

Scripture:

Numbers 11:24-30

Acts 2 :1-21

“The age of the Spirit.”

Today is the day of Pentecost ---- the day we remember the Jewish feast of Weeks --- or Shavout ---- when Jesus sent the Holy Spirit upon His disciples just as He promised He would before He ascended to God’s right hand.

And the scene we have in the book of Acts is a very dramatic depiction of the Holy Spirit coming that day ---- and as so often happens when the Holy Spirit comes it is more of a feeling than anything that can be accurately described.

Words often fail us --- when it comes to describing the Holy Spirit.

Listen to how it is described in the book of Acts today ---- picking it up at verse 2 ----

“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...”

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

A visit from the Holy Spirit --- time spent wit the Holy Spirit ----- is often beyond words --- even the disciples can’t find any words to adequately describe what they experienced that day ----- “Something like...” ---- and --- - “What seemed to be...” --- are the best they can come up with.

The truth is the Spirit of God transcends description --- the Spirit of God is beyond words ----- it cannot be contained or limited --- as the disciples say -- ---- it’s kind of like a rush of wind.

It blows where it chooses --- and cannot be stopped.

You can’t stop the wind from blowing --- yes you can put things in the way to stop the wind from hitting you but you can’t outright stop the wind ---- when it blows it blows --- there’s nothing that can be done to stop it.

So it is with the Holy Spirit.

In our Old Testament reading today ---- we have another recounting of the coming of the Spirit --- a little less dramatic than that in the Book of Acts but no less powerful ---- real --- or faithful.

Moses gathers 70 of the elders.

The people have received the tablets ---- the Ten Commandments --- they are at the foot of the mountain ---Sinai --- and they are about to set out for the Promised Land --- and here they gather ----- Moses and 70 of the elders - --- and then this happens ----- picking it up at verse 25 ---

“Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke with him --- and he took some of the power of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders.”

The elders are blessed with power of the Holy Spirit --- it’s far less dramatic than --- “The sudden sound like the blowing of a violent wind...” --- and ----- “They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire...” --- but it is no less real ---- powerful --- or true.

And of course if we read on in the book of Numbers ---- a little later on in our passage --- we see that 2 elders who weren’t there with Moses and the other 70 elders are also blessed with the Holy Spirit.

Picking it up at verse 26 --- “However two men, whose names were Eldad and Medad --- had remained in the camp. They were listed among the elders, but did not go out to the tent. Yet the Spirit also rested on them, and they prophesied in the camp.”

And as we see just after this Joshua isn’t sure about this --- he’s a little anxious and uncertain ---- maybe these 2 who weren’t with the group should be stopped.

But Moses --- faithful as always --- tells Joshua not to worry.

Moses knows the Spirit works as the Spirit works ---- it cannot be contained or limited --- and so he blesses and celebrates that the Spirit has rested on Eldad and Medad too ----- see verse 29.

We live in the age of the Spirit --- the in between time --- the time between Christ's first coming and His second coming --- we live it what we might call the age of the Spirit.

And to be clear ---- at the heart of the church's life is the experience of the crucified --- risen Lord.

The Lamb of God ---- the prince of peace ---- wonderful counselor ---- bread of life --- and so on ---- as our Sunday school highlighted so well for us earlier.

The heart of the church's life is the experience of the crucified and risen Lord --- and the Holy Spirit lives to empower us to share this saving truth of Christ ----- Christ crucified and Christ resurrected --- with us forever.

It is never the Spirit just for the Spirit's sake ----- it is the Spirit to share --- and bear witness --- and testify --- to our Risen Lord.

If we read on past our passage from Acts today --- we see that the Holy Spirit was given to the disciples that they might share Jesus.

“Fellow Israelites, listen to this...” Peter says beginning right after our passage in verse 22 ----- “Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles...” ----- and Peter goes on to share the truth of Christ --- that He is the Messiah and Lord that they have been longing for.

The Spirit comes to empower the proclamation of the Risen Lord --- it has purpose ---- meaning --- and function.

When we are blessed by the Spirit --- we may not know exactly how to describe it how or put it into words --- but we are blessed with leadings ---- and direction.

Even if we don't always recognize it at the time --- the Spirit always has a clear purpose.

Moses and the 72 preached and prophesied --- Peter and the disciples preached and shared Christ ----- the Spirit has purpose --- meaning and gives us divine direction.

Yes the spirit is comfort --- but it is comfort with purpose and with direction.

And we live in the age of the Spirit --- the age where we are blessed with the comfort of Christ and direction from God.

The comfort and direction as we wait for Christ to return again.

In the mean time ---- we have the presence of God in the Holy Spirit and the Risen Christ to guide --- lead --- and sustain us.

The gift of Christ is new life ---- and we live in that new life now.

And the gift of the Spirit is new life --- and we live in that new life now too.

Yes we wait for the arrival of the Messiah at the end of time as we know it.

But we also have new life in Christ here and now.

What happened at Pentecost was the out pouring of God's energy.

And once God's energy --- and presence and power and influence are poured out --- it can't be bottled back up --- or taken back.

The Spirit has mysterious generative power that is beyond human comprehension.

The goal of a Spirit directed person isn't ever just be to describe what it is like to dwell in the Spirit --- but to do as the Spirit so directs.

And very often it is far less dramatic than what we have described in the book of Acts today.

More often than not --- there isn't any thing that seems to tongues o fire --- or something like the blowing of a violent wind ----- either way -----
--- regardless of how the Spirit comes --- in a violent wind seeming like tongues of fire ----- or in gentleness -----

God is real.

Jesus is real.

The Holy Spirit is real.

And very often the presence of God and His Holy Spirit comes after prayer.

Jeremiah 29:12 says --- And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.”

And then in Matthew 21:22 --- we have ---- “Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.”

And of course just before the Spirit comes in the book of Acts at Pentecost -- -- we heard a bit about this last week --- we find the disciples gathered in prayer ----- Acts 1 verse 14 --- “they all joined together constantly in prayer...”

We live in the in between time ----- we live in the age of the spirit --- and one of the great and faithful acts and attributes of this age is prayer.

Indeed one of the great attributes of every age from the perspective of faith is prayer.

Look at how many times --- and how often the early church prayed.

After Jesus left the disciples to return to God’s right hand --- they saturated themselves in prayer.

And so we follow their lead and remain in dialogue with God --- as we wait --- and witness ---- and testify to the saving truth of God in Jesus Christ.

Pentecost is all about God blessing the people and equipping them to share God’s Word and God’s living Word Jesus Christ.

As the Reformation Commentary on Scripture says in its introduction to Acts chapter 2 ----- “...the ...Spirit is not just to entertain or expand

intellectual horizons --- but to share fellowship with others in love and conversation ---- drawing them into the divine life.”

And Jesus Christ is the heart and the very centre of divine life.

He is the beginning and the end ---- the Alpha and the Omega.

What a great way to celebrate Pentecost --- the coming of the Holy Spirit from Christ to us --- by having a reflection on the names of Christ ----- and by celebrating communion --- our union with Christ --- our doing as Christ instructed us to do until He comes again.

At the heart of the church’s life is the experience of the crucified --- risen Lord.

And so whether it be Pentecost --- Palm Sunday --- Easter ---- or Christmas Day --- the highest of high days in the church year --- all roads point to the crucified and risen Lord.

The Holy Spirit came to the disciples empowering them to proclaim the Christ event.

The Holy Spirit comes into our hearts enabling us to share the saving love of Christ too.

And just as the disciples gathered praying and seeking God’s direction --- so too do we gather and pray --- seeking God’s direction together.

And just as Christ instructed His disciples to gather together and break bread ---- “Do this in remembrance of me” ---He said ---- so do we gather together and break bread --- in His name.

There are a few truly high and celebratory days in the church year --- where we want to pull out all of the stops.

Today is one of them ---- the breath of God blowing through the hearts of the disciples empowering them to proclaim to truth of Christ to all who would listen.

The real event of Pentecost happens just after our reading today.

In our reading we have the coming of the Spirit --- but the real event comes right after this --- go home and read the rest of Acts chapter 2 --- that's the real story of Pentecost ---- Peter preaching and sharing and explaining all about the truth and saving love of Jesus Christ to the vast crowd that was in Jerusalem for the festival of weeks.

The one we call --- Lamb of God ----- Rock --- High Priest ----- True Vine --
- Messiah ---- Good Shepherd --- Light of the world ----- Cornerstone ---
Servant Saviour ---- and so on --- many of which you see here before us.

The one we call Bread of Life ----- our salvation.

Today we gather as He instructed us to gather --- doing this in remembrance of Him.

Proclaiming His death until He comes again.

By whatever name we know Him ---- He is our prophet --- priest and King --
- our Saviour and our Messiah.

And we are blessed with the Spirit from Him ---- to share Him --- proclaim Him and make Him known in this in between time ---- in this age of the Spirit time.

The Spirit of God will bless us with all the right words to share Christ just as it was at Pentecost --- the festival of weeks in Jerusalem for the first believers.

God will not leave us floundering or at a loss.

When our hearts are oriented to Him --- the words come ---- the gestures come ---- the leadings come --- and all in due time --- maybe not in our time --- but in due time --- God's time.

In the mean time --- we pray --- we proclaim --- and we break bread together.

We bear witness and we celebrate His goodness --- recalling the great deeds He has done --- and will do.

Looking eagerly towards the great and glorious day of the Lord ----- knowing that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Today is a day of great celebration ---- God sent the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit enabled the disciples to share Christ that all might come to know Him.

The saving love of God was shared and hearts were opened to its truth.

And we now stand in that great line of good and faithful witness to the way of our Lord Jesus Christ.

May we celebrate His presence ---- and share His great love.

Amen.