

St. Luke's Episcopal Church
Lindale, Texas
Acts 2:1-21
Day of Pentecost
June 4, 2017
The Reverend John P. Carr

Filled with the Holy Spirit

The Day of Pentecost is of tremendous historical and theological importance. The great days of the church calendar celebrate the life of Jesus from His birth at Christmas through the last week of His life on earth ending with His resurrection on Easter Day. These special days celebrate the events in the life of Jesus and how He interacted with the people of the time and the disciples. From the day of Pentecost forward, the relationship between man and God is directly with the Holy Spirit.

Following His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples on numerous occasions and various places. His final appearance was His departure on the Day of Ascension when He left earth to return to His Father. Even as He departed, He directed the disciples to return to Jerusalem and wait for the promised power that the Father was sending to them. He had earlier alluded to the arrival of the Advocate, the Comforter who would come to them as He left. They would not be left alone, the power of the Holy Spirit would be given to them. All of these events involve the life and presence of Jesus and are focused on His words and interactions with His disciples. These are holy moments shared between the Son of God and the disciples.

At Pentecost the power of the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples as they were in hiding. This moment changed history. Now the active agents for God were the people of God *following* the teachings of Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit. If the promised Holy Spirit had not arrived and changed the lives and outlook of the disciples it is not difficult to imagine that Christianity might have disappeared from the scene. God ensured that did not happen.

The Holy Spirit *did* arrive and the world changed because the Holy Spirit revealed something new to the disciples.

They were no longer men hiding in a room fearing what the Jews might do to the followers of Jesus. Now that the Son had returned to the Father, the Holy Spirit was sent and filled the hearts and minds of the followers of Jesus.

This is a monumental moment in history because *when the disciples changed, the world changed*. This was the real commencement day of the Christian faith.

The followers of Jesus were filled with the Holy Spirit and boldly went forth into the streets of Jerusalem proclaiming in many languages the story of the Way, The Truth and the life of Jesus. They fearlessly spoke to the Jewish authorities after the miracle of their speaking in the languages of all the known world at the time.

Their faith was real, strong and undeniable and would cause the world to change. Because of *that day* when the Holy Spirit filled the hearts and minds of the followers of Jesus, there are now billions of Christians around the world.

The Holy Spirit is with us today. Miracles of faith both great and small surround us.

We are a part of the Jesus movement empowered by the Holy Spirit. We, like the disciples, have seen that the power of the Holy Spirit brings people together to heal the world around them. The Spirit is alive and well and you are an expression of the Spirit as the Spirit is alive in you.

We see that the Spirit is alive in us in the world. We are called in the Great Commission to:

- *“go and make disciples of all nations,*
- *baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ and*
- *teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*
- *And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Mt. 28:19-20*

Interestingly, we are we given a charge, a commission, a responsibility to do our special work for God as His hands in the world to:

- GO
- TO MAKE DISCIPLES
- TO BAPTIZE AND
- TEACH THEM,
- and we are reassured that Jesus will be with us even unto the end of the age.

He is present with the Holy Spirit as part of the Trinity. At Ascension and before, Jesus told the disciples that as He went away, He would send the Holy Spirit, *what His Father promised*, the Advocate, the Counselor to be with and to guide them in their ministries. Then Jesus arose and left the earth. This was the end of the beginning of the kingdom of God on earth. Pentecost is also the beginning of the next age. Jesus said He would be with us even to the end of the age and He will be with us until He comes again and into eternity.

So what!, one might say. What is the importance of the Holy Spirit?

With the Holy Spirit with us we have nothing to fear.

Witness the Coptic Christians from Illinois who were killed in Egypt by Isis terrorists last week. When confronted by the terrorists and the choice between conversion or death was demanded, *they sang hymns*. They paid with their lives. The Holy Spirit was with them and gave them courage.

One of the survivors who lost almost her entire family, said that she was praying for the terrorists. She was praying for them to be forgiven.

- That is radical but it is what the Holy Spirit calls us to do.
- We are not of this world or like this world.
- We Christians are different.
- We are people of the Holy Spirit, we are people of the love of Christ.
- We forgive.
- We love our enemies.
- We care for the least, the poor the ignored, the marginalized.
- We are people who embrace the teachings of Jesus to love our neighbor.

There was a handicapped girl at a special Young Life Camp in the mid-east for kids with physical handicaps. She came to the camp in a wheel chair but when the rest of the kids walked into the field to play and get to know each other, she slumped down against a fence and rejected all invitations to participate. She could walk a little but very very slowly.

At lunch she began to cry and then stood and lumbered over to a chair away from the others who were eating. She sat alone crying. One of the Young Life leaders went to sit with her. The girl explained that she could not feed herself because of her disability. She could not hold the utensils. She was embarrassed to sit with the others. The other girl, the Young Life leader, gave her a hug and went to fill a plate for her and then returned and hand fed her new friend who could not feed herself. From that moment on the girl smiled, participated and even surprised them all when she struggled to her feet at the last club meeting and asked if she could say something.

The camp speaker leaned the microphone to her lips and this is what she said:
"I have never in my life experienced any moments like this. No one in our village cares for us like this.

And what I realize here is that it is not the person who has the problem with their body who has the problem.

No, it's the person who has a problem in their mind towards the person who has a problem in their body who has the problem.

Thank you for showing us that we are special and that we can do things that normal people do."

The young Christian leader, filled with the Holy Spirit and the love of Jesus, helped her new visiting Muslim friend.

The new girl was changed by the love that was unexpectedly shown to her.

This is what we are called to do. We are called to be agents of change by allowing the Holy Spirit to work through us, to animate our thoughts and actions and to enable us to become the hands of Christ in the world.

Amen

