

COME HOLY SPIRIT, QUICKLY COME

Acts 2: 1-8; 14-21

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One thing that impresses me about the Pentecost story is the abrupt change in the disciples. One minute they're huddle together, hiding in the Upper Room with a "What are we supposed to do now?" type of attitude.

Ten days earlier, Jesus left them behind but not alone when he ascended into heaven. Earlier he promised the Holy Spirit would come in power. Until then, they have to wait. For ten days they waited and waited and waited, praying together ceaselessly but also wondering how they'd ever begin to accomplish Christ's last command, "Go out and make disciples of all nations."

Suddenly it happened. Out of nowhere the Holy Spirit invaded their lives with an empowerment they never experienced before. Instantly, they were transformed from being timid, frightened followers into bold, courageous leaders. New life and purpose was breathed into their souls. They were the same yet somehow different. From then on they'd never be quite the same again.

Several Sundays ago, the sermon was about the peace of God.

"Peace I give you, my peace I give to you... Let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid." (John 14:27)

The night before he died, Jesus bequeathed to his disciples the gift of peace, the blessed assurance that God would always be with them through thick and thin. They were also promised they'd never be left abandoned and desolate.

In that same room the disciples received God's peace they were now receiving a second gift, the power of the Holy Spirit.

Did you ever wonder what, "the power of the Holy Spirit" means? Let's take a moment to think about that. "Who is the Holy Spirit?" Notice I didn't ask, "What is the Holy Spirit?" The Holy Spirit isn't a "what" but a "who," not an "it" but a "he," or someone would argue, "a she." Either way, the Holy Spirit is a person.

The theologian Paul Tillich wrote, "The Holy Spirit is God himself, God present in communities and personalities, grasping them, transforming them and inspiring them. The Holy Spirit is the power that drives your human spirit above yourself to do what you cannot attain by yourself."

Tillich makes sense, without the power of the Holy Spirit, there'd be nothing at all, no universe, no world, no you.

We first hear about the Holy Spirit, God's powerful creative life-giving presence, in the Book of Genesis: "The Spirit of God moved across the face of the waters," or as it reads in the King James translation, "... the Spirit of God brooded over the face of the deep."

I prefer the King James translation if only because of the word "brooded." I looked "brooded" up in the dictionary. It means: to sit upon eggs, to hatch, as a bird; "to warm, protect or cover with the wings or body;" "to think persistently or moodily about."

The thought of God brooding over his creation permits new insights into God's mysterious ways. I don't know about you but since I've been told since childhood that nothing is ever too tough for God. I always imagined God snapping his fingers to make new stars appear or with the blink of an eye, forming new worlds without breaking a sweat. God spoke and it all happened effortlessly.

"Brooding" suggest something entirely different. Even though God is all-powerful, God chose to expend copious amounts of energy during the creative process. Maybe that verse in Genesis, "on the seventh day, God rested," is more than quaint poetry. Instead, God persistently and moodily created the universe. Like a mother giving birth, God labored long and hard, bringing order out of chaos and life out of nothing. And it wasn't a one-time deal. God's creative power never stops. If God ever withdrew his presence, everything and everyone would immediately cease to exist. Why else would the psalmist declare:

"Lord, you made so many things...
The earth is filled with your creatures,
All of them depend on you!"

The psalmist's words give us hope and awe. God, the sovereign power of the universe, the source and sustainer of life, continues brooding over us every minute of every day. God labors long and hard so we can live hopefully.

Sadly, too many people don't have any hope. Kurt Cobain, the lead singer of the rock band Nirvana, was an angry and bitter young man. The lyrics of his songs reflected his despondency. When he was twenty seven, he committed suicide. A friend was quoted as saying, "I think Kurt killed himself for the same reason I'd kill myself. We lack something. We have no core."

It's tragic that so many people are trapped in the chaos, feeling lost and hopeless. Jesus doesn't want his us to be that way, that's why he promised his peace. That's also why Jesus gave that last command before ascending into heaven, "Go out and make disciples."

If you want motivation for discipleship (or being a good neighbor) seriously think about people of all ages without even a shred of hope. It must be horrible being that way, living on

the edge of the of the abyss, desperate for a word of hope that's never spoken, unless people of goodwill are willing to speak it.

Making disciples is all about Jesus' people being a healing presence to lost and confused people struggling to survive. When you experience Pentecost, part of what you experience is the growing desire to bring hope to these people. Jesus gave us his peace so we can be peacemakers, bringing peace where there is no peace. The Holy Spirit, brooding within you, empowers you with empathy for others, motivating you to stay with them in the name of Jesus.

I believe this is what happened on Pentecost. The Holy Spirit empowered the disciples to be motivated. They weren't given magical powers but they were empowered to begin the long, laborious process to finally become fully human like Jesus, trusting in God and living for others.

That's what Pentecost is really all about, you claiming what God already placed in you, the ability to begin the journey of becoming truly human, created in the image of God or becoming the man or the woman God intended you to be from the very beginning.

Like the disciples of the Upper Room, we are to wait for the Holy Spirit to stir us up too. When that happens, all the ingredients that make us truly human are blended together to reform us in the image of Christ's. So we wait for as long as it takes for the Spirit to brood over the chaos within us and create something new and life-giving.

While you wait, don't expect to become superhuman with over-the-top talents and personality. Don't think you're supposed to become someone you're not. Don't believe God didn't already give you whatever it takes to live the abundant life and then share it with others.

Instead God only wants you to become the you, your true self, the person hidden under the chaos. He wants you to stop thinking you lack something and you have no core. Truth be told, the only thing we do lack is trusting the promise God gave us that core. You do have a core and his name is Jesus. Your core, that's where the power comes from as the Holy Spirit nurtures us into Christ. Remember, the best part of us is Christ living in us and through us. If we let him.

Phillips Brooks, the Boston minister who wrote the Christmas Carol, "O Little Town of Bethlehem," was once overheard praying over and over again, "Lord, give me power. Lord, give me power."

He was praying for is Jesus, the core of our souls who redeems us from the chaos and brings purpose to our lives.

Someone once said, "We are not human beings trying to be spiritual, we are spiritual beings trying to be human." That's what the Bible means by God creating us in the image of God. God is the Supreme Spirit. God created us in God's image to be spiritual beings so we can become one with his Spirit.

We talked about this last Sunday. God the Son, is one with God the Father and through Christ we are made one with the Father, the Son and each other. We are human beings becoming spiritual beings, enabled to love and be loved, through Christ who strengthens us and the Holy Spirit who empowers us.

Pentecost is meant to be a day of glorious celebration. We wear red, symbolizing the presence of the Holy Spirit. We take in new members, reminiscent of that crowd of people in Jerusalem who were added to the church after hearing Peter's sermon. And we respond by going out into our neighborhoods to bring the kingdom near.

Let this day also be a day of prayer and contemplation as you prepare to be filled with the power of God and passing it on as promptly as you received it. That is your calling in Christ. Accept your calling. Allow the Holy Spirit grasp, transform and drive your human spirit above yourself to accomplish what you could never do by yourself, for Christ and his Kingdom.