

Acts 2:1-21

2:1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.
2:2 And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.
2:3 Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them.
2:4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.
2:5 Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem.
2:6 And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.
2:7 Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?
2:8 And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?
2:9 Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,
2:10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,
2:11 Cretans and Arabs--in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power."
2:12 All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"
2:13 But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."
2:14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say.
2:15 Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning.
2:16 No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:
2:17 'In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.
2:18 Even upon my slaves, both men and women, in those days I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.
2:19 And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist.
2:20 The sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.
2:21 Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'

1 Corinthians 12:3b-13

12:3b No one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit.
12:4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;
12:5 and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord;
12:6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.
12:7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.
12:8 To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit,

12:9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,
12:10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits,
to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.
12:11 All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.
12:12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.
12:13 For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--Jews or Greeks, slaves or free--and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Proclamation of the Word

Last Friday our country paused to remember and honor the 70th Anniversary of D-Day- the invasion of Normandy which most refer to as the beginning of the end of World II. 10,000 graves give witness to the tremendous loss of life. For those who have made a pilgrimage to this site, I hear them describe it in terms of deeply meaningful. So many still carry the pain and the pride of that experience as brothers gave the ultimate sacrifice for not only a nation, but European neighbors who were being overrun by evil, systemic murder, and ethnic cleansing. Those who survived this ordeal speak as if it was yesterday with tears and a catch in the throat. Ninety-something year old men remember stepping over the dead bodies and having to keep moving. They grieve still the loss of comrades and brothers. And we continue to salute them.

On June 6, 1944, President Franklin D. Roosevelt prayed:ⁱ

They will be sore tried, by night and by day, without rest-until the victory is won. The darkness will be rent by noise and flame. Men's souls will be shaken with the violences of war.

For these men are lately drawn from the ways of peace. They fight not for the lust of conquest. They fight to end conquest. They fight to liberate. They fight to let justice arise, and tolerance and good will among all Thy people. They yearn but for the end of battle, for their return to the haven of home.

Some will never return. Embrace these, Father, and receive them, Thy heroic servants, into Thy kingdom.

This group was dubbed "The Greatest Generation"ⁱⁱ by author Tom Brokaw some years ago because as he wrote, they were not seeking fame or recognition, but fought because it was "the right thing to do." And some WWII veterans remain here with us: Claire Caskey, Alice Dorn, George Mitchell, Bob Mixon, Mario Muzzi, and Phil Prince, all members of the greatest generation. What makes them great was a concern for the common good.

The common good, a value and term, used in public discourse these days as something we have lost and need to recover. This Sunday falls in between a week of D-Day anniversary and a Primary Election on Tuesday where we all have the privilege and duty to vote to serve the common good. As news commentators debate whether an American soldier should have been rescued, leaders and citizens

must ask what serves the common good. Recall the soldier's creed, "no man left behind" and the value of doing the right thing exemplified by the Greatest Generation.

Where does this sense of the common good come from? I did a little reading on this matter. Jim Wallis has written a book, *On God's Side; What Religions Forget and Politics Hasn't Learned about Serving the Common Good*. The "Common Good" was coined by Aristotle and has roots in Greek philosophy, of course, but here is a nice summary according to Jim Wallis,ⁱⁱⁱ

*The common good has origins in the beginnings of Christianity. An early church father, John Chrysostom (c. 347–407), once wrote: "This is the rule of most perfect Christianity, its most exact definition, its highest point, namely, the seeking of the **common good** . . . for nothing can so make a person an imitator of Christ as caring for his neighbors." Of course, all our religious traditions say that we are indeed our neighbor's keeper, but today people of every faith don't often actually say and do the things that their faith says and stands for.*

The notion of the common good has both religious and secular roots going back to Catholic social teaching, the Protestant social gospel, Judaism, Islam, and in the American Constitution itself, which says that government should promote "the general welfare."

For the Christian who professes "Jesus is Lord" seeking the common good is faith driven. Listen again to the opening words of our passage where Paul writes:

*No one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit.
Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;
and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in **everyone**.
To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the **common good**.*

Today is Pentecost Sunday when the Spirit whipped through Jerusalem and set a small band of Jesus followers on fire for the good news!

As they were living out being the Spirit led Church of Jesus in the new age, Paul wrote to the church at Corinth in this way. Paul was writing to put out fires, and remind them to seek the common good. The Corinthian church was embroiled in fights over who was most important. The people with means were serving themselves first at the Lord's Supper and the poorer members were eating the leftovers. They were fighting over sexuality and the proper use of it. The more things change, the more they stay the same as we as a church debate the care for the vulnerable poor and the proper role of the gift of sexuality in our church and society.

Paul invites the Corinthians into a new way of life as the church, one that sees the value of each and everyone who professes Jesus as Lord and serves the common good to the glory of God.

Contributing to the common good

There's an old story about a man who walked into a church that was under construction. He went up to one of the workers and asked, "What are you doing?"

"I'm sawing a board," the man replied.

He strolled up to a second worker and asked him what he was doing.

"I'm building a pew," was his answer.

Then the visitor walked over to a third worker and asked him the very same question. "I'm building a cathedral to the glory of God!" he replied.

Now there's a man who understands how his work contributes to the common good!

How can you and I each contribute to the common good and build up the church to the glory of God?

A challenge before Fort Hill church is our buildings and how they help us accomplish our mission. When people who are in wheelchairs or are disabled cannot access our church, we are not serving our common good. And when our 53 year old HVAC system in our Education Building is being patched together with duct tape, we are not serving the common good. If the HVAC went down, AA would not meet to support those struggling with Alcoholism. Children would not meet to learn to sing and study to the glory of God. Families with Preschoolers would not have a loving and nurturing place to learn and grow.

So as we receive the Master Plan to address these issues the Session, you and I will have the opportunity to serve the common good in a building renovation that not only maintains our facilities, but improves them for the common good. Each and every one of us will need to add our gifts so that work can be accomplished. We are past the 50th anniversary of the Education building and our Sanctuary turns 25 next year. We will do the right thing and care for these gifts given to us by prior generations of faithful Fort Hill Christians. We will be figuratively continuing to, "Build a cathedral to the glory of God!" And the ultimate common good, is for us to know and be in relationship with God who know us. One way we do that as by gathering in community as the church to tell what God is doing, has done, and will do. Our buildings exist to serve that purpose.

The Church is also a servant church. Our Greatest Ethic given to us by Jesus is to "love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind and strength, and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves."

Therefore, we exist by the power of the Spirit, not only to serve and care for our internal needs, but to love and serve our neighbors. We pray that the Holy Spirit moves in us and use us for God's work in the world.

We also work collectively as a church to follow the Spirit's leading into the world in the challenges raised in a new day. Look at your bulletin Cover....

PCUSA seal- word of God, pulpit, flames of Spirit and dove...Flames of Spirit means God's Spirit is still active, calling the Church to continue to serve.

Next week June 14-21,^{iv} our elder commissioners from our Presbytery, Foothills Presbytery, and the other 161 presbyteries will meet to work, pray, and discern the Spirit in our work as church. Commissioners (elders and young adult advisors) will worship and work consider matters from human trafficking, to drug policy, to marriage, to mid-council structures, and peace in the Middle East so that the church can respond to seek the common good. The church of Jesus Christ is not just concerned with salvation of individuals but must seek the common good in the world that God loves.

To repeat John of Chrysostom again, "*seeking of the **common good** . . . for nothing can so make a person an imitator of Christ as caring for his neighbors.*"

But we must remember that all we do as Fort Hill Church, the Presbyterian Church (USA) and as part of this nation and God's world, is done relying on the Holy Spirit.

All that we do is done by the primary actor, God. Because God is, we are. We are simply to catch the fire of the Spirit and do the work of God. As Scripture reminds us:

"Such is the confidence we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God" (2 Cor 3:4)

"It is by God's mercy that you are engaged in this ministry" (2 Cor 4:1);

"We have this treasure in clay jars so it may be clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and doesn't come from us" (2 Cor 5:7).

It's not about you and me. It is about God.

God has a vision for his church, that all men and women, young and old, Jew, Greek, American, foreign, rich, poor, gay and straight, abled, disabled, each and every one, may live to God's glory and love neighbor as self.

As we serve the common good, may the church set the world afire with the good news that points us to God, so we may know God and serve him.

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ⁱ Franklin D. Roosevelt: "Prayer on D-Day," June 6, 1944. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16515>

ⁱⁱ Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation*, (Random House: New York, 1998)

ⁱⁱⁱ Jim Wallis, "Whatever Happened to the Common Good?" *TIME*, April 4, 2013.

<http://ideas.time.com/2013/04/04/whatever-happened-to-the-common-good/>

^{iv} go to <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/ga/ga221/> to follow the General Assembly in Detroit.