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Gathering the Scattered

PENTECOST SUNDAY 2020 YouTube message

Scripture: Acts 2:1-21

May 31, 2020

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine." But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams. Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist. The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today is Pentecost Sunday –

Pente - meaning 50

50 days after Easter

The Sunday of the Holy Spirit, the birthday of the church.

We wear red.

Like mine

Fire red flames sparking & flickering faith

Adding to that the mighty wind blowing truth & understanding into our lives

That day the believers gathered together

Suddenly everyone can hear one another.

No language barriers.

No "others"

No "I can't understand how he speaks"

Peter's Galilean accent doesn't betray him as on the night of Jesus' arrest & suffering.

I like that Luke In Acts names the places where all these different people originated.

That's important.

Their different places mattered.

It was part of who they were.

But they're not held against them.

Like nothing good coming out of Nazareth aa some said of Jesus.

This is comforting to hear today

Even as our own tv & phone screens are filled with violence and a shockingly horrific video of a needless death by those entrusted with serving & protecting.

Differences shouldn't motivate actions.

God used differences of people as a gift.

All heard God's message in their own different tongue & all understood.

We need such understanding.

We need to live such understanding

Pentecost comforts us, reassure us, and animates our hands & feet to serve

And emulate Christ in all we do

The sending of the Spirit makes us all the body of Christ in the world

So when one suffers, we all suffer together.

God's mighty deed is Jesus Christ crucified & risen for the life of the world.

His most important act!

The only truly perfect power we have

It's a great awakening today

Hearts and minds are opened

God's great "aha" moment for us

God's plan in saving the world through Christ makes sense!

All these divine puzzle pieces fit in place!

The years of separation have passed.

The longing is over.

The wandering has ceased.

Freedom is ours.

Pentecost is a real home coming for the entire body of Christ scattered all over the world.

God wants us close to Him forever.

As He once walked with humanity on earth, then departed when sin grew too ugly.

Then after generations of angst He literally pulled up a chair close to all of us giving us the life of Jesus.

Now He imports His Spirit so all this salvation history makes sense

"...and now your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams."

The church today needs imaginative Gospel-centred vision.

The church needs to re-claim her often muted voice.

Find her witnessing skills

The compassion which marked Jesus' ministry so shapes ours
Seeing things as they are but then reimagining things as they could be with faith and serving
As challenging as these times are they are also invigorating with new ways and new visions.
Through the all-encompassing saving love of Christ.
The scriptures aren't a bland history lesson
They're the living active Word-voice spoken from our God to real people
It's time to cease with worry for our own self comforts.
The message of Pentecost is a call to re-invigoration!
The wild and free Holy Spirit is descending upon us to imagine the new ways in which God is calling us to be church, to do ministry, to be Christians.
Our biggest problem is that we want a God who will solve our problems.
The problem-solving God shapes the way we pray,
the way we read the Bible.
Scripture is not so much a problem solver as it is OUR faith story
as we see ourselves unfold in its message daily, hourly.
Maybe we just listen.
Hear the Word.
See Christ.
See the needs around us.
Respond in faith?
Responding to the world around us
Something like this I learned years ago
Responding
It's a big part of being an artist.
In Art school, my design prof showed us a Leaf
He held it up.
Said God created it. Its perfect. You can't improve on it...
Your job – as artists,...is responding to it!
That response is in our imaginations, intellects and hearts.
Within our talents and interests.
Same as our response to the world.
Engaging the world.
Re-imagining ways to express the hope we have
Letting God lead. Letting His Spirit twist our paths in His direction.
Letting go of our control.
Letting our sinful self die
And it does.
With the spirit at work in us we live new
Because our redeemed self lives.
For us, the pouring out of the Spirit like a baptismal shower is a wonderful miraculous
treasure words can't fully express.
Just like those gathered that day

the Holy Spirit invades our space and turns our lives upside down.

We begin believing things

And saying things

Only God could've put in our mouths.

We're dreaming dreams and envisioning visions.

We're encountering people we never dreamt of encountering.

Why?

Because the Holy Spirit is re-vamping us from the inside out!

Seeing the world in need of hearing and trusting in this same revamping!

The Holy Spirit didn't solve the problems of the church according to the stories in the Book of Acts.

Instead the Holy Spirit created new problems:

Saul, a persecutor of the early believers – becomes an avid convert. Who can trust that?

A Eunuch from Ethiopia asks Apostle Philip to interpret a portion of Isaiah, converts, is baptized and the seed of the Gospel is planted in North Africa.

Who'd have thought that would happen!?

What do we do with Saul? What to do with the Ethiopian or all the new believers' following Peter's sermon?

Welcome them all in!

That was extremely challenging to the early church – totally out of the box!

New scary but so Christ like simple

Christ crucified & living is still our only mighty power - because it is God's power in bringing the world back to Himself.

Our real life message.

The Spirit keeps us connected to Christ just as roadways take us back home.

So if Christ suffered & died, we will too.

There will be trials and troubles and terrifying experiences

Mixed with celebrations and times of renewal.

I know we long to rub elbows and create tangible avenues for the Gospel to penetrate our neighbourhoods. In person. In our buildings

Maybe, just maybe, the problems we face in the church today,

and they are indeed challenging problems,

maybe these problems are Spirit sent.

Maybe these problems are meant to draw us out of our preoccupation with ourselves , confess our sins, TRUST JESUS and remain in action for those in need around us.

Finding our voice

Our witnessing voice

Which involves a cross & empty tomb

Our wide and wiling welcome

Maybe the Spirit's tearing down the walls of the church so that we might see new visions and dream new dreams?

Peter is quoting the Prophet, Joel, in the Acts Reading when he talks about dreams and visions...they anticipated a new future for all people.

A generation of people immediately responding to this new Spirit-power.

All people

All languages, races, colours —like Heaven itself illustrates in Revelations!

And so as the body of Christ in 2020, you, as many, different, scattered in all places, are Christ to the nations.

Even as voices crying out for justice.

Even as laments flying up to God's throne when innocent people are killed for no reason.

When hungry go unfed, when sick are left to die.

When COVID takes more lives

When jobs are lost

When depression weighs us down

These are our realities here and everywhere.

When one member of the Body of Jesus suffers, we all suffer together.

All we have is Christ emitting from our humble frame drawing into our presence those who have need.

Baptized and energized with the Spirit we have His Word and the message of God's mighty deed

This mighty saving deed we are gracing other people's lives when we speak of a dying Lord on a cross and an empty garden grave.

He has saved us with His Blood, He saves you, and He saves even those who feel unsaveable.

No one is out of reach from God's all encompassing love and compassion.

Christ crucified & risen is the Spirit's transformative redesign for our needy world.

Even if you forget what to say, the Spirit speaks.

Blows His wind in your lungs to fan the flame of faith lit upon your heart.

Its exciting.

Its powerful.

We will not only survive

but our Lord's grace,

But we'll flourish.

In revamped style.

Red & Fiery.

Amen.