

Pentecost 2010

Acts 2:1-21

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 where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs-- in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

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. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

‘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.
Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.
And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.
The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day.
Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ "

Romans 8:14-17

All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba!

Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ-- if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

John 14:8-17 (25-27)

Philip said to Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you."

["I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."]

When the day of Pentecost had come, the disciples gathered together, suddenly from heaven came a sound like the rush of a violent wind. It filled the house where they were. Tongues as of fire appeared among them and rested on each of them. Filled with the Holy Spirit, they began to speak as the Spirit gave them ability.

John Mueller, I am thinking that with the change of one word, "speak" to "sing," we might have an example of your ministry here at St. Anne's and perhaps elsewhere. Today is the Day of Pentecost but most on peoples' minds is the fact that this is your last day with us. No doubt but that Pentecost is one of the major feast days of our church, but your presence here has been so significant that Pentecost must take a back pew to the gratitude and joy that you have brought to this faith community.

In the few months that I have been among you, I have been honored each Sunday as John has come forward to better hear what I have to say. You have honored me with that, and I thank you. On the other hand, knowing just a bit of your background and the high regard with which people hold you, I probably should have been scared. I have a hunch that if a student of the organ or a chorister had had the same experience of you walking up close by to better observe, they would have been shaking in their shoes. But, then, you are also a man of grace and spirit, so I have not been afraid but profoundly grateful for your interest, your kind words, and your delightful presence. So, as new as I am but still feeling some of the appreciation that I know all of these people feel, let me be the first to say thank you.

And let me say a special thank you for the gift of Margaret. Her ready smile each Sunday is one thing that I am most especially going to miss!

We know that this is not your first leaving of St. Anne's. But, we know it is your last. Gratitude and appreciation for you have been shown before, but now we know that this will be our last time to do so. So, let me offer these brief words on this day so that we can be about our celebration for your time with us.

Pentecost and the gift of the Holy Spirit is a most fitting day for this farewell to you. There are some elements of the work of the Holy Spirit in scripture that are important to keep in mind always, and these same elements are not far removed from the work of St. Anne's Director of Music.

We first encounter the Spirit brooding over creation, moving about the waters of chaos, and bringing life and order out of unruliness. The *ruach*, the life giving breath of God moves to bring energy and life and order. It sounds like a choir rehearsal doesn't it?

We next encounter the Spirit of God as wisdom, as *sophia*, stirring the hearts and minds of God's people toward holy purposes. That sounds like a Sunday service and the work of you, Margaret, and the choir!

Lastly, there are two choices for the first lesson this day. One is from Genesis and is the story of Babel. The other is what was read, the story of the first Pentecost for Jesus' followers.

But the other choice, Genesis 11, tells us of how, when the whole earth had one language and the same words for everything, people got it into their minds that they would build a lasting tribute to themselves, a city with a tower reaching to heaven, so as to have a name and not become scattered upon the face of the earth. They made bricks for themselves, burned them thoroughly, and had bitumen for mortar. So they set about the work.

We know the ending of the story, how nothing proposed would be impossible, how their language was confused so that one could not understand the other, and how because of that they left off building the city.

It is a delightful story and on the surface of things might serve as one of those from ancient times offering explanations for why things are the way they are. But, at another level, it is an inspiring story still very much alive and holding before all the presence of diversity, the presence of all sorts of voices, not as punishment for lofty goals but just because it is the way we are.

Into this panoply of size and shape, sense and sound, shades and nuances, God's Holy Spirit still moves with creative breath stirring hearts and heads for His Glory and the welfare of His children. This happens in many ways, but today we remember how it has happened with you, John. Your spirit working with God's Spirit has enabled us to join together with one voice and heart to the Glory of God.

The story of the First Pentecost was our chosen lesson. It is the traditional one. It is filled with Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Cretens and Arabs, all sorts and conditions of people. Need I say anything about our choir here?

It is worth noting that people first thought the disciples were filled with new wine. All could understand what each was saying to them which left them amazed and perplexed. Now new wine might not be a stranger to our choir, but perplexed about them we are not – amazed, yes; perplexed, no.

Your years with St. Anne's and your work here have been so significant. Your mark is upon this place. Your memory will long be here. You are among those who in the past have enabled God's sons and daughters to prophesy, to see visions, to dream dreams, and to call upon the Lord.

Thank you, John.