

Pentecost Sunday
June 5th, 2022
Christ Lutheran Church, West Covina

Acts 2:1-21
Psalm 104
Romans 8:14-17
John 14:8-17, 25-27

Sermon

“And I will ask the Father and He will give you another advocate to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth.”

Let Us pray...

O Lord God, you are the Creator and Spirit of all life. You have given us the gift of language which reflects our diversity, but through your Spirit we are able to communicate to one another in the language of love and so be united as one. Inspire us, O Lord, to indeed live as one so that we as your Church proclaim together your message of hope and new life. Breathe into us the power of your gospel so that we too may catch your Spirit and serve you with renewed strength. All these things we pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

I think I was about 10 or so when it happened for the first time. I was trying to see how high I could kick a football and before I knew it, my feet slipped out from underneath me, and I landed flat on my back. Suddenly it felt like I had no air to breathe! It seemed like an eternity until I was able to relax and regain my breath again. I heard one of my friends say “Oh you will be ok. You just got the wind knocked out of you.”

I imagine you all have had a similar experience at one time or another, as it can serve to remind you to never take breathing for granted! Each breath is precious, and yet don't we take our capacity to breathe completely for granted? Yet how long would we live without it? Something so vital and yet almost ignored. I wonder if the same can be said about the Holy Spirit. How often do we take its vital power to renew, heal, unite, and bring forth life all for granted? Perhaps, just like breathing, we don't fully appreciate the Spirit's presence in our lives and all that the Spirit does for us. Perhaps it is because we don't take time to ask ourselves “Was it the Holy Spirit?”

What is its role in our lives and how does it enable us to fully be alive and boldly live upon faith? The strange images we have for the Spirit on this day of Pentecost are wind and fire. Sometimes we even refer to the Spirit as the breath of life. Fire is often seen as the Spirit's power to ignite our passion as well as to refine us, to burn away all that can get in the way of being a faithful disciple.

Jesus tells the disciples that in order to understand the Spirit, we need to ask, “Who is the Spirit?” instead of “What is the Spirit?”

The Spirit is like a person who will advocate for us, comfort and strengthen us, who will enable us to hear and understand one another while appreciating our diversity, and at the same time, unite us and make us one, especially as we share in the same mission of proclaiming the truth. Isn't that what the Spirit did for Peter? It was only a few weeks before that Peter denied even knowing Jesus and now, being filled with the Spirit, Peter is the one who stands up before everyone and declares “These people are not drunk” (and one of my favorite lines...) “it is only 9 in the morning!” Instead, they are filled with the Spirit just as Jesus had promised them. Now each and everyone of them will be inspired to declare the good news of the Risen Lord! They will boldly proclaim that in his name is salvation and liberation from death and sin. Yes, and isn't this the same role of the Spirit for us today? To allow the Spirit to let go of our fears and let our hearts not be troubled, so we can become vessels for the peace that Jesus offers us. If we are open to the Spirit's presence, we will be able to trust and keep on being reminded of Jesus' teachings and even have the fortitude to obey His commandments.

That's why I believe we should truly celebrate the ongoing event of Pentecost; that we too might be transformed by the Spirit to be the Church God desires us to be. Just like the disciples we can learn to listen to one another and understand how, through our differences, we can create even more powerful and authentic unity. Likewise, are we not also reminded of who we are through who the Spirit is? The Spirit restores our confidence to do exactly what Jesus commands us to do; baptize, love, forgive, repent, serve and be a witness in his name.

Because of the Spirit we don't have to feel timid or say to ourselves “I can't do that”. No, not when we are doing the work of Christ, because we have the Spirit who is ever present. Sure, we can take the Spirit for granted, just like breathing, but if we open our hearts and catch the Spirit moving in and through us, then we will have the power and the fire to kindle anew, God's love, and the wind to get us moving, fulfilling our mission to demonstrate that the Risen Christ is alive and well in us and the world.

Amen