

St. Thomas's Episcopal Church
Newark, DE
The Day of the Pentecost – June 4, 2017/Year A
Acts 2:1-21; Psalm 104:25-35, 37b; 1 Corinthians 12:3-13; John 20:19-23
The Reverend Paul W. Gennett, Jr

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*Come Holy Spirit! Fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in us the fire of your love!
Send forth your Spirit, and we shall be created; and with you, we will renew the face of the earth.
AMEN*

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“When the day of Pentecost had come, the disciples were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house ... Divided tongues, as of fire ... rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit ...”

As important this day is in our Christian life and faith, I can understand how disconnected it may sound and how difficult it can be to embrace what these first disciples experienced that Pentecost Day in downtown Jerusalem.

While our “many languages” lectors offer their gifts to recreate what the experience may have sounded to those first century folk outside that upper room. Their moving from being alone in their pew to gathering as one voice together in front of the altar gives a physical representation of what it was like it is still hard for our over-filled 21st century minds to absorb. Particularly as we sit fairly comfortably in OUR pew, in a comfortably climate controlled space, and of course **quietly and with order**. It is just hard to translate this experience into our time.

Author Annie Dillard writes, **“Why do we people in churches seem like cheerful, brainless tourists on a packaged tour of the Absolute? People who come here should be equipped with safety helmets and life vests, and the pews should all have safety harnesses. For if we come to church to be transformed, hang on tight for that is what the Spirit of the living God will do!”**

For all these things that do not seem **quite the same** as that first Pentecost Day, here is what will be equally and importantly the same for **every single one of us** gathered this day, in this place, and at this time -- ***we shall be created; and with you, we will renew the face of the earth TOGETHER!***

Together we will do this through the **presence and power and purpose** of Love that is our Triune God!

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Whatever we believe about the Church as we know it today, the community of faith for those first believers is **anything but orderly**. A bunch of ne'er do well followers of this Jesus now burst forth from their hideaway, speaking in the tongues of all the people, and proclaiming with wisdom and eloquence the in-breaking of the kingdom of God! Whatever our story in Holy Scripture and the Gospels are about, they are first and foremost about a **major alteration and transformation of our life!**

Yet before this life-shaking moment, those gathered in that upper room were together in prayer and **presence** to one another, and with one another. The Day of Pentecost is not a **private and personal relationship with God**, but a **public and communal profession of the Divine One** who touches our hearts and souls with fire of Love.

Then comes the **power of God** in transformation or conversion – *“And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house.”* This moment is called by many names, such as **being born again, regenerated, and redeemed**. Yet this is simply God's means of **closing in on us**, God getting God's way with the world through us in spite of what this reclamation may cost. We are transformed to be in right relationship with God's will and desire for our life and faith. We are sanctified with the saints of God in our lifelong redemptive journey with Christ. This life we live and claim as our faith now is filled in **purpose**.

The coming of God's kingdom is the gathering of the whole world into God's peace and love. The **purpose** and fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel, in which God pours out the Holy Spirit upon ALL flesh in this decisive moment of humanity. It is what we see and hear in these fisherman and others then, and in you and me right now! We hear the universal mission of the church symbolized by the specific **naming** of all peoples and nations. The confusion of the Tower of Babel brought about by human arrogance is now overturned by the power of God's Holy Spirit. All of humanity is brought to the divine possibility of right relationship once again through the promise of Jesus. The community of faith is **empowered** with new ways of **speaking, hearing, and being** to the whole world then, and to the whole world now.

The Spirit of our living God is not restricted to the privileged or those in power. The Spirit moves through and empowers ALL who believe and bear the faith in our Triune God. As St. Paul later writes in 1 Corinthians, the diversity of gifts are NOT for division, but for the common good. Paul later calls us to use these very and varied gifts as **ambassadors of God**, as those set apart by faith and charged with a sacred commission of announcing and being the reconciling presence of God in our world. And we NEVER do this alone but through participation in the community with what **God has already done and continues doing in us and in the lives of all**.

We live in a time and culture that believes in the fantastic notion that all conversion is **instantaneous and without cost**. When we truly **hear and speak God's Word** in our lives, it begins a **daily transformation** again, and again, and again. Through our transformation, we no longer live for ourselves alone but for the body of Christ, the Church. The church exists not for itself either, but to **show the world “God in skin”** by announcing the advent of a new world.

Being a disciple of Christ is our **adventure in transformation**. It is most often messy and most definitely messes with our life plans and flips our doodle calendar world upside down! It is the movement from death to life, darkness to light, and all through God's grace working through our lives. There is only one way I can describe this feeling of transformational invitation of God, and that is **relentless**. God's is **closing in on us** and getting God's way with the world in spite of what this reclamation may cost God or us. Pentecost is a movement of God to the world, and we are the instrument of God's mission through the **presence and power and purpose** of Love.

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Today may not feel like that first Pentecost Day did to the disciples and all who experienced the **presence and power and purpose** of Love those short 2100 years ago. Yet when all is said and done, on this day, you can make the choice of keeping this all to yourself and just check off another box in your faith journey. **Or you and I can and will be different ... and together, we can change the world.**

*Come Holy Spirit! Fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in us the fire of your love!
Send forth Your Spirit, and we shall be created; and with you, WE will renew the face of the earth.*

AMEN