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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.'

Acts 19:1-7

Paul in Ephesus

19 While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples.

² He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" They replied, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

³ Then he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They answered, "Into John's baptism."

⁴ Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus."

⁵ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

⁶ When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied—

⁷ altogether there were about twelve of them.

Proclamation of the Word

Have you heard of the Holy Spirit?

During a Presbyterian worship service a man began to be moved by the Spirit.

Out loud he said "Amen!" People around him were a little disturbed.

Then louder he said, "Hallelujah!" A few more people were becoming disturbed.

Louder still he shouted "Praise Jesus!"

An usher moved quickly down the aisle. He bent over and whispered to the man, "Sir! Control yourself!"

The man exclaimed, "I can't help it. I got religion!!!"

To which the usher responded, "Well you didn't get it here!"

Presbyterians are called the Frozen Chosen.

Presbyterian-type Christians have been suspicious of the Pentecostal movement and their children- the Charismatics- speaking in tongues is foreign to us.

We tend to be thinking Christians more than emotional Christians.

In my church growing up, Dr. Clay Doyle spoke thoughtfully about *Gawd*.

I knew I was in a holy place.

I am sure that I had heard of the Holy Spirit.

I was baptized into the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as Jesus commands.

And I was confirmed, taking very seriously that day I stood before my church family and professed my faith.

I knew something had changed within me.

I was a new follower of Jesus Christ.

I am sure Dr. Doyle spoke about the Holy Spirit, but I do not recall really understanding IT.

And there is my misunderstanding.

The Holy Spirit is not an IT. The Spirit is a Person of the Trinity.

We call God Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

And Father and Son sounds more personal, right?

But the Holy Spirit is just as personal.

In fact, the word in Hebrew for Spirit is feminine,

but we know the Spirit is not a she any more than God the Father is only male.

God is beyond our words.

Language for God is always metaphor.

I think that is why the Spirit makes a better verb than noun.

We know the Spirit by what the Spirit does.

Let me illustrate:

I recently spoke to Cynthia Gravelly, and she allowed me to share her story today. We were remembering when our paths crossed some 25 years ago when I was the PSA intern and next door neighbor to their son, Edward. She said, "I am so grateful for the gift of life. If you have been in such a bad place, you learn to appreciate each day.

All those years ago I knew that Cynthia was very sick and homebound, but I never knew the whole story. I asked her what had happened again. She shared that for 11 years she was not able to eat due to GI issues for most of Edward's youth. One time she spent 8 weeks at Duke and was told it was all in her head, but she knew there was a real physical issue. And finally a physician in Greenville, after many years, found the answer they had been seeking. She began to eat only pureed foods for a year. Now she is the picture of health, enjoying a more normal diet.

Cynthia remembered at one point she was 88 pounds and only eating liquids. There was a day when her hospital bed was being moved into the kitchen she was so allergic to everything in the house. She was at the end of her rope, frustrated, and she prayed, "Jesus, I cannot do this any longer. It is all in your hands."

She described having a powerful experience of the Holy Spirit- a visitation. At first she felt unworthy of the gift of God's presence as if the Lord had more important things to do. But most of all she felt "new"- just new. And once the bed was moved to the kitchen, she was at peace, glad. She said she would have been happy if the Lord just took her then, but he left her there with that fullness of the Spirit. She remarked, "Once you have experienced that, you believe that the things we read in the Bible are all true."

The Holy Spirit will surprise us! When we talk about the Spirit as the Sustainer, I cannot imagine a more real experience of the sustenance of God than that, the breath of life filling Cynthia with strength, peace, power, and hope. What a powerful witness!

Now I admit that I knew the Spirit even as a young person, because I knew the presence of God that moves and dwells in each of our hearts. I knew God was as close as my breath.

And I probably knew more about the Spirit from the hymns we sang like "Breathe on me Breath of God, fill me with life anew" or Every Time I feel the Spirit moving in my heart, I will pray" or Spirit of the Living God fall afresh on me, melt me, mold me, fill me, use me.

Maybe it is best that we learn about the Spirit by singing, because it is the breath of God that vibrates within our chest, producing sound and harmony.

It is the breath of God that gives us power and strength to live.

God's Spirit does.

Spirit is a verb more than noun.

We know the Spirit by what the Spirit does.

Today we encounter some disciples who have not even heard of the Holy Spirit. They have repented and been baptized with water and believed that Jesus, the Messiah, was coming, but the Holy Spirit baptism had not yet been revealed to them. When Paul asks if they have received the Holy Spirit when they became believers? They reply, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit?"

They may not have heard of the Holy Spirit, but if they were breathing, they knew it. *Ruach*, the breath that gave life as the Spirit moved over the waters of Creation, endowing all the earth with life.

Remember the valley of dry bones, in Ezekiel's vision, where Spirit, wind and breath — all the same Hebrew word, *ruach* — enter bleached bones, causing them to clink and clank into a fresh community, raised to new life (Ezekiel 37:1-14).

The Spirit here is *communal*, not private.

The Spirit exists in community — a spiritual temple — in a way that transcends individual believers.

The apostle Paul, too, pictured the church as a Spirit-filled temple, when he railed against schisms at Corinth. His language is measured, his logic calculated:

Do you not know

that you are God's temple and

that God's Spirit dwells in you?

If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person.

For God's temple is holy,

and you (Y'all) are that temple (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).

The Holy Spirit is both personal and communal.

As happened in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost, the Spirit causes a diverse group of people to hear and understand one another.

The Spirit inspires dreams and visions.

The Spirit is what moves the Church of Jesus Christ.

Later Paul describes the Church as a body with a varieties of gifts, by the same Spirit. Paul wrote, "For in the one Spirit we were baptized into one body- Jews or Greeks, slaves or free- and we were made to drink of the one Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:13)

While the Body of Christ is diverse by ethnicity, social class, gender, we are unified in one Spirit.

The Body of Christ by design has unity without uniformity.

That is why one of the gifts the church can best learn and teach our world today is how to maintain unity while enjoying diversity.

As Paul warns, "Anyone who destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person."

That is one of the things I love about Fort Hill, we are not all the same!

So how is the Spirit moving us, the church of Jesus Christ?

Where do you feel the Spirit Alive among us?

I felt it last Sunday as this choir sang the Anthem and we all joined in!

And then I saw it as so many of you shared your love and appreciation with our over 90 members of our church family.

Another way the Spirit is working is when small groups make a commitment to study and know one another. One small group that has been meeting for almost 5 years formed after controversies following a General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. They intentionally formed because they saw things differently and wanted to be in Christian fellowship together seeking to learn together and love one another. That is a great sign of the work of the Holy Spirit- one the world needs more of.

Also, this summer we are sending multiple groups out to serve in mission and grow in faith. I trust the Spirit of the living God will be moving and making things happen on those journeys and encounters.

This summer our elders and church leaders are reading a book together, *Neighborhood Church, Transforming your Congregation into a Powerhouse for mission*.

We will be listening for the Spirit, listening to one another, listening to our community, Listening for the Spirit to help us further our mission of glorifying God, growing disciples and meeting human need.

Our guiding prayer will be, "Thy kingdom come on earth, and in the Clemson area, as it is in heaven."

God's Church does not have a mission.

God's mission has a Church.

The Spirit of God is always personal because the Spirit is a person of the Trinity.

But it is always communal- a sign and seal of God's grace at work in the Body of Christ. The Spirit calls us into the world where God is already at work.

God invites us to be a part of what God's Spirit is already doing.

Finally, the Spirit causes us to witness!

Maybe the gentleman did not catch religion in that Presbyterian Church because God's Spirit is not bound by church walls, but he sure did witness to it.

The Spirit is active and moving, everywhere present in God's world.

Cynthia witnessed to me that day of the work of the Holy Spirit.

I know she had been a faithful disciple for a lifetime surrounded by a community of faith. Her experience of handing it all over into God's hands was an act of faith, born of suffering. And when she needed it, the Holy Spirit, the comforter and advocate, the one who gives power and even the faith to believe was present.

That is a story worth sharing.

A witness that gives us all strength and encouragement.

So when you hear what the Spirit is up to, make sure you tell about it!

Prayer: Holy Spirit, wind and flame: You filled your disciples with joy and courage, empowering them to preach your word and to share your good news.

Come, Spirit of Power, make us bold witnesses of your redeeming love. Amen.