



United Methodist Church OF GENEVA

Its NOT five o'clock somewhere

A Pentecost sermon by Pastor Rob Hamilton - June 5, 2022- Acts 2:1-21 NIRV

When the day of Pentecost came, all the believers gathered in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound came from heaven. It was like a strong wind blowing. It filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw something that looked like fire in the shape of tongues. The flames separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit. They began to speak in languages they had not known before. The Spirit gave them the ability to do this. 5 Godly Jews from every country in the world were staying in Jerusalem. 6 A crowd came together when they heard the sound. They were bewildered because each of them heard their own language being spoken. 7 The crowd was really amazed. They asked, “Aren’t all these people who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then why do we each hear them speaking in our own native language? 9 We are Parthians, Medes and Elamites. We live in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia. We are from Pontus, Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia. Others of us are from Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene. Still others are visitors from Rome. 11 Some of the visitors are Jews. Others have accepted the Jewish faith. Also, Cretans and Arabs are here. We hear all these people speaking about God’s wonders in our own languages!” 12 They were amazed and bewildered. They asked one another, “What does this mean?” 13 But some people in the crowd made fun of the believers. “They’ve had too much wine!” they said. 14 Then Peter stood up with the 11 apostles. In a loud voice he spoke to the crowd. “My fellow Jews,” he said, “let me explain this to you. All of you who live in Jerusalem, listen carefully to what I say. 15 You think these people are drunk. But they aren’t. It’s only nine o’clock in the morning! 16 No, here is what the prophet Joel meant. 17 He said,

“ ‘In the last days, God says,

I will pour out my Holy Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy.

Your young men will see visions.

Your old men will have dreams.

18 In those days, I will pour out my Spirit on my servants.

I will pour out my Spirit on both men and women.

When I do, they will prophesy.

19 I will show wonders in the heavens above.

I will show signs on the earth below.



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There will be blood and fire and clouds of smoke.

20 The sun will become dark.

The moon will turn red like blood.

This will happen before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

21 Everyone who calls

on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

Preamble

Thank you for sharing in this Pentecost celebration. I am Rob Hamilton, Senior Pastor here and today is a special day in the life of the church. It's the church's birthday... not the founding of the United Methodist Church of Geneva, but the day we remember that the Holy Spirit comes, fills and empowers the disciples of Jesus to be beloved community. God's Holy Spirit comes upon all people that we might do the very things Jesus did: heal, preach, teach, feed, restore, witness and be a means of grace.

This is the second sermon in a series on Acts that Pastor Lisa and I are following the next two months called Spirited Adventures: How the Holy Spirit moves us to the ends of the earth. Today we will focus on how the Holy Spirit fills us for the mission of moving the gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth. Let's pause here for the Holy Spirit's inspiration:

Prayer of Illumination

Jesus, send us your Spirit again,

Not the docile, tamed, subtly working, feel-good Spirit that we often talk about and pray to. No, send us that Spirit that came, on this day so many years ago. That rushed in like a gale force wind and caused your gospel to be opened up to new people, reaching new places. Do that again. If possible, use us. Not because we need our names recorded in history, but because our love for you and for others burns within our hearts. Amen.

Sermon

Today's story is somewhat common in the reading and hearing in church circles and its also somewhat unbelievable. So what I hope to accomplish in this



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message today is two-fold. First, I want to offer some explanation to what seems to have happened some 2000 years ago, as it must have been important, otherwise this story wouldn't have been passed down all of these years. Second, offer some insight about why a 2000 year-old story even matters in our lives today.

To that end, I first have to admit that we have an awful amount of jargon as Christians. I have this set of little books that takes the entire New Testament and break it up into easy to read chunks. Each book offers some comment and interpretation on what was just read. Every time the author uses a technical Christian term (this jargon, I'm referring to) that word is in bold and in the back of the book is a glossary that offers definitions. So first let me deal with some jargon.

Pentecost, which is what we in the church are celebrating today, is an actual historical event for the Jewish people. It is actually a celebration... kinda like Thanksgiving. Pentecost was a festival that took place 50 days after Passover (another festival recalling the Jew's flight from Egypt). Pentecost was an agricultural festival where Jewish farmers from all around, even different countries would bring as an offering to God, the first sheaf of wheat. The offering was a prayer. Partly these farmers were bringing in their first harvest as a sign of gratitude to God that conditions provided a harvest and partly it was a prayer that the rest of the harvest would be gathered in safety.

So all these agriculture folk from different countries are in Jerusalem for this Pentecost festival and it's likely that those gathered in Jerusalem for this festival have some ability to communicate in Aramaic (a common language of the time), but that would be the second language for many. But on this Pentecost, the one after Jesus was resurrected from the dead and had just 10 days earlier ascended into the realm of God, the promise that Jesus made that God would send power upon people would happen through the Holy Spirit coming to rest first the disciples, then upon all flesh. So it's this new Pentecost that we celebrate as Christians. is the Pentecost when God sends the Holy Spirit.

Now the Holy Spirit is hard to explain. So is God for that matter. We have this belief called the Trinity which means God is one deity, but also has three distinct 'persons'. There is God the creator. There is Jesus, God made flesh, whose victory over death saves us. Then there is God the Holy Spirit, this empowering force that works on and in the lives of people's human beings and communities.

So what we heard Carol read is the Holy Spirit shows up with power. There is a loud noise - like a gale force wind. People see the Holy Spirit; it looks like little flames on the heads of the Jesus followers. Then the disciples start talking in



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different languages. They were speaking in the native languages of all those who were in town for the festival. This garnered some attention. After all these Jesus followers were not highly educated, multi-lingual people. So when those gathered near heard them speaking in their native language, they stopped what they were doing and watched these what was happening with the disciples.

Of course there were skeptics in the crowd, just like I'm sure there are skeptics who hear this story today and think this story would never pass any sort of fact-check.

The skeptics accuse the disciples of being drunk. But it is only 9am. Too early to be drunk - according to the author Luke. Plus every drunk person I've been around might get talkative and loud, but never have I seen a drunk person pick up a new language, usually they are simply slurring their own native language... right?

That's when Peter, who is not a public speaker, addresses the crowd. Telling them that way back in the Old Testament, a prophet named Joel spoke to the Jewish people, roughly 500 years earlier about how God will pour out God's Spirit upon all people someday. Peter proclaims with Joel that when God sends the Holy Spirit as promised it will come on old and young, men and women alike. They will be connected and empowered by God in new ways, to do new things. This is how the world will start to change into the new kingdom Jesus had promised. As the Holy Spirit comes all flesh, not just some, all will have the chance to experience here and now salvation.

Now the salvation Joel, Jesus, and now Peter empowered by the Holy Spirit, talk about doesn't simply mean, you get to go to heaven when you die. Salvation for Luke means knowing God's rescuing power, the power revealed in Jesus which



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anticipates in the present, God's final great act of deliverance of the new kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. In essence, salvation means that anyone who knows they need rescuing, whatever from, can call upon the Lord and discover how salvation can happen now. **Salvation is a present reality as well as a future hope.**

This is why I think this 2000 year-old story matters for our lives today. We all need rescuing from our worst-selves and our world needs rescuing from our worst-selves too. Our worst-selves bring sin and death. Sin are the actions (and sometimes inactions) that separate us from God, divine love and from each other. And death isn't just when your body stops functioning, death is all that takes away from living life and living life in the fullness and abundance God desires for us to live life. God's desire is the same for our world too. So sin and death, our worst-selves, don't just catch up with us in some after-life. Sin and death, our worst-selves, are wreaking havoc here and now. Jesus can rescue us from our worst selves, both now *and* later. That's the message Peter gave. I think that's the message the world so desperate needs to hear today. The rescue Jesus offers is a changed life. Living life in a new way. You don't have to wait to start living that life in some other, etherial place when we die; that new life can be lived here and now. In fact, the Holy Spirit empowers us to live the new lives God desires for us to live. Luke will write 28 chapters of how the Holy Spirit changes lives, forms new community, modeled after Jesus making salvation a present reality pointing to a future hope. Luke writes the book of Acts as a testimony to how that rescuing Jesus offers all people is taking place in Luke's own time and place.

This rescuing isn't some old, wishful story either. The Spirit is still active today - helping people proclaim the message that salvation is available here and now today - helping to broaden this message to new people, or new places, or to familiar people and places, but who will this time, hear the good news anew.

Now knowing the Pentecost story is important for another reason, because it helps me to explain people like Henry. Henry is one of those people the prophet Joel and disciple Peter talked about, that are filled with the Holy Spirit. You should know I've met many such people, but when I met Henry he looked like this: Henry was a quiet, thoughtful and inspiring boy. He's no poster-child for an enthusiastic Pentecostal, but he's sure





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filled with the Holy Spirit. The reason Henry came to my mind, over the others is that he turned 24 this past week and he was one of the active kids at the first church I served at full-time.

When I first met Henry he was planning his 11th birthday party. Through his church Henry learned that there were far more people in the world who were not as fortunate as he was. Henry realized that he was healthy, has the chance at a good education and all his material needs and wants are met. Yes, this came from a 10 year-old boy and it wasn't really drilled into him by his parents. Henry's just observant and thoughtful like that. So Henry planned your typical 11 year-old birthday party, but on his invitations he asked his invitees to NOT buy him presents. Instead he wanted raise money to help those less fortunate. He already talked to his parents and family members and they all agreed to forgo presents in pursuit of the cause. Henry had figured between his family and friends he'd have about \$200 to help others.

Well, by the end of Henry's party he had \$1500 in cash and some birthday presents too. (Turn's out, not everyone is good at following instructions) to help those who were on Henry's heart. But was even more amazing, is that Henry's friends started having birthday parties like his too; no presents please, just help those in need. Henry's life continues to unfold in this same way.

In Henry's story -and the hundreds more I'm blessed to have encountered- I don't see chicken soup for the soul, I see Jesus. I see the fulfillment of God's promises. I see salvation come here and now. I see the work of the Holy Spirit. I see Pentecost still happening today.

People might see stories of what I identify as the Holy Spirit acting today - such as Henry's - and think like those confused and amazed people in Jerusalem,- "that five o'clock has come early", as a way to explain away the odd behavior. just as I know people tried to explain away Henry's 11th birthday party. But I know the truth. I've seen the Spirit at work in Henry's life. I've seen the Spirit working in our lives today too, and it makes me wonder how many people think we're drunk or odd because of the way the Holy Spirit is acting in us?

May the Spirit continue to astonish and amaze and work new wonders in our lives to expand the reach of the good news so that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

After all it's NOT five o'clock some where; it's Pentecost, here. Amen.