

WELCOME 5th June 2022 – Pentecost '22 C

Acts 2:1-11

Welcome! Happy Pentecost to each of you! Not quite a birthday...but a great day to be together for worship. Pastor John is due back in town soon from his trip to the US & we continue to pray God blesses that time away & his reconnection with family he hasn't been able to see since the pandemic hit. Thank you to everyone who is filling in & picking up a few loose ends while he's away.

As we move into this week... Who remembers "magic-eye" art? It was a late '90s rage. The technical name is Autostereogram. It's a printing technique that hides a 3-Dimensional image w/in a two dimensional pattern. To see the image, you have to "trick" your eyes into seeing 3-D in stereo at the same time. I'm told you need to stare long enough at a fixed point...maybe like until your eyes bleed & then you see all sorts of stuff? I never could see anything...

The resurrection of Jesus is first & foremost a transformation of our ability to see. Not crazy artwork, but to **SEE** the hand of God bringing together all the lost & broken pieces of our lives to reconcile & rebuild us in the image of Jesus...to **SEE** our world as it was intended reborn, renewed, flourishing with abundance...to **SEE** the people around us as the objects of God's great love, perhaps yet-unknowing recipients of the forgiving saving work of Jesus...to **SEE** the end of death & sin...to see the ultimate overthrow of evil & all its worst works...to **SEE** the Spirit of Christ alive & at work in people & places we might never have imagined...including **US!**

But we know, the old adage remains true, "**There** are none so blind as those who will not see" Some in our world...even in the church...see Jesus as a relic of the past, as a system of being tolerantly nice to others, a fairy tale for children, or as simply a sin-management mechanism that gets me into heaven in spite of myself.

On the 1st Pentecost, there were those who saw the out-pouring of the Spirit as the work of too much wine on too many people too early in the morning. Peter saw the reality: "**...what** you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel..." Peter saw the decisive war has already been fought & won by the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. Death & evil routed & abundant life ours in Christ alone. The only thing remaining is for the church to proclaim that truth against the lies & blindness confronting us daily & to stand anchored in that truth as a vibrant compassionate hope-filled joyous fellowship that invites all people to become disciples of Jesus who grow in his grace & go in his power to show his love to the world.

We'll explore & experience that together...Let's pray, sing & then hear God's Word.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let's pray together

Breathe in me O Holy Spirit that all my thoughts may be holy;
Act in me O Holy Spirit that my works, too, may be holy;
Draw my heart O Holy Spirit that I love only what is holy;
Strengthen me O Holy Spirit to defend that which is holy;
Guard me then O Holy Spirit that I always may be holy.
To the glory of Jesus Christ...Amen

St. Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430)

10,000 Reasons...

**PENTECOST '22 C – IN CHRIST'S HANDS:
UNVEILING THE NEW REALITY – PROCLAIMING REALITY**

An old friend shared the amazement his family felt when his little sister got her 1st pair of glasses. They just assumed she was the “clumsy” kid in their family but her Kindergarten teacher assured them...it's her eyes. So off to the optometrist & sure enough...glasses. But the fascinating thing, he said, “On the drive home she stared in wonder out of the car window, pointed to the top of the telephone poles & said, ‘There’s wires up there!’” What had she thought all those wooden crosses were for? Suddenly she stopped being the clumsy kid & could see wires & more.

What do **YOU** see when you look at the world around you? Do you see: Decay. Despair. Threat piled upon threat. Moral chaos. Political rot. A world that gets stranger & weirder & more disconnected from anything you've ever known. Generation after generation farther & farther from the living experience of Christ that you've had. Do you see growing uncertainty...challenges beyond your ability to comprehend...or maybe even cope?

If you said “yes” to any of that...you're probably not alone in this room. You're certainly not alone in this world...and the burning question is...**So**, what are you going to do? Because if you said “yes” to any of that you're not just living in 2022, you're living in Peter's world. The 1st cent (like the 21st) was marked by unprecedented technological innovation, in guess which fields? Engineering & Warfare. Building cities. Killing enemies. It's always been that way. Humanity often advances on the back of architecture & armaments. Disease wreaked havoc in successive waves across the Roman Empire generally thinning the population of the poor & vulnerable. If you think our current crop of public figures are moral alley cats...you should have seen the Roman Senate. Emperor Caligula had his horse elected to the Senate & the debauchery of his reign far overshadowed anything we might see @ Sydney Mardi Gras. The chasm ^{b/t} rich & poor was as etched in stone as the steps leading into the Coliseum. Peter didn't know it yet...but the mockery of the Jews gathered for the Pentecost celebration in Jerusalem was a summer picnic compared to the persecution soon to be unleashed against the church by Rome & those same Jews. His world & ours could be viewed through the very same depressing lenses. Except Peter sees the wires. Peter sees what no one else can. Peter stands in the middle of a crowd of disciples surrounded by scoffers & knows he's standing on the solid foundation of God's fulfillment of 2 promises that change the destiny & shape of human life forever after. He has, in the last 30 days, seen death sin & evil crushed under the feet of the resurrected Jesus **AND** sees in **that** moment the Spirit of God, the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the grave, the same Spirit the Father

promised would signal the glorious reconciled reunion ^{b/t} God & his creation now dwelling in all who trust the risen Jesus for life abundant eternal forgiven & free.

He says: “...**what** you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel: ‘In the last days,’ God says, ‘I will pour out my Spirit upon all people...’” & then “**With** the help of lawless Gentiles, you nailed Jesus to a cross & killed him. But God released him from the horrors of death & raised him back to life, for death could not keep him in its grip.” Christ is risen & the Spirit of God that raises the dead lives in you! As clear as John's vision in the heavenly glory Peter sees here & now that life cannot go on as it always has... Christ is risen & the Spirit of God that raises the dead lives in you!

The Holy Spirit is the renovating/renewing/resurrecting power of God's Presence. The Spirit is the source of new birth, of life & faith. The great news is...God does not deal in ½-measures, or restrict blessings to occasional seasons, once-in-awhile moments...given out with an eye-dropper in little tidbits so we don't get too excited. God wants to fill us to gushing over with his power & love & healing presence... every day...How did Jesus say it?

“Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! Anyone who believes in me may come & drink! For the Scriptures declare, ‘RIVERS of living water will flow from their heart.’” John 7:37-38
When was the last time you felt or acted like a RIVER? Why so long?

There is a flamboyance about this whole event. God, it seems, doesn't know when to quit...when “enough is enough.” A roaring violent wind, flames dancing over their heads, proclamation in every language of the world...No wonder the sticky-beaks accused the Apostles of being drunk & disorderly. The promised Holy Advocate & Counselor is excessive/exuberant/extravagant in love & joy & passion for the renewal of the whole of humanity. When God has his way in the world, & his way in the church, the cup is always full & running over. When was the last time you felt or acted like a RIVER? Why so long?

You see...one of my pastor mentors repeatedly reminds me, “**It's** not so much what happens at the meeting that matters, it's what happens after the meeting that matters.” You know that. You've been to meetings where something was debated & decided & no one did anything about it. Passed a resolution & ignored it. But from here forward the Spirit did two things instantly to those early followers of Jesus. First they displayed a **courage** unheard of until that moment. They stopped being cowards hiding behind locked doors keeping their lips sealed for fear someone might take offense & instead started to fearlessly share the Gospel of Christ crucified & risen for the healing of the nations. They became the proclaimers of the good news of death's defeat, sin's forgiveness, & eternal life given as a gift that Jesus had told

them they would be. And as if that wasn't enough...The Spirit wove them into a **fellowship** unlike anything the world had ever seen.

Rich & poor, men & women, slave & free, former Jew & Gentile... **All** the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, & to fellowship, & to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), & to prayer...all the believers met together in one place & shared everything they had...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. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved. --- **All** the believers were united in heart & mind. They felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had...There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them & give the money to the apostles...

Pentecost is where the promises of God to make his people a light to the nations jump off the page & put feet on the pavement. The Spirit reached into the hearts of Jesus-followers who were as ordinary as homemade soap, & empowered them to speak with bold wisdom, to love with deep compassion, to exercise the gift of strong faith, to take authority over sin & evil, to win people's hearts with their deeds & their words, to widen the reach of their small fellowship one by one by one, to speak & live from the treasure of God's word such that lives were shaped & changed & opened to God-inspired opportunities...

They were people whose capacities seemed limited, whose charisma & influence appeared minuscule. Yet they were washed over & renewed by the Holy Spirit & those early followers of Jesus encouraged each other & challenged each other & held one another accountable to that same Spirit of Jesus until they saw in their lives/churches the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, & self-control... & they knew there was no limit to how often or how much they could bear those fruit. They went passionately & urgently to the world with the simple message that Jesus is Lord...His Love changes lives...His Spirit will fill you & sustain you come what may & everyone has a gift from God to offer the world in the name & service of Jesus...who died & was raised again so that all might have unending abundant life now & always.

The resurrection of Jesus is first & foremost a transformation of our ability to see...to **SEE** the hand of God bringing together all the lost & broken pieces of our lives to reconcile & rebuild us in the image of Jesus...to **SEE** our world as it was intended reborn, renewed, flourishing with abundance...to **SEE** the people around us as the objects of God's great love, perhaps yet-unknowing recipients of the forgiving saving work of Jesus...to **SEE** the end of death & sin...to see the ultimate overthrow of evil

& all its worst works...to **SEE** the Spirit of Christ alive & at work in people & places we might never have imagined...including **US!**

I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons & daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions & your old will dream dreams...
And anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved

We see what Peter saw: the decisive war has already been fought & won by the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. Death & evil routed & abundant life ours in Christ alone. The only thing remaining is for the church to proclaim that truth against the lies & blindness confronting us daily & to stand anchored in that truth as a vibrant compassionate hope-filled joyous fellowship that invites all people to become disciples of Jesus who grow in his grace & go in his power to show his love to the world.

Pentecost is not a happening in the distant past. It is today. God still refuses to recognize limits of time or place. This is a day to celebrate the indulgence of our God. To revel in the extravagance of God's Holy Spirit, to affirm each other's faith, fortify each other's hope, cherish each other's love, and to honour & exercise our gifts for the sake of those around us in the Name of Jesus our Saviour & Lord.

Let's close praying together...

**"Come Holy Spirit and make us people of Pentecost.
Let your wisdom and right judgment guide our decisions
and temper our impulses.
Let knowledge and understanding
increase our capacity for empathy and compassion.
Give us courage and boldness
to witness lovingly and faithfully in word and deed.
We pray through Jesus Christ who lives and prays for us before the Father...Amen**