

Scripture:

Numbers 11:24-30

Acts 2:1-21

“The Spirit at Pentecost.”

Today is Pentecost Sunday.

The Sunday in the Church year where we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit in a special ---- heightened --- and dramatic way.

It is 50 days after the Passover festival ---- 50 days since Jesus rose from the dead and 10 days since He left earth --- ascending to God’s right hand.

And now the Holy Spirit manifests itself at the festival of weeks ---- or Pentecost ---- in Jerusalem as the disciples gather together with Jews from near and far.

And it’s a rather dramatic expression of the Spirit ---- indeed the most dramatic of all the accounts we have of the Holy Spirit in all of scripture.

Indeed it’s so dramatic that the disciples have great difficulty describing it.

Picking it up at verse 2 from the book of Acts today ---- “Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit....”

Listen to the words again ----- “Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind...” --- and ---- “They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire...”

“Like...” ----- and --- “What seemed to be...”

It was like --- and it seemed to be ----- in others words those who were there couldn’t describe what exactly happened all that well.

Words couldn’t capture what was happening --- “like” ----- and ---“it seemed to be” ----- are the best the disciples can do in describing things.

The work and witness and presence and influence of the Holy Spirit isn't ever something that can be described precisely ----- and it can't be described precisely ----- precisely because it is the work and witness and presence of God.

When it comes to God there is --- always a little bit of healthy mystery.

When it comes to God there is always ---- or at least ought to be ---- a bit of healthy --- beyond our ability to understand and articulate --- mystery.

“Like” --- and --- “seemed to be” ----- are as close as the disciples get to describing God's presence on the very first post resurrection day of Pentecost.

What happens after this indescribable --- mysterious --- manifestation of the Spirit is a whole lot clearer than how the disciples are able to describe it.

Verse 4 ----- “all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues --- or languages ----- as the Spirit enabled them.”

As was the case with all major festivals in the Jewish year ---- all Jews in and around Jerusalem were mandated ---- to gather in the great city and worship and celebrate the feast and festival together.

And so there were Parthians --- Medes --- Elamites --- residents from Mesopotamia --- Judea and Cappadocia ---- Asia --- Pamphylia --- Egypt ---- ---- Libya --- Rome and so on as verses 9-11 in our reading from the book of Acts recounts.

There were people in Jerusalem who spoke various languages --- and as the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples it enabled them --- at least for a time --- to speak to these people in languages that they understood.

The Spirit blessed the disciples with the ability to communicate clearly to all the visitors who traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost.

And clearly it didn't go unnoticed or happen quietly --- off to the side.

It was public --- dramatic and caused quite a stir.

“Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”

“Suddenly something like a violent wind” --- “what seemed to be tongues of fire” ----- and ----- “the ability to speak various languages.”

Sudden --- dramatic ---- difficult to describe ---- miraculous --- and at the same time clarifying ----- clarity ----- speaking in languages they could all understand.

The Holy Spirit is the gift of new life.

Sudden ----- unmerited --- irresistible new life.

And at the heart of the church’s new life is the experience of the crucified risen Lord.

At the heart of the church’s new life is the experience of the crucified risen Lord ----- because once the Spirit has caught the attention of all the visitors in Jerusalem ----- the message is all about the Risen and ascended Lord --- Jesus Christ.

The book of Acts is all about the sharing and the spreading of the message of the Risen and Ascended Lord.

The Spirit is all about new life --- new life in Christ and that’s precisely the message that the disciples share in this moment at Pentecost and beyond.

And what a moment it is ---- all the stops are pulled out on this first post resurrection day of Pentecost ----- God doesn’t hold anything back ----- He seizes this opportunity to share Christ as all Jews for miles and miles gather together for the first time since Jesus was killed.

A heavenly sound like a rushing wind ----- descending fire ----- patterns of transformed speech ----- and likely a whole lot more than this as well.

Not even the most lavish use of human language is capable of capturing the experiences of the day --- which is part of what this passage conveys.

What actually happened --- goes far beyond human description --- terms such as ----- “like” ----- and ----- “seemed to be” ----- are the best the disciples can muster to capture the power and mystery of the day.

How and why the Spirit comes are far beyond our ability to explain ---just as it was well beyond the disciples ability to explain --- and always will be.

What they do know is that the Spirit enabled to communicate clearly --- better ---- and more faithfully ---- the Spirit enabled them to speak such that everyone clearly understood what they were saying.

The Spirit blessed the disciples with new life ---- sudden ---- unmerited --- and irresistible new life.

And their message was precisely one and the same ---- new life --- sudden -- ----- unmerited ----- irresistible ---- new life.

New life for the church!

New life for individuals within the church!

New life through the Spirit of God!

This is the meaning of Pentecost!

And according to the book of Acts today ----- no one present is excluded from the powerful and sudden display of God’s grace at Pentecost.

Unlike some other important moments in the history of God’s acts of salvation --- the transfiguration for example ---- where only a few are witnesses to the work of God’s Spirit ----- at Pentecost everyone is included.

What happens at Pentecost is not some inner mystical experience --- but an outpouring of God’s energy that touches every single person present.

The Spirit is for everyone ----- and it comes to everyone in ways that they all can understand.

All those present hear the Good News of Jesus Christ in their native tongue.

Pentecost reminds us that God speaks to us in ways that we can understand -
----- in ways ---- in images ----- in language --- in experiences -----
--- that resonate with us.

Some people understand Jesus in terms like ---- “Blood of the lamb” -----
for others it’s ----- “Atoning one” ----- for others phrasings like -----
“Sanctifying one” ----- “Or reconciling and redeeming one” ----- resonate
greater and more faithfully.

For some it’s ---- “faithful friend and companion along the way” --- and so
on ----- the possibilities are endless.

And all are good and faithful --- all are God inspired --- all are Spirit led.

The precise terms employed by the disciples differed --- different languages
were spoken ----- but the message was one and the same the same ----

Jesus is the Christ.

The saving one.

**He is God’s will and love ---- come to life ---- showing us by example in
the flesh and blood that God loves us --- forgives us --- and saves us -----
showing us by example how we are to live out this saving --- forgiving
love of God.**

The truth is ----- the life giving work and presence of the Holy Spirit runs
like a ribbon through the whole of the gospel story.

From the murky beginning --- through to the triumphant end --- the Spirit ---
---- murmurs --- breathes --- and broods ----- sometimes still and small -----
other times --- like today --- exploding onto the scene in dramatic fashion.

Today in the book of Acts we have a bright shining --- dramatic ----- sudden --- and powerful example of the Holy Spirit.

And what more perfect day to celebrate the day of Pentecost ----- where we celebrate new life and the manifestation of the Spirit it a heightened special way ----- that to worship outdoors ----- and experience new life in ways that we might not ----- if we were inside.

The breeze --- the breath of God.

The birds chirping ---- the voice of God --- God speaking --- in another language.

The sun shining --- the leaves and trees' rustling ---- the beauty of God's voice in nature ---- whispering new life --- Spirit filled life.

The wind and the fire would have been novel and unusual --- as would have been the various languages at Pentecost ----- but the new life --- joy --- and fellowship --- worship ----- and freedom ---- boldness and power wouldn't have been all that new.

So today ----- the sounds of the birds --- and the breeze --- and the sun shining ----- and the trees and leaves rustling --- are a little new to us --- at least ---- **"new"** ---- in the context of corporate worship.

But the new life ----- joy --- fellowship ---- worship --- freedom in Christ --- --- the boldness and power of the Spirit of God --- aren't all that new.

God sometimes shakes things up a bit in order to get people's attention ---- the very first post resurrection festival of Pentecost.

And that's part of what we're trying to do today isn't it.

We're still worshipping like we always do --- every Sunday of the year --- week in and week out.

But we're also shaking it up a bit ---- moving outside ---- hoping to draw a little attention to God ---- as people walk ---- and drive by.

Just as a body without breathe is a corpse ----- so the church without the Spirit is dead.

God is forever and always breathing new life --- the new life of His spirit into the church --- and Pentecost is a heightened --- special ---- sudden -----
----- dramatic ----- and powerful example of this.

Today as we sing --- and pray ----- and praise God in the context of His great and wonderful creation ----- may we be open in a heightened and special way --- to the movement of His Spirit in and through us.

In and through us as individuals ----- and --- in and through us as a community of faith --- as a family of faith.

New life.

**Sudden --- unmerited ---- irresistible new life through God's Spirit---
that's the heart of Pentecost.**

New life for the church!

New life for individuals within the church!

New life through the Spirit of God!

That is the meaning of Pentecost!

That's what we're here to celebrate today.

I feel the Spirit of God blowing through this community ----- and not just today ----- but in more general --- and day to day ----- terms as well.

And others have shared this with me as well ---- that they too ----- feel the Holy Spirit ---- blowing in ----- and through St. Andrew's.

Praise God.

Praise God for newness of life in Jesus Christ.

Praise God for newness of life in the Holy Spirit.

It's a beautiful day to worship God.

It's an exciting time to be at St. Andrew's in Whitby.

God is good.

God is faithful.

And God is just.

And He is blessing us with His Holy Spirit as we continue to grow and mature and share our faith that all might come to know Him.

May we continue on ---- in His name ----- sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ that all might come to know Him.

Let us pray.

Gracious God we thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit.

May we never take it for granted.

May we never hide it or pack it away.

Instead may we share the joy that is in our hearts for all to see and experience.

May we forever see ourselves in the context of your great plan for your creation.

And may forever celebrate the newness of life that you give us through Christ Jesus our Lord --- and through the blessed and powerful gift of your Spirit.

Amen.