters & sewers sometimes you have to unpick...or you have to try & figure out where the leftover parts are supposed to have gone. You have to undo before you do...

Well what I am beginning to understand about Pentecost is that it is first that sort undoing...Pentecost undoes before it does...Here's what I mean...As a non-Jewish Xn, I've always approached Pentecost head-on as simply the arrival of the Holy Spirit, as if this was a wrestling match & the risen Jesus ascends tags out & the Holy Spirit tags in & takes over...womping on the devil & my sinful flesh. But we know the Spirit has already moved through the OT at various times & through various people & Lk has told us it was the Holy Spirit that overshadowed Mary so she could conceive & bear Jesus...So the Spirit is not the absent member of the Trinity that only now gets a guernsey...So what's going on here?

**BIBLES** Gen 11 & Ex 32

Jerusalem is filled with travellers...*religious pilgrims from all over the place vs 5. Why? Pentecost or Shavu'ot is a Jewish religious mandatory pilgrim festival. 3 mandatory festivals in Jerusalem for Jews...(Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles)* Remember Passover was only a month & a half ago...7 weeks about 50 days...these travellers from all over have been in Jerusalem for the 2 festivals. Shavu'ot/Pentecost is the day Jews celebrated receiving the Law/Torah (centre piece was the 10Cs) at Mt Sinai. God had brought them out of Egypt across the Red Sea & in anticipation of leading them into the Promised Land God established the nature of his relationship w/ them...He gave them the Law that was to characterize their life in relationship w/ him & as a people. The primary part of which is "*I am the LORD your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.*" – Ex 20:2-3

That's why they are all there. They are not one of them expecting anything new or different from any other festival...They're all Jews...even the disciples are still there only because Jesus told them to stay there, but they weren't expecting anything & most of them were celebrating this festival with their friends & family.

There is no indication they were expecting this to be the time Jesus would send the Spirit like he promised. But since Shavu'ot/Pentecost *is* when Jesus sent the Spirit in this way...What's going on? According to Ex 32, Moses has gone up & down Mt Sinai a couple times & is now up there 40 days/40 nights as God gives him the Law & inscribes it on 2 stone tablets. But while the cat's away...Moses is up on Sinai & there is the cloud & fire & thunder & lightning & earthquakes & all that surrounding the top of Sinai that signals God's presence; the people down below get scared & after 40 days start wondering if Moses is dead/never coming back & they're left out there on their own. So they get Aaron to make idols...that will lead them...presumably back to Egypt where life will be normal again.

So imbedded in the Pentecost/Shavu'ot memory/celebration is the reminder that God's people are often unfaithful...prone to making gods out of all sorts of things that aren't God...inclined to fear & placing their trust in everything but the Father despite his mighty work in their lives. When Moses comes down & sees the worship of the idols Aaron has made (& that always included some sort of orgy-making & naked revelry) Moses summons the Levites & tells them to gird their loins & grab their swords & they make a swift sweep through the schoolies-week Israelites & kill 3000 of their idolatrous fellow Israelites. I'ma let you look at that # for a bit.

So when Luke tells you that 3,000 were added to God's People on this Pentecost he wants you to remember the 3,000 deleted from God's People on the first Pentecost. Where 3,000 committed idolatry & died, 3,000 now believe & have life w/o end. But here's the thing...Those in the crowd listening to Peter are no different than the crowd at the foot of Sinai...every bit as susceptible to worship any god but God... every bit as prone to unbelief & unfaithfulness. They crucified Jesus a month & a half ago. They're no different than the crowd at the foot of Sinai that first Shavu'ot/Pentecost. In truth no different from us...susceptible to worship any god but God... prone to unbelief/unfaithfulness

Luke wants you to see in this Pentecost story the undoing of that one. He wants you to see it's God's doing not ours—God's faithfulness to us despite our unfaithfulness, God graciously overcoming our unbelief, our proclivity to idolatry & sin. Luke wants you to see that this 3,000 is the Living God carrying out His agenda to seek & save the lost – to draw to himself rebellious people by his love & grace. Luke wants us to know this is the Holy Spirit's agenda. The Spirit of the Crucified/Risen Jesus Christ compelling Peter — who b/4 this couldn't get his foot out of his mouth — to proclaim that the Law first given at the original Shavu'ot/Pentecost to Israel has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The demands of the Law have

been fulfilled by Christ & no longer is the law a sword pointed at our throats...In Christ the new Pentecost has arrived & it's a joyous day...no dark memory of idolatry & punishment & death – that day is over!

But that's not the only undoing here...The Jews from all over the world were amazed that *"These people are all from Galilee, & yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages! Here we are—Parthians, Medes, Elamites...And we all hear these people speaking in our own languages **about the wonderful things God has done!**"* Everyone hearing that w/ any OT-memory remembers that all those languages were ACC TO THE OT a curse brought against humanity at Babel because their agenda was *"Come, let us build ourselves a city & a tower with its top in the heavens, & let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth."* – Gen 11:4

But here...in this Pentecost the languages are restored not for the purpose of making humankind famous...not for building a human city...not for human glory... not as a bulwark against human fear but for the proclamation of God's name – for declaring the Father's glory – for His Name's sake. Again Luke wants us to see how God in Jesus Christ crucified/risen/ruling over all things in love undoes the curse of human pride – human striving to be god for ourselves – breaks into the broken world so that we might be restored to our rightful place as citizens of God's glorious city not dwellers in the muck/mess of our own construction.

What I am beginning to understand about Pentecost is that it is 1<sup>st</sup> that sort undoing. Pentecost undoes before it does. So what does the Spirit do here? I'm convinced it's 2 things: *On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, & it filled the house where they were sitting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire **appeared & settled/rested** on each of them. **Everyone** present was filled with the Holy Spirit & began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.* The tangible/visible presence of the Holy Spirit was not a fleeting thing...The language Luke uses is of "setting up shop" "staying put." The presence was permanent **AND** it was universal. It was settled on resting in abiding in every one of them. Every Christian...every follower of Jesus is spirit-filled. Doesn't mean you have to jump a pew or speak in tongues...but you cannot avoid the reality of the Spirit's presence in you or you deny the reality of Christ in you. Every follower of Jesus is spirit-filled...Baptism

Then there's this: *"These people are all from Galilee, & yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages! Here we are—Parthians, Medes, Elamites...And we all hear these people speaking in our own languages **about the wonderful things God has done!**"* This is always what the Holy Spirit does...it equips us for *speaking about the wonderful things God has done* in Jesus Christ in the languages of the many cultures & sub-cultures groups & subgroups that surround us every day...in all the places God leads us every day...which is exactly what Peter says in his sermon...really? Yes...let's keep going...

The Spirit makes a grand entrance...It rests/settles on/abides <sup>w/in</sup> the followers of Jesus...They then, as the Spirit takes hold, appear to be driven out of the room they are in & out into the streets of Jerusalem & point to/talk about/share what God has done in Jesus. The Spirit always & only ever points to Jesus...shapes our lives responsive to Jesus...shapes our character reflective of Jesus...In Jn 16 Jesus tells the disciples that when he has died risen & gone back to be with the Father the Spirit will come to do just that: convict us of our sin & convince us of Christ's sufficiency for salvation. *"The work of the Spirit will be to convict you of your sin, convince you of my perfect righteousness, & to judge the world for they did not believe in me."*

In Christ crucified/risen/ascended/ruling Peter knows that the relationship b/t you/me & the Father broken by sin is restored never to be severed again...death is crushed...hell demolished & sin both the stain & the burden obliterated...So Peter takes the Spirit's coming as the dawning of a new day...the final era of human history has broken into right now...We can see now what God will do in eternity. We know now what God intends for our destiny...So Peter says the Spirit comes *"in the last days"* as a sign that the new creation new heaven new earth are closer than ever In Christ the new Pentecost has arrived & time becomes urgent because time is short

It is too easy for too many of us to stand at a distance from Jesus & either feel an ambivalence or a cultural familiarity but feel no urgency or passion or connection or desire or much of anything...It is too easy for too many of us to acknowledge Jesus but deny his claim on us...or his power within us. But if in fact these are the last days...if in fact our time on this earth is short then that benevolent passive disinterest can only spell disaster for us...benevolent passive disinterest will kill you But *"everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."* And if you are sitting right here today & your agenda is anything other than the risen Christ living in you by his Spirit...then make this the last moment for that other agenda to see the light of day. You have been created by God, chosen by God, & empowered by God to fulfill His agenda, not yours. Pentecost is what happens when your agenda gets bowled over by something bigger more powerful... more urgent...more pressing & more fulfilling...when you & I live responsive to the Holy Spirit & are driven by God's agenda that all people would encounter, know & trust the good news that God comes personally to rescue & recreate all things through the life, death & resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Let's pray with that in mind... **Father, you sent your Holy Spirit at Pentecost, filling the disciples with your resurrected life so they could boldly share the good news. Let the boldness of your Spirit transform us, the gentleness of your Spirit lead us, and the gifts of your Spirit equip us so that we too may powerfully and passionately proclaim Christ to the people of this city. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.**