

## **WELCOME 7<sup>th</sup> June 2020 – 1 Pentecost '20 A (Trinity)**

Acts 2:36-47 & John 7:37-38

Good morning! Welcome back to the On-line well of Living Water! It's great we can be together in this way...in this time when we can't be together. I'm glad you're here AND I pray that when we **ARE** back together...if you've never been with us before except on livestream...you'll pop in & hang out with us in person. Please check our website for our weekly Zoom Bible Study catch-ups. Those are a great way to stay in touch & experience God's Word together!

*As we wrap up our Move Together teaching series...what have you always heard?*

Two heads are better than one. There's no "I" in "team" There's strength in numbers.

Those are great motivational slogans...look good on inspirational posters & calendars...but the truth is they point to what many of us are missing in these seemingly unending days of isolation & distancing...each other...

When the church is told it is "non-essential"...when we are pushed farther to the margins of society...when our freedom to worship is curtailed beyond reason...when it's tempting to just pull up the covers & leave the world to its own devices & live behind the convenience of our computer screens...Scripture reminds us we are firmly planted in Christ not as isolated individuals but as a community...a people...a gathered body that together lives in the assurance of Christ's resurrection into the hope only the living Jesus can give. What we all know...

Everything new becomes old. Everything in this world gets old...fades...& ultimately withers & dies. Everything. Fads & fashions. Fame & fortune. Even...maybe most notably...we ourselves. But rather than throw our hands up in cynical skeptical resignation to a life of futility with no meaning no purpose no power & no future; Jesus gathers us/his church his family in his life & through us pours that life out to the world. Jesus gathers us in that which lasts forever his life among his people & through us pours that life out to the world.

*"Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from their heart.'"*

Jesus offers an invitation to come to him & receive life this world cannot give...And in this world the church is the only vehicle God has chosen to share this saving transforming good news of life with the world. The church is the only place God has chosen where the love life & grace of Jesus are proclaimed clearly & lived passionately.

Because we are filled with the Spirit of the risen Jesus, the church bears to the world life that never gets old & power that renews, restores, revitalizes & recreates you day after day, satisfying your heart & filling you with joy & peace.

We'll explore & experience that today...as we **MOVE TOGETHER: IN UNITY** as a people united in Christ & bound to one another in love that never dies, strength that is never exhausted & life that never ends.

Let's pray...and then we'll get stuck into it.

### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

*Heavenly Father fill our hearts today with your living joy & hope. We are surrounded by things that would draw our attention away from you; so remove from us our distractions, our heart-worries, our to-dos & should-haves & the constant stress & strain of life in this difficult season. In their place, Father, give us more of You so we become more like Christ...in His Name we pray...Amen!*

### **FAITH CHAT:**

1. Who is someone you admire for their courage and conviction?
2. In this season of isolation/lockdown, what are you most looking forward to when the restrictions are gone?
3. When you think of "unity" in the church, how do you picture it?

**BIBLES**

## 1 Pentecost '20 A\_(Trinity) – MOVE TOGETHER: IN UNITY

The first pages of the Bible recount God's creating work...the universe & the outer reaches of space...this beautiful earth & all that is in it...animals & plants, birds & fish, all the creepy crawlies most of us want nothing to do with. Even if you're not part of a Xn community you know how that part of the narrative goes. God says, "Let there be..." & it happens. And when we say it we always give God a big booming voice...I don't know why...We don't know what it sounded like but we always do it like that...

We know how the account unfolds...God speaks to the void/darkness & calls forth what he wants next & out of nothing that next thing comes...Until the 6<sup>th</sup> day. On day 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 God says "Let there be..." & there is. But on day 6, God says, "Let us make..." Make? "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us." Whoa...God does not speak to the void to call humans into being. God *MAKES* us – God *FORMS* us. Human beings are the 1<sup>st</sup> thing in the whole created universe that God touches. Everything else from asteroids/zebras God summons/calls/speaks into being. But humans...*US!* God touches...forms us from the dust of the earth...shapes us by hand...Everything else God summons/calls/speaks into existence. But humans...you & me...God touches...and we have needed to be touched ever since.

We know that...babies aren't touched they don't thrive. We need to be touched. Touch stimulates bits of our brain & we grow & develop. If we aren't touched we don't thrive. Why all of that? The Father is fundamentally relational & he has passed onto us that need for relationship...that need hardwired into our lives to be in & among other people...closely connected life to life. The Bible is clear God seeks an intimate personal relationship w/ each of us... w/ each of his human creations... *2 Cor 5:19 - God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself... 1 Pet 3:18 - Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God...* And as those who bear God's image & are the fruit of that reconciliation to the Father in Christ – who experience that homecoming into the Father's arms, we are at our best linked to...connected to others.

How do I know that? Well first...the heart of the gospel is "In Jesus, God comes personally to us, to rescue & renew all things by Christ's life, death & resurrection." God loved the world so much that he didn't make more laws to follow. He didn't send us a scorecard to measure up against. He didn't give us a process/program/particular prayers to pray a set # of times per day. He didn't lay out a fixed # of good things we needed to do to get into some place called heaven.

No...The Father loved the world so much that he sent his Son to take into himself the burden of human sin, brokenness & separation from God, to suffer the full weight of evil & die so that all those things would be destroyed. This Son, Jesus was then raised to life again by the Father's power & we now live as reborn children of God trusting all that was *FOR US!*

Everything we are & do now (as God's beloved children) is shaped by how Jesus lived obedient to the Father...Jesus' ministry was communal. Jesus didn't Lone Ranger through the world. He called to himself a community of 12 disciples That crew of misfits was hardly the best/brightest of Israel...a revolutionary, some fishermen, a tax-collector/traitor, various odd balls including one who would betray him for a fistful of \$\$\$. The circle widened to include respectable & disreputable women & various other hangers-on. Eventually almost all abandoned him. But Mk 3:13-15 tells us Jesus called them together w/ a straightforward purpose: *They were to accompany him, & he would send them out to preach, giving them authority to cast out demons.* They were to live in his presence, share what he planted in them & have authority over the evil one. TO **THIS DAY** THAT CALL HAS NEVER CHANGED.

His commission/gift of Spirit was communal...Last week was Pentecost...when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the followers of Jesus & they were gifted with the capacity to tell the mighty saving work of God in Jesus in the variety of languages in their known world. That sending of the Spirit was the fulfillment of Jesus' promise to empower/equip them for taking what he had done for them & what he told them his life/death/rez meant *FOR* the world *TO* the world: *You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere — in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, & to the ends of the earth.* – Acts 1:8 When the Spirit was poured out it fell on men & women slave & free Jew & Texan...apostle & also-in-the-house. The Spirit took up residence in every heart Christ had claimed as his dwelling place...every life he had adopted as child of God. There was no hierarchy among them. The apostles simply had been with Jesus longer so they were respected as the benchmark for what was authentic to Jesus. But as the growing number of Jesus-followers scattered...they ALL carried w/in them the bubbling excitement of a living encounter with the life of Jesus through his Spirit...they ALL lived w/ an urgency to tell to someone else what Christ had done in reconciling the whole world to the Father...and they lived a unique companionship...

*All the believers met together in one place & shared everything they had. They sold their property & possessions & shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, & shared their meals with great joy & generosity — all the while praising God & enjoying the goodwill of all the people. Each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.* – Acts 2:44-47 They lived an open invitation to anyone men/women slave/free rich/poor Jew or not imperial messenger/runaway slave to be part of their community that was bound by the love found only in the living hope of Jesus Christ raised from the dead. I love that last part of vs 47: *Each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.* When we act as one we reflect better who God is & what Jesus has done. When followers of Jesus live deeply bound to each other by the Spirit at work w/in us, ordinary people become extraordinary & the Spirit multiplies the harvest from our witness.

I have long ago exhausted my patience w/ being kept apart from the fellowship of the gathered church. Jesus did not die & dispatch the Holy Spirit so we could sit on our sofas in our slippers in the convenience & comfort of our own homes watching/listening to sounds/images emanating from the internet. It was in fact during the many plagues that ravaged the Roman Empire & early Europe that Christians continued to meet together & when the elite fled from their towns & villages it was the Christians who tended the sick, buried the dead & cared for the orphans left behind. In the face of persecution from the Nazi regime of terror, Lutheran Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote: "A community of Jesus which seeks to hide itself has ceased to follow him. *'Neither do men light a lamp & put it under a bushel, but on a stand.'*"

When in prison for taking part in a plot to kill Hitler he would later write: "It is easily forgotten that the fellowship of the Christian community is a gift of grace, a gift of the Kingdom of God that may any day be taken from us...Therefore, let all who have the privilege of living a common Christian life with other Christians praise God's grace from the bottom of their heart. Let them thank God on their knees & declare: It is grace, nothing but grace that we are allowed to live in community with other Christians." Our oneness is not an ideal we must create ourselves by doctrinal agreement or religious treaty: it is a reality created by God in Christ in which we are called to take our part. The more clearly we recognize that the foundation & power & purpose & promise of being the church is in Jesus Christ alone proclaimed & celebrated among our brothers & sisters in Him, the more we will see the Holy Spirit add to our fellowship those who are being saved.

God never intended us to make this journey alone...or from some remote space. He has given us the gift of the church as a place where we can enjoy him together, love him together & witness to him together. But along with that, it is a place to love one another, pray for one another, challenge one another. The church is not a hideout for the already holy. It is a hospital for the hurting & the hard-hearted...This is where we confess our brokenness to one another forgive one another & support & care for one another...**AND** of central importance, invite others into that closeness w/ God & his people where we are known for who we are & loved into whoever it is God intends us to be. "*Anyone who believes in me may come & drink! For the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from their heart.'*" You are meant to be a river not bottled water...it's time we claimed that promise & became that river...

Ultimately...Our destiny is communal. *After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation & tribe & people & language, standing in front of the throne & before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes & held palm branches in their hands.* – Rev 7:9 There are dozens of jokes written about the sections of heaven...Lutheran section, Baptist section, RC section, Presby, section, Pentecostal section, Anglican section...Heaven was going to be like the old cemeteries where it was improper to bury a Protestant next to a RC. Some of those are funny but they're all rubbish...and those sections in the old cemeteries are an offense...Our destiny is communal...& we are to live that now: *For there is one body & one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God & Father of all, who is over all, in all, & living through all.* – Eph 4:4-6

Jesus gathers us/his church his family in his life & through us pours that life out to the world. Jesus gathers us in that which lasts forever his life among his people & through us pours that life out to the world. His ministry is communal. His gift of the Spirit is communal. When we act as one we reflect better who God is & what Jesus has done. Ultimately our destiny is communal...together forever.

Jesus offers an invitation to come to him & receive life this world cannot give...And in this world the church is the only vehicle God has chosen to share this saving transforming good news of life with the world. The church is the only place God has chosen where the love life & grace of Jesus are proclaimed clearly & lived passionately. Because we are filled with the Spirit of the risen Jesus, the church bears to the world life that never gets old & power that renews, restores, revitalizes & recreates you day after day, satisfying your heart & filling you with joy & peace. We **MOVE TOGETHER: IN UNITY** as a people united in Christ & bound to one another in love that never dies, strength that is never exhausted & life that never ends.

Let's pray with that in mind...

Holy Spirit move in & take over our lives. Draw us more deeply into the heart of the Father and the life of the Son. Work through us, your church, so the world can see you in us and come to trust your saving love.

Lord Jesus thank you for your church in all its joys and struggles. Bless us with your presence & your wisdom. Form us more and more into your body in mission to this world for your glory and the growth of your Kingdom.

Lord of the universe we praise you for your creation, you have provided us with everything needed for life and health. Grant that the resources of the earth may neither be hoarded by the selfish nor squandered by the foolish but that all may share your gifts.

We remember all who bear the responsibility of leadership, for heads of state, ambassadors and political advisers; let your will for our world be accomplished through the decisions they make and give them a vision of peace and reconciliation for you Lord can find a way when men and women are lost.

Lord we pray for an end to the panic & pandemic that has had us locked away from our brothers & sisters. In all those places where life is moving forward into free space, let your church also be free of the burden of fear for the joy of sharing your salvation in Jesus Christ. We remember those who struggle against injustice. Let human hearts recognize your love's supremacy against all violence & cultural disorder.

Remember us in your kingdom & teach us to pray...