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 May 20, 2018
 Pentecost

The Challenge of Pentecost
Acts 2:1-21

*2 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were **all together** in one place.*

*2 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. 3 Divided tongues, as of **fire**, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4 **All** of them were filled with the **Holy Spirit** and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them **ability**.*

*5 Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. 6 And at this sound the crowd gathered and was **bewildered**, because each one heard them **speaking** in the native language of each. 7 Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our **own native language**? 9 Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11 Cretans and Arabs— in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power."*

*12 **All** were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" 13 But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."*

*14 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. 15 Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. 16 No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:*

*17 '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.*

*18 Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
 in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
 and they shall prophesy.*

*19 And I will show portents in the heaven above
 and signs on the earth below,*

blood, and fire, and smoky mist.
²⁰ *The sun shall be turned to darkness*
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.
²¹ *Then **everyone** who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'*

Today I want to do something a little bit different,
 To help us all **hear** the story a bit differently.
 I'm going to **re-read** the first few verses,
 and I'm going to ask you think about a question while I read it.

When I read the first time I want you to notice **the word or phrase** that stands out to you.....read vs. 1-12....share

When I read it this time I want you to see what **image** comes into your mind....
 Share....

When I read it this last time I want you to think about:
What is God saying to me in this story?
 Share.....

What we've just done is called **Lectio Divina**,
 and it's an **ancient** church way of studying and listening to the Bible.
 You can do it **at home** with your Bible, and any story in it.
 I think it's especially powerful with those stories
 that you've heard **many times**.

It's good for us as we celebrate Pentecost,
 To think about—**what does this mean for me? Today?**
 Why does this matter to us—**as people, and as a church?**

One thing we find in scripture stories is **ourselves**.
 We find where **we are** in the story—so think about that for a minute.
Where are you in this story?

If you are one of those gathered in that **room**,
 what does it feel like to be 'preaching'?
 If you are **outside** the room, gathered with the crowds in Jerusalem,
 What does it feel like to hear people speak about God's power?

This story says a lot to us about the ***power of the Holy Spirit***.

I mean can you even imagine—

what tongues of ***fire and a mighty wind*** would have looked like as it descended upon people,

who then started all preaching in different languages?

Talk about wild!

No wonder some thought they were all ***drunk!***

It's easy for us to read this story,

and hear Jesus' words about the Spirit,

and think—well, that was then, this is now.

Where is this powerful Spirit, this Spirit of truth in my life ***today?***

Where is the Holy Spirit ***in your life today?***

Where have you seen the Spirit at work ***in your life, this week? This month?***

This year? Maybe even today?

I was thinking about this as I was writing, and I thought wow,

the Holy Spirit has been ***having coffee with me*** on the porch

early in the mornings.

The Spirit has been my prayer ***companion*** as I sit there and pray and write.

The Spirit has been ***reminding*** me of God's promises in the mornings.

Where have you seen the Spirit at work in ***your life?***

Has it been through a friend? A family member?

Nature? Work? Something totally ordinary?

I want you to turn to a neighbor right now ***and tell them,***

where you saw or experienced the power of the Holy Spirit recently:

doesn't matter what it is.....share.

Share a ***God-sighting!***

You know, Pentecost reminds us that the Holy Spirit is our ***power source***.

It was the wind and fire that they saw,

when they received the power to preach.

It was that act that ***created the church---***

because the Holy Spirit made preachers of all Jesus' followers

That's why we call it the *birthday* of the church!

Pentecost is a *new chapter* for all God's people, and Jesus' disciples. From now on they will be proclaiming God's power to everyone.

Pentecost is about the people of God *expanding*—beyond Jews—to include people all over the world.

Wind and fire—are things that easily get *out of control*, right?

That's exactly right.

No coincidence that this is how the Spirit appears—in wind and fire.

It's how God appeared to the Israelites in the wilderness-

as a *cloud* by day and a *pillar* of fire by night.

It was how *Moses* was called---in a burning bush.

Wind and fire are some of the *elemental powers* of the universe.

Life depends upon them.

Just like our *lives still depend upon* the power of the Holy Spirit in us.

Do you *realize* that?

Holy Spirit is our *power source*—to do anything in faith!

Holy Spirit is like the *wall outlet*, and we have to 'plug in' to it's power, and when we do—watch out!

One thing I heard when studying this lectio divina style, reading it aloud to myself three times, the way we all did together,

Was the word: *ALL*.

And the phrase:

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

They *ALL* had the Spirit's power,

and those gathered *ALL heard* about God in their own tongue.

This story to me, is about all God's people receiving *all of God's power* and hearing *all of God's good news*.

This is about an *ever widening circle* of God's power,

And of God's love.

They weren't just speaking in tongues, it says:
we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.
They are ***ALL hearing*** the Good ***news*** of God's love!

I was reading this week in the ***Presbyterian Outlook***,
and Editor Rev. Jill Duffield was writing about
'a wider love' in the Pentecost story.
She was talking about the ***revolutionary*** side of the Spirit—
where barriers were broken down.
Faith in Jesus was no longer for just a select few. It was for ***ALL***.
And the church became not just ***multicultural, but multilingual!***

She was asking, where is that ***revolution of Pentecost today?***
Have we ***shut out*** the Spirit, in our lives, and churches?
Have we ***run away*** from that power and message?

After all a Spirit-filled life, a Spirit-filled church is ***challenging!***
If we are going to widen God's love and the message of God's grace,
To literally everyone---well, that takes ***patience, and effort,***
It means ***we don't all get to have what we want*** in church or worship,
it means we have to start thinking about the people
that aren't even in our church,
and what would help them know God's love!

It means using some ***new methods,*** and some ***new vocabulary.***
Do people ***visiting*** know the language of our worship?
Do they feel ***comfortable*** with us, and what we are doing,
or is what we're doing exclusionary? Does it put up barriers?

Duffield says we are usually happy to just hear this Pentecost story,
say 'happy birthday church!', and then go back to our favorite pew!
Which is not what God calls us to do!

The people of Jesus' day were not much different from us.
Different cultures didn't hang out together, or speak one another's languages.
People were ***suspicious and wary,***
of those who were different, just like we are today.

And there were **huge barriers**—just like today,
the people were more **divided** than united.

Duffield writes:

*Pentecost is **revolutionary**, turning upside down and inside out every human-constructed category, divide and barrier to God's constituting one family. Distinct languages remain, but now we can speak to one another and understand. **Nothing** will separate us from the love of God....or from one another, either.*

*And yet, here we are in 2018, **divided**.*

*The income gap grows, schools have re-segregated, most neighborhoods are homogeneous and churches... What **happened** to the revolution of Pentecost?*

She went on to talk about a **lecture**,

about pastors being 'priests of segregation'.

... they have "settled for love of their own people rather than using love to create a new people."

She says all too often that's us---settling for loving our own people.

What if we tried to learn another language, lean on the Holy Spirit,

And help make a new people?

Jill Duffield in the Presbyterian Outlook, May 14, 2018.

That's not easy, is it?

It's **way, way easier to be divided**, and separated.

And just hang out together with the people we already love.

But Pentecost is about a **wider love**.

The love of God—not just for us **in here**, but for a whole world out there.

How will we **show** that love?

How will we **widen** our love?

How will we try to let **ALL people know** the love of God?

And the **power** of the Holy Spirit?

These are some important things for us to consider as we gather today and celebrate this amazing event that took place thousands of years ago.

I see us doing some of this already—
And I see opportunities to keep moving outside ourselves.
At **Youth Café, at VBS, in our youth** group,
In **worship**—when we invite those we know.
Whenever we do mission out in the community,
But, where else can we reach out?
This is what we're called to do—
And we **depend on** the Holy Spirit, to help us!

Friends, hear the **Good news** of the Gospel on this Pentecost day:
The same Holy Spirit that came in wind and fire that day,
Is the powerful Spirit of truth that **dwells** in us today!
And **our calling** remains the same—
to speak about God's power and love in the languages
of ALL God's people.
May we hear that call, and respond!
Amen.